

BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION TECHNIQUES

Submissive / Shy / Sensitive Dogs

Your dog exhibits one or more of the following characteristics.

SUBMISSION • FEAR • SHY/SENSITIVE • STRESS

These characteristics make him or her afraid or wary of strange people, other dogs, unfamiliar noise, or sights. A submissive dog will crouch low (as to a social superior), putting the ears back, the tail between the legs, and in extreme cases, will involuntarily urinate.

A shy, sensitive, or stressed dog will often show submissive characteristics, as well as other behaviors. They may bark or lunge at strangers (either other dogs or human), may refuse to return eye contact, may shake, quiver, or sweat from the paws. A stressed dog may also pace, drool, or lose coat when placed in uncomfortable surroundings.

All the above dogs may bite when cornered, tied up, or threatened.

Sometimes people become frustrated, and yell at or chastise the dog physically. Since the dog is usually doing its very best to please the owner (by showing signs of submission), it is very confusing to the dog, who has no alternate behavior to offer.

Along with any other technique your behavior consultant suggests, the following are useful in modifying these behaviors.

- **IGNORE YOUR DOG MOST OF THE TIME.** Many behaviors will slowly fade away if you pay no attention to them. Some respond to controlled positive reinforcement.
 - Avoid petting the dog when he or she shows signs of stress, or appears frightened or submissive. Ignore the behavior or try using a ball, treat or toy to distract the dog from her fear.
 - Do not punish submissive behavior such as urination or cowering. This is involuntary, and any punishment will actually make the behavior much worse. Remember, he's doing all he can to make you like him or at least not be mean to him.
- **AVOID PROLONGED EYE CONTACT WITH THE DOG.** Instead, look at the dog sideways, for short periods of time.
- **IF THE DOG IS VERY FRIGHTENED,** drop down to its level to communicate. Don't look at the dog, hold out your hand, and speak in a low, conversational tone. Remember, though, if you don't know how to make the dog happy, ignore him!
- **TEACH THE DOG TRICKS, OR TAKE HER TO OBEDIENCE CLASS.** Try to build confidence by letting her take the initiative. Make sure she knows what is right to do (accentuate the positive), and make your corrections calm and matter of fact. Teaching jumps, climbing, and retrieve are excellent confidence builders for unconfident dogs. Obedience classes not only teach the dog what is expected, they teach the owners how to be consistent in their corrections and praise.

- GIVE THE DOG AN IRONCLAD ROUTINE FOR AT LEAST A MONTH. Walks at the same time each day, food at the same time, playtime, etc.
- BE AS CONSISTENT AS YOU HUMANLY CAN TO YOUR CANINE FRIEND.