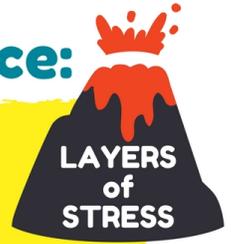




Stress Factors that WE Influence:



CLARITY



Understanding of circumstances, Consistency, Routine, Clear Order & Boundaries.

LEASH



Creates **FRUSTRATION** if handled poorly. **COMMUNICATION** tool, **NOT** restraint device.

TRIGGERS

The last straw. Things that set the dog off. Things that make the dog blow.

SOLUTIONS:

- Be **MINDFUL & PRESENT**
- **WATCH** Dog Body Language
- Limit **AROUSAL/Barking**
- Limit **DISTRACTIONS**
- **Good LEASH** technique
- **6 WORDS** we LIVE by
- **Communicate CERTAINTY**
- **Name & Explain** during **UNCERTAINTY**



- Be a **CLEAR & CONSISTENT LEADER**
- Be **SMOOTH** in our **MOVEMENTS**
- **RULES** are **CONSISTENT**
- **CALM** demeanor... **BREATHE!**
- **Swift**, but **NOT** rushed
- **Limit VERBAL** chatter
- **BE** the **ENERGY** we need from the dog
- **Figure out** how to be in **COOPERATION** ...**NOT** opposition! **KNOW** your **LIMITS!**



Every dog has a threshold at which it fails to perform. There is always a breaking point. That can mean that:

- distractions become too intense for a dog to still follow obedience commands
- a fearful dog is getting too stressed and shuts down or blows up
- an aggressive dog acts upon its triggers.

When the stress is too high the dog fails.

Stress has multiple layers.

For example, a dog that is not feeling well, can react towards a stimulus one way although it would handle things differently if it was feeling better. Or a dog with too much pent-up energy can't focus on a task until some of that energy has been drained.

By focusing only on triggers upon which a dog reacts, we make it much harder on ourselves and our dog to better deal with its environment. The layered stress model describes the different stress layers we should address before working on any actual reactivity. The Layered Stress Model was developed by Chad Mackin.

The HEALTH Layer of Stress (controlled by Owner)

Health affects behavior. If a dog has a health issue their threshold will be way lower than if they were healthy. A dog can't tell anyone if it isn't feeling well and you are only going to notice conditions once they get bad enough to show symptoms.

We all know that acute conditions can affect behavior. The classic example: a dog with an injured leg snaps at you when you touch that leg. That's obvious. But people are less aware of how chronic health issues can really increase the base layer of stress in a dog:

- an allergy that leaves a dog itchy
- an inflamed stomach from food intolerances
- toenails are touching the floor, causing foot pain

None of these would be bad enough for us to see physical symptoms, but they would absolutely add to their stress! Also, medications can influence this concept in a couple of ways. Some medications cause emotional

side effects and many antibiotics can cause stomach distress. That can easily make dogs a little snarky and irritable.

Even more rare examples are physiologically impaired dogs with thyroid issues, neurotransmitter dysregulation, and so forth. Clearly, those would drastically affect behavior.

Obviously, most people keep their dogs in great health. Regular vet care. Good food. Grooming and hygiene. All that good stuff. And I know discussing health during a behavior discussion is a little like that phone call to the IT department when they ask you “is it plugged in”, or “is the power on?” Yes, it kind of makes you want to punch them, but it IS important. If the thing isn’t plugged in, or on, none of the advice they give you will help. It’s the same here. If a dog isn’t in good health, none of the strategies to manage a dog’s stress will get it as low as it is supposed to.

Any time you see a sudden change in behavior in your dog please take a moment and look at the health layer. Skipping this step and assuming health may drastically affect the outcome of any protocol you try.

The LIFESTYLE Layer of Stress (controlled by Owner)

Everyone has a biologically fulfilling lifestyle with biologically appropriate activities. If dogs had the world to themselves they would move 10-20 miles per day, hunt, kill, fight and mate. They wouldn’t go dock diving or heel or even to dog daycare. If you take your dog for a six mile walk every day you are still only providing a third of one fifth of what your dog naturally would do. We need to find biologically fulfilling activities for our dogs to keep them psychologically healthy. Our job is to figure out what our dog likes, evaluate if we can provide that and if not find acceptable surrogate activities that fulfill our dog in the same way.

According to the Brahimi Commission on Animal Welfare the definition of a good lifestyle is:

- Freedom from hunger and thirst (this is self-explanatory)
- Freedom from discomfort (this too, is self-explanatory)
- Freedom from fear and distress (this can be natural evolutionary fears, or learned fears)

The emotional causes can be different for each dog. One activity may totally distress one dog and not bother another. Getting to know each dog helps understand what causes them distress. “Freedom” from these fears and distresses, doesn’t necessarily mean avoiding them. It may mean teaching them that they don’t need to be afraid of them. It will be up to you to understand your dogs, and decide what they need. It is also up to you to develop the relationship you need to guide them through the fears they need help with.

Freedom to express normal behaviors (this is the one everyone is familiar with). Dogs need exercise . Some need more than others. Some need different types of activities. Many times it is influenced by breed but each dog must be understood as an individual. You must figure out what behaviors and activities are fulfilling to the dog, and find a way to provide them—or surrogate activities, that don’t ruin your own lifestyle.

The CLARITY Layer of Stress (influenced by OUR choices)

Every being requires a different level of clarity to maneuver the world safely. Structure is one way to provide clarity but not the only way. Some dogs need a lot of clarity, others need none. The goal of structure should be to provide clarity. As understanding develops, structure can be reduced without the dog losing clarity. One example is obedience commands. Most obedience is interpreted and not literal. An example would be the difference between using the commands “off” and “down”. These commands tend to be used very inconsistently. Same with “no” and “enough”. If commands are used inconsistently there is no clarity, we are asking a dog to guess. If a dog is asked to sit and first sits but then lies down and then gets back up and walks around without any feedback up to that point but is then suddenly scolded, what is it learning? It is learning to understand “sit” as something to be interpreted and if it guesses wrong it leads to unpleasant consequences. This adds stress. Interpreted obedience adds stress due to a lack of clarity. Only literal obedience can reduce stress. Without clarity a dog is not disobedient, it just guesses wrong. Obedience should only be used if it provides more clarity.

At Play N Stay Pet Camp, we utilize "The 6 words we live by." These are words that EACH and EVERY team member uses, so that as we begin to "TEACH OUR DOGS ENGLISH", the message is consistent. ONE

OTHER IMPORTANT WORD is "OKAY!" This is our "release word" - it tells every dog when to get up from a sit, when to come out of it's crate, etc. It basically means, "You're FREE!"

Dogs should remain in a SIT until released with "OK!" The release sequence is, "OK", then dog gets up. IF THE DOG IS GETTING UP BEFORE OK, he must be told he's made a wrong choice with "Uh Uh" and put BACK INTO A SIT...EVERY TIME.

Failing to hold this line causes a few problems:

1. The dog never relaxes in a SIT. He spends the entire time guessing when to get up, as well as trying to get up. Leads to a frantic mind that is anticipating his and your next move.
2. It causes the dog to be corrected WAY more often than is needed. Because you lack CLARITY and CONSISTENCY, the dog constantly tests the boundaries AND makes his or her own decisions - guessing when to get up, instead of waiting for YOU to release him. That's NOT leadership. AND if some staff hold strict SIT/OK rules and other's don't, the dog will fail often and get corrected. This leads to frustration and confusion for people and dogs. ALWAYS HOLD THIS RULE. This is also important when moving dogs from enclosures.
3. Increased FRUSTRATION leads to increased AROUSAL...barking, upset, bad decisions. We want dogs to make GOOD decisions. Be CLEAR in all you do.

The LEASH Layer of Stress (influenced by OUR choices)

Most dogs find leashes annoying as they prevent them from doing what they want to do. Leashes are frustrating because they are restraining—anything restraining tends to frustrate dogs. We often use positive forms of frustration to increase drive but negative forms of frustration are unproductive during training. Leash restraint creates negative frustration unless we acclimate our dogs to them. If we don't, most dogs develop a relationship of disregard or disdain for the leash and collar. By acclimation we can change this perception of the collar signal from annoying restraint to helpful information.

At Play N Stay Pet Camp, we teach "Conversational Leash Work" (as taught by Tyler Muto) AND "Pressure & Release" (as taught by Chad Mackin). The LEASH is COMMUNICATION...NOT restraint!

TRIGGERS

These are dynamics that cause good dogs to make BAD decisions. They include, but are not limited to:

- Meeting Strangers
- Crowding into a dog's SPACE (by human or dog)
- Noises that startle or scare or are unknown
- Feeling cornered
- Feeling intimidated
- New places
- New people
- New routines
- New requirements to navigate or survive
- New situations
- Threatening behavior by another dog
- Arousal - not sexual - EXAMPLES: Rowdy play, ball throwing, reunion with family, high energy ANYTHING
- **LAST, BUT NOT LEAST** - My favorite example, by one of my FAVORITE dog-training people, Nelson Hodges —> Verbal English chatter by stupid, human primates!

Don't be offended! We will talk more in future lessons about how we expect DOGS - who are predators - to behave like PRIMATES. They aren't the same, and failure to recognize this causes our dogs not to reach their full potential!