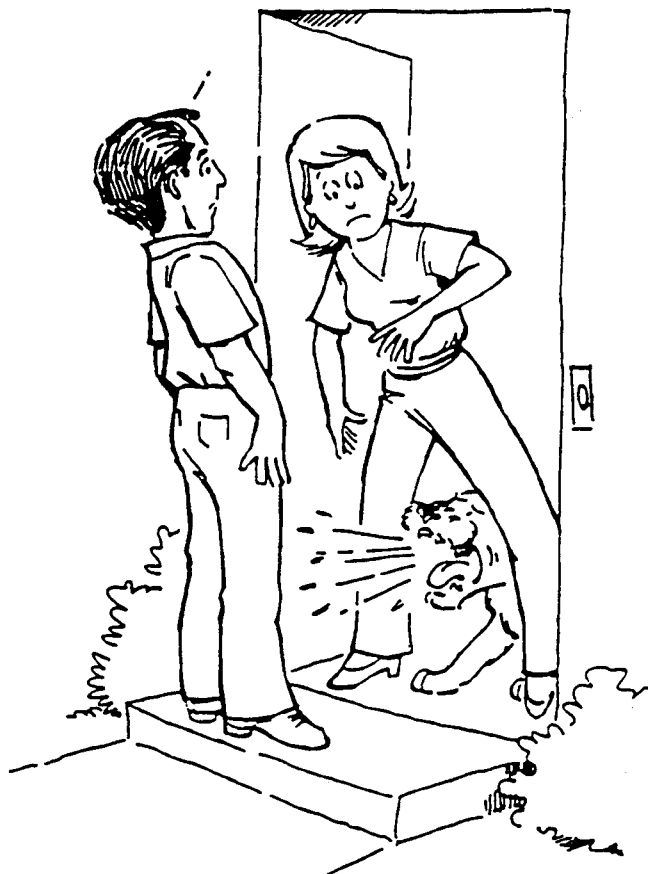


A Program For

HELPING THE FEARFUL DOG ACCEPT PEOPLE



by
Terry Ryan

Drawings/Text

\$4.00

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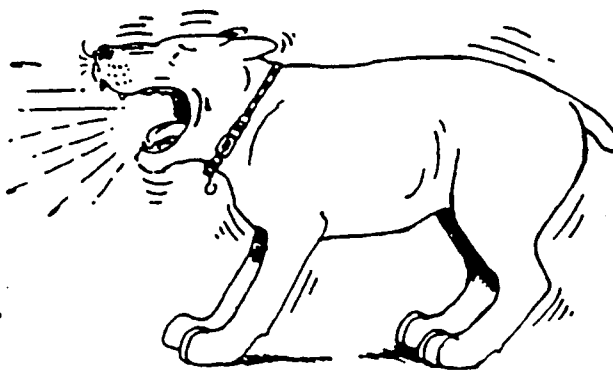
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Before You Get Started:

This program targets one behavior - the dog which is afraid of strangers. Because fear responses are often complicated and deep-rooted, it's helpful to start a broader-based foundation upon which you can build this specific program. Generalized confidence building for the dog and leadership skills for the owner are good places to start. Some ideas for this are in the back of the booklet. Check with the dog's veterinarian before proceeding. Poor health could be the cause of poor behavior. Because it's possible that a fearful dog might bite, it's important that each situation be evaluated individually and a suitable program for behavior modification be supervised by a pet professional such as a veterinarian, a behavior consultant or an obedience instructor. This program is not appropriate for working with dominant, bold, offensive dogs. Because of the risk factor, helpers must be knowledgeable in canine behavior and able to read dogs. If in doubt, the owner can positively condition the dog to a muzzle before proceeding with the visitation exercises.

PROFILE:

AFRAID OF PEOPLE



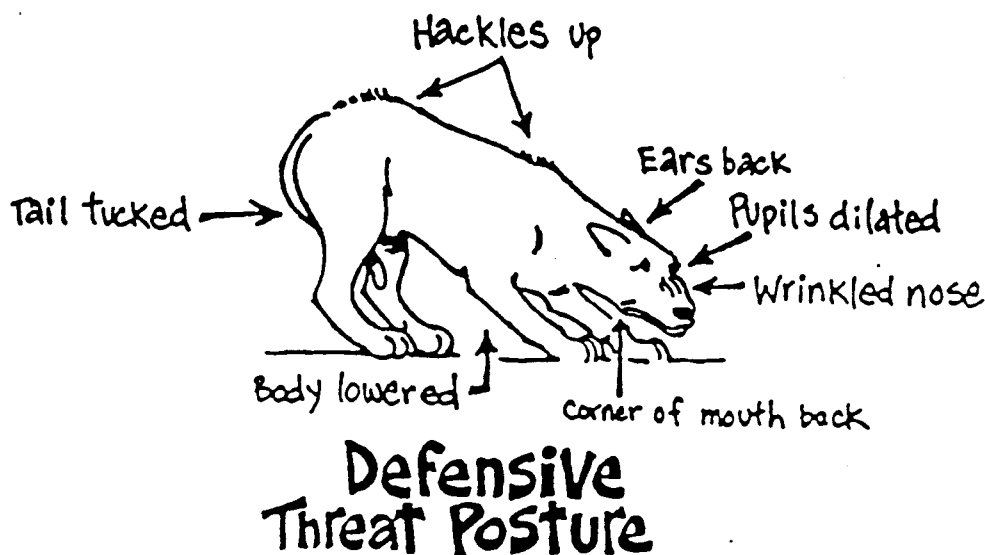
Why the fear? Is it nature or nurture? Some dogs have inherited their fearful tendencies (nature). Some dogs have learned to be fearful from their experiences in their environment (nurture).

A fearful dog is a stressed dog. There are many techniques for reducing stress. This booklet will give specific ideas on reducing a dog's fear of people, but it is recommended that you also begin to explore a broader regime of general stress reduction for your dog.

Fearful dogs usually prefer to avoid people they don't trust, rather than confront or bite them. Those that do bite usually warn first. Unfortunately, many people are unaware of what the dog is telling them. Dogs are nonverbal communicators. We must learn to read their body language. Understanding them in this way will reduce their stress and the likelihood of inappropriate interactions between people and dogs, enhancing the quality of life for both.

A FEARFUL DOG IS ...

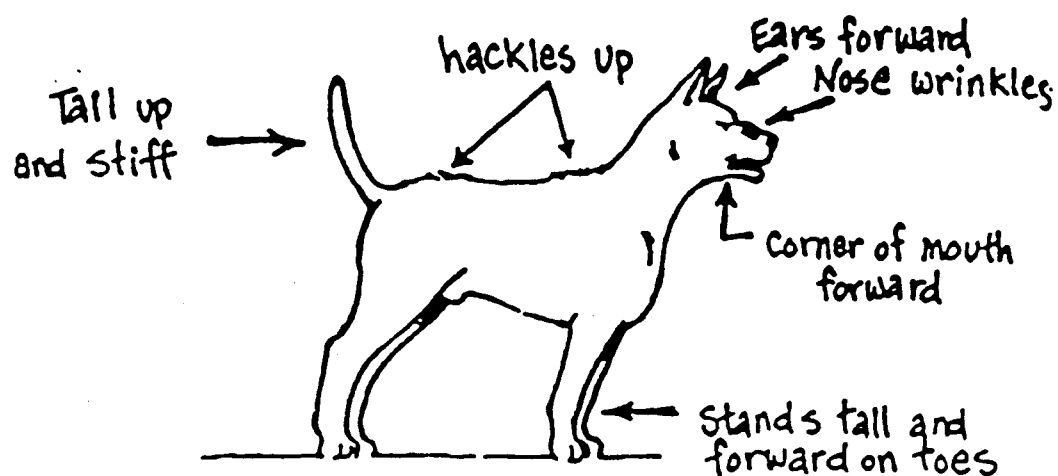
often hesitant, easily frightened, timid, tends to avoid certain persons or things. Frequently, these traits are not noticed until the dog encounters a new situation. The dog might assume elements of the DEFENSIVE THREAT POSTURE when frightened. Shy and fearful dogs can be gentle, loving, obedient pets, but may try to bite a person when frightened. The motive is to chase that person away. The problem is, we can't always tell which people or actions frighten the dog.



The fearful dog may fool you and appear to be brave because of raised hackles (the fur along the neck and back) like a brave/offensive dog, but the ears may be pinned back, body lowered, tail between the legs. The tail may even be wagging. A wagging tail doesn't always mean a friendly dog. This dog might bark and stare, possibly even lunge, but then avert his or her eyes and turn away, only to turn toward you again and start all over. This dog would really rather not deal with you and hopes to frighten you away. If pushed, this dog might bite. Compare the fearful dog's posture with the brave/offensive dog's posture on the next page.

THE BRAVE/OFFENSIVE DOG IS ...

often hostile, assertive, ready for combat, dominant and self-confident. He or she might assume the body language of the **OFFENSIVE THREAT POSTURE** when provoked and possibly lunge, bark, snap. This dog can be a loving and loyal pet to the immediate family if given proper training, but this type of dog might bite if challenged. The motive is to hurt the challenging person. The problem is, we don't always know what the dog may regard as provocation or a challenge.



offensive Threat Posture

This dog's **OFFENSIVE THREAT POSTURE** may include growling deeply, raised hackles, staring at the opponent, a show of fangs, standing tall with ears and tail somewhat upright, and leaning toward the opponent.

REMINDER:

The following program is not designed for a brave/offensive dog as described above. It will rarely help in the behavior modification of such a dog. In fact, it may make matters worse.

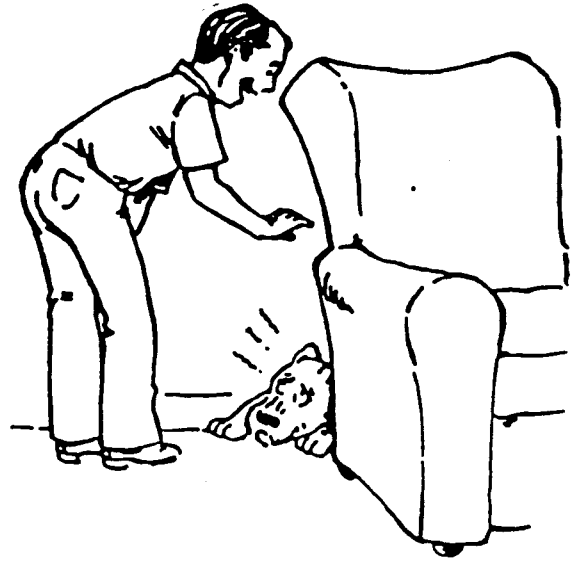
GO SLOWLY

Frequently when a frightened dog is behaving poorly around strangers the owner encourages the stranger to make friends. The dog's actions say that he or she doesn't want to make friends right now, but rather retreat to a safe spot and keep an eye on the visitor. The worse thing the owner can do is to *force* this worried dog to make friends.

The visitor in this drawing is making matters worse. In trying to be friendly, he is further frightening the dog with his body language - gestures of dominance which will intimidate the dog:

- 1) Towering over the dog
- 2) Staring (making eye contact)
- 3) Standing directly in front of dog
- 4) Reaching over dog's head and neck

Notice this dog has no place to retreat.



THIS BODY LANGUAGE IS BETTER

The person at the left is demonstrating less threatening body language, however this is no assurance that the dog will accept the person.

- 1) Person lowers his body
- 2) No eye contact
- 3) Standing sideways to the dog
- 4) Pet chest, not over dog's head

This dog is not cornered.



"My Dog Is Protecting Me"

Some dogs bark and act out more when near the owner. Is the owner being "protected" or is the owner seen as back up for a dog which lacks confidence? Similarly, some fearful dogs become bolder in the company of other dogs.



Food as a reward:

The following program works best with food rewards. But please don't unbalance a dog's diet with TOO MUCH human food. Training treats should not comprise more than ten percent of the caloric intake of your dog. Many dogs will enjoy a portion of their daily ration of kibble as training treats. Some dogs respond better to extra special food. Low fat Mozzarella cheese or boiled liver cut in 1/8 inch cubes work well. Most "biscuits" are too large. Some trainers use bits of cat kibble or raisins.

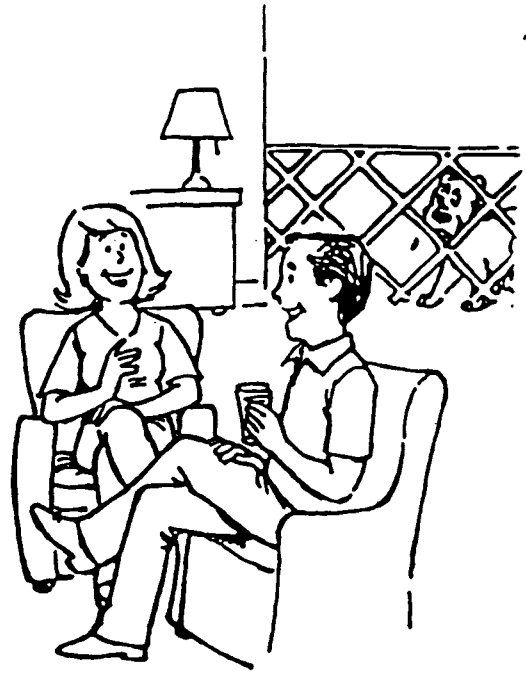
Reasons not to use food: some dogs are allergic to certain foods, are overweight, have digestive problems, are not food-oriented. If you use non dog food, check with the dog's veterinarian. Give food more power--schedule the training when the dog is hungry--just before a meal. Try a supply of balls or other toys. Some dogs are so shy and fearful that food or toys will not overcome their fear and this program will not work at all, but many, many dogs have responded favorably to this program in the past.

GETTING STARTED

At first the pet professional (the helper) will visit the dog's home. Plan ahead so the helper will have a supply of the dog's favorite treats. Before the helper arrives, the dog should be placed in an adjoining room with a partition between the dog and the sitting room. A baby safety gate is an appropriate partition. Obtain a temporary spring loaded model which can be used without damaging your walls. Or, the dog can be tied away from the visiting area. In both cases it's important that the dog have a place to back into if frightened without feeling cornered. The dog must be able to retreat and avoid the problem or else you may inadvertently force the dog to bite.

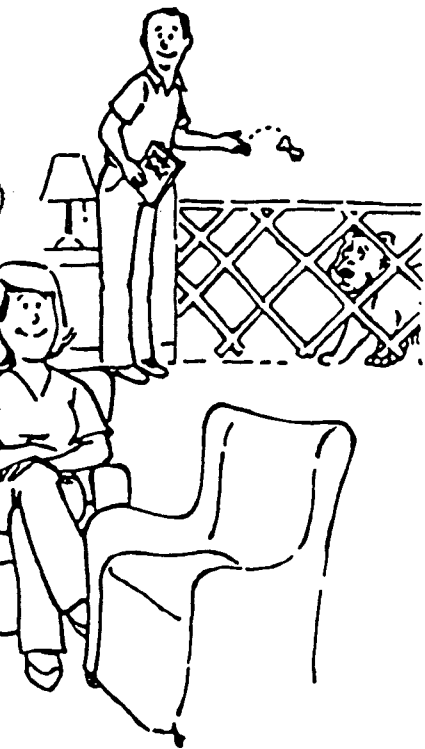
ENTER, SIT and IGNORE

When the dog is settled, cue your helper to knock on the door. As the helper is invited in, everyone present, owner, visitor and other family members must sit quietly AND NOT LOOK AT OR TALK TO THE DOG, even if the dog's barking. It does little good to punish a fearful dog. Commands probably haven't worked and should be avoided for now. Comforting might make your dog think you are worried too. Sit and visit. Most dogs will settle quickly but some take up to 30 minutes before relaxing.



TREAT WHILE PASSING

The helper should get up after the dog has relaxed and casually walk close to, but out of reach of the dog. The helper should have the container of treats in hand and toss one to the dog without looking at or speaking to the dog. The helper should not confront (face) the dog or get close enough to touch the dog. If the dog is barking, the helper should wait until there is a pause or else the dog might think the barking has been effective - and chased the helper away. Most dogs bark in a series and then catch their breath and start the series over. The break is the time to toss the treat in. The helper will then go sit down again, keeping the treats in hand to suggest to the dog that there's more to come.



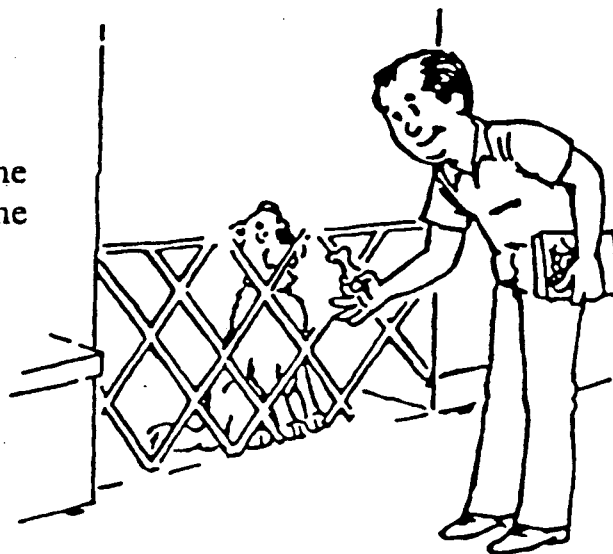
When the dog looks at a person, that person can use calming signals:
yawning, looking away, turning of the head, lazily blinking the eyes -
Natural signals dogs use to calm themselves and others in times of stress.

A determination must now be made to continue if progress is being made or stop the program if the dog is not responding favorably.

The helper should continue this procedure several times until the dog seems relaxed. Each time the helper makes the trip over to the dog he should pause a little longer before tossing the treat and turn his body slightly so eventually he is confronting the dog.

OFFER A TREAT FROM HAND

When the dog seems at ease and accepts the treats readily, the helper can pause and offer the treat out of his hand, following these rules:



- no eye contact
- stand low and sideways to the dog
- offer from under dog's chin, palm up, food between fingers
- hold hand several inches away from the dog's mouth and wait for the dog to reach for the treat
- don't speak and don't try to touch the dog with either hand
- if the dog doesn't take it, drop the treat and go sit down
- if the dog barks or growls, don't drop the treat--wait for a quiet time

The helper should continue passing by and tossing the food until it is determined that either the dog is ready to accept from hand or is too fearful to continue the program.

CHANGE HAND POSITION

If the dog readily accepts the food, continue offering it in the same manner several more times and then change hand position. The food is now held as shown so the dog has to "come into the hand" to take the treat. As you repeat this step, fingers can casually and lightly touch the dog's face as he takes the treat.

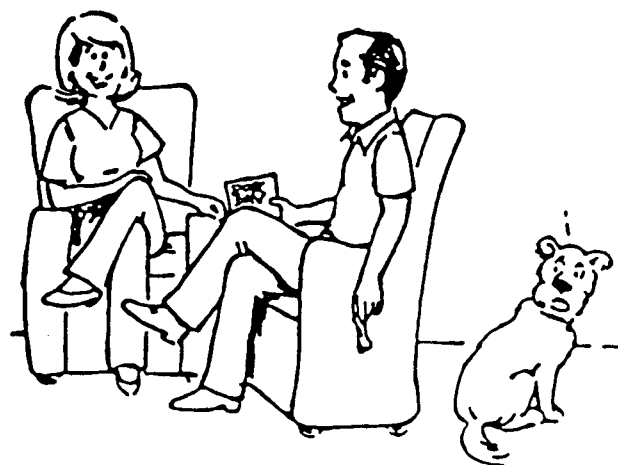


DOG ALLOWED IN ROOM

When the dog seems completely at ease the owner should get up and remove the gate. The helper should remain seated with the container of treats, ignoring the dog. Both people should resume their visit and completely ignore the dog unless the dog comes over to the helper to beg for a treat. At this time, the helper should give the reward immediately and quietly speak a few words of praise to the dog!

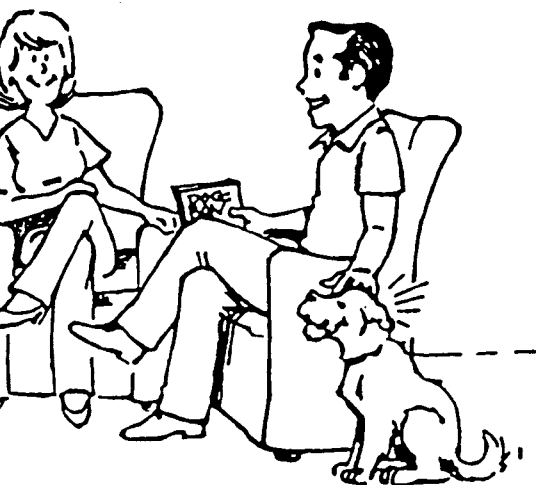
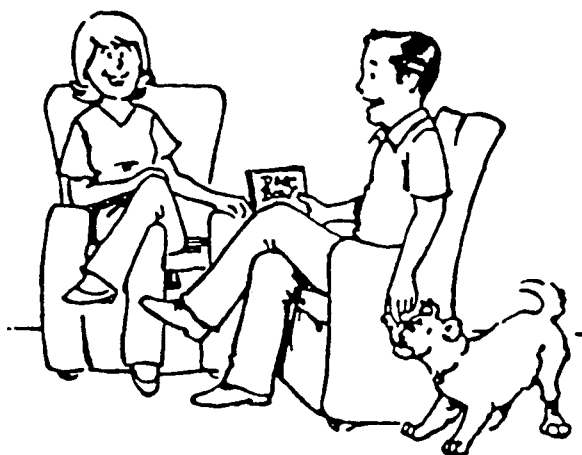
TREAT DOG FROM CHAIR - Step One

While seated, continue the conversation, but the helper now holds a treat within reach should the dog walk by. Be very casual and do not talk to or look at the dog.



TREAT FROM CHAIR - Step Two

If the dog comes over to investigate or take the reward, the helper should quietly encourage the dog *once or twice*, but not make extended eye contact. It's important that the dog know you are relaxed. Don't forget to *BREATHE*. If it helps, play easy listening music.



PET DOG FROM CHAIR

You will be successful if the dog comes over to accept treats and eventually petting. Remember to pet from the side or below the dog's head. Often when the helper gets up from the chair, the dog becomes fearful again. The owner might want to put the dog back in the security area first.

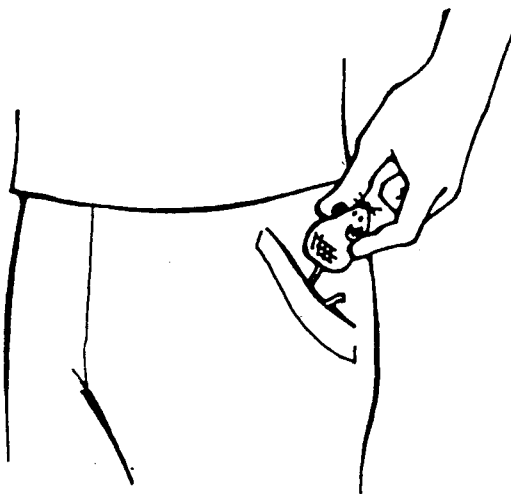
Success?

If the dog accepts the visitor, you've made a great beginning. Now repeat the program with a different helper. Perhaps someone with a hat or in uniform if the dog seems to dislike such. When successful in the dog's home, adapt the program by visiting in a friend's home, or in a park. Remember that your helper must be a pet professional who understands the dog and the program.

Good luck!

The following boxes include concise explanations of other ideas for helping dogs overcome fear. These ideas can be implemented alone or together.

Habituation Through the Sense of Smell:



If the dog has a favorite toy, for example a ball, a Kong, or a nylabone, that toy can be used to passively get the dog used to strangers. Give the toy to a friend to keep in his or her pocket for a day or two. This friend should be someone the dog does not know. Then, simply return the toy to the dog. If the dog refuses the toy, ignore the situation for a day, then tease the dog into a game with the toy. Repeat with different toys, different people.

If the dog does not play with toys, incorporate a small towel into the dog's bed or favorite resting area. Then give the towel to a friend who can place it in a pocket or in some other convenient way, make sure plenty of scent is imparted to the material. If the dog refuses his bed with the towel in it, try making the towel a place mat for the dog's food bowl.

Other Tools for Behavior Modification

The tools used in the fearful dog program are *counter conditioning* and *systematic desensitization*. There are other tools which might prove helpful for your particular dog. For instance, *habituation* (getting used to it) might be used by taping the sounds of people the dog doesn't like - for instance children playing loudly or teenagers laughing and joking around. The tape could be played at quiet, relaxful times while the owner is home with the dog. For more information on additional methods and how to employ them, refer to the booklet "*The TOOLBOX for Remodeling Problem Dogs*".

Give The Dog Someone to Depend On

The owner should be number one in the dog's life. The decision maker. The one in charge. If the dog regards the owner as a capable leader, the responsibility of matters such as chasing off suspicious strangers can be left up to the owner! A concise leadership program is outlined in the booklet "*How to ALPHAbetize Yourself*."

Build The Dog's Confidence

Obedience train the dog, using positive reinforcement and motivational techniques. The dog will be delighted in the praise received for a job well done and confidence will soar. Agility (obstacle course) training is very good for this. If the dog dares to walk through a hula hoop, the dog may next have the confidence to walk under a card table with a sheet draped over two sides. If the dog has been asked to do this and no harm has come, the dog also gains confidence in the owner's ability as a leader. Perhaps now the dog will be more apt to allow the owner to handle frightening situations, taking much responsibility and worry from the dog.

Group Therapy



Because there is always the potential that a fearful dog will bite, this exercise should be done under the supervision of a professional instructor and knowledgeable volunteers.

The instructor will take the dog's leash and ask the owner to leave the training area. Make a semicircle (dog should never feel "surrounded") of helpers sitting on the floor around the instructor and the dog. Each person will have something the dog likes. The people in the circle will avoid eye contact, stay seated, not make sudden movements, be quiet.

One by one the instructor will hand the leash to one of the helpers who will encourage the dog to come over by offering their toy or treat. The leash is then passed to another person who does the same thing. The instructor will decide if, when and how the assistants actually interact with the dog.

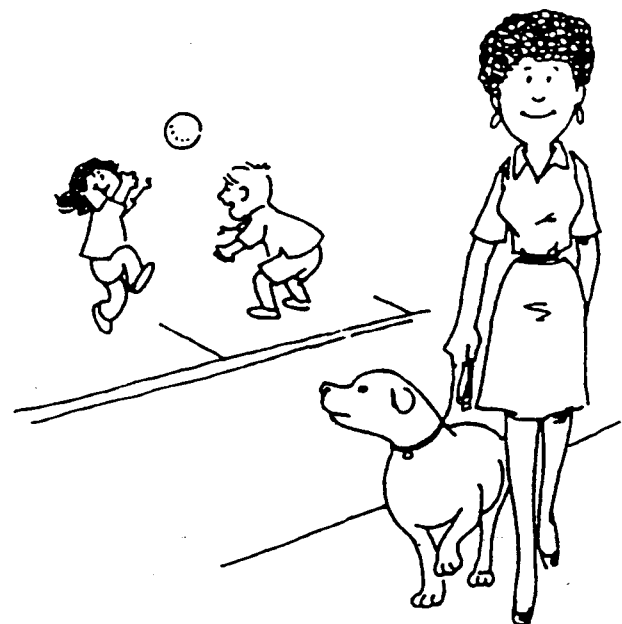


Have you checked with the dog's veterinarian about the fearful behavior? More than just ruling out a physical problem, the veterinarian might suggest a course of pharmaceutical therapy to help rehabilitate the dog. Homeopathy and herbal preparations are gaining in popularity as is massage and touch therapy for behavior disorders.

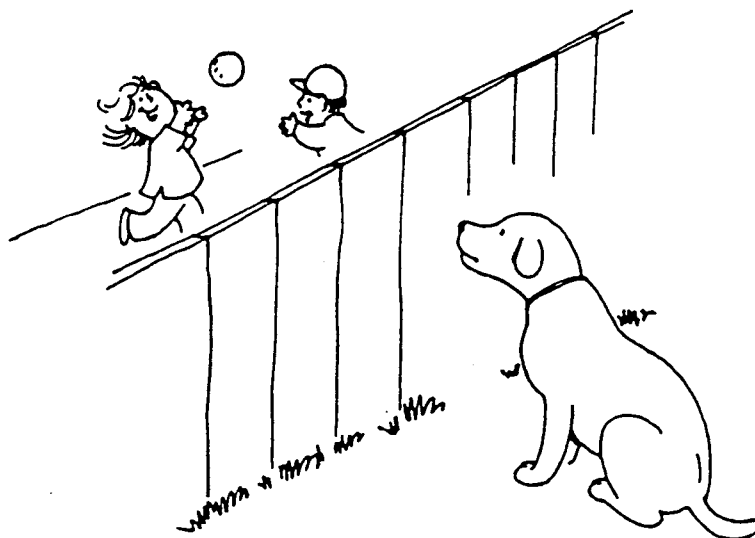
In Conclusion

There are too many variables - in the dogs - in the owners - in the environment - to guarantee that any of the above methods will work quickly or even at all. While these programs have been used for years with fearful dogs and much success has been gained, owners must always be watchful. Especially if a dog has bitten someone or seems to have that potential, it is only prudent to assume ultimate responsibility by:

SUPERVISION



CONFINEMENT



- end -

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