

I often compare barking in dogs to laughter in humans. We find ourselves laughing in all sorts of situations, some of which are contrary to one another: We laugh for joy, we laugh nervously in uncomfortable or high-pressure situations, we laugh when we're exhausted (tired giddiness), we laugh in defense, we laugh for relief ... eventually it becomes ridiculous and we can't help but laugh at our misfortune; especially when being consoled by a friend, we laugh after we cry), etc. AND it is often uncontrollable.

Barking is a way of releasing internal tension. Think of it as the steam leaving the tea kettle. In some situations, if you can actually elicit a DEEP bark from your dog, then you'll be getting at the deep place where their stress is stored.

Barking can be therapeutic, depending on the circumstances. It may be your dog's only way of releasing tension at this point when s/he is anxious.

Dogs that alert bark are doing so because something new and/or unexpected in the environment changes their emotional state to a more aroused one, and for most dogs when aroused, they bark. Chances are the dog will initially bark when someone familiar and even very strongly bonded to shows up unexpectedly or out of context.

It is safest in our society for the dog to become curious rather than defensive once recovered from the initial startle.

This could be because the dog does feel threatened or because "the best offense is a good defense". In other words, the dog responds in a defensive way automatically, giving him/her the time and distance to assess if the person is a threat or not and they want to either go to the person or allow the person into their space. People have subtle ways of keeping other people at a distance while they assess them. The problem is that the way dogs do it is not politically correct all the time!

If you have heard of or seen the quick fixes on TV your trainer simply isn't educating you about how suppressed energy quite often comes out sideways in other context. Most dog trainers do not educate the human. Or the human has no desire to be educated.

Barking is a perfectly natural canine behavior. Birds sing; frogs croak; and a dog barks, whines and howls. If you have a dog, you better expect some barking, whining or howling. It is unrealistic and unfair to think you can train your dog to stop barking altogether. However, you, your neighbors and your dog will all be much happier if the barking had an off switch! One of the things I harness in my process is to have the dog speak on cue teaching a on and off switch!

Dogs that are socially isolated or confined for long periods without supervised exercise need some outlet for their pent-up energy. A dog that is left alone all day is likely to take up barking as a hobby because no one is there to interrupt

him. In no time at all, barking becomes an enjoyable habit. And for many dogs, once they start barking, they tend to continue barking for the sheer fun of it. Plus its great exercise.

Your dog may be barking excessively because you unintentionally trained her to do so. Dog barks and you respond. "Bark" and you open the door to let the dog out. "Bark" and you open it again to let her in. "bark" and she gets her ball tossed, "bark" for a treat . . . you get the idea. Your dog has learned to get attention through barking. It is easy to fall into this trap because the very nature of barking gets your attention.

It's no wonder people have barking problems with their dogs. Most dogs have no clue as to whether barking is something good or something bad. Sometimes when the dog barks, s/he is ignored (guide in a jolly mood). Other times, the dog is encouraged (guide sees suspicious stranger outside the house). And yet other times, the dog is yelled at (guide has a headache). Humans are consistently inconsistent.

In order to help your dog know your expectations, teach him/her what they are. Here is a good rule to start with: Barking is OK until the dog is taught to "Stop Barking" or better yet is interrupted and redirected, heck you'd be better off praising the dog when s/he barked because your emotional state would change, hence affecting the dog to want to stop and focus on you. Think of "Stop Barking" as an "off switch" rather than simply an unpredictable reprimand. The dog must be taught what the off switch is. A simple startle may work initially but may not continue to work long term, because depending on the dog, the Startle (yelling NO, Quiet, Shut up, ect.) will easily diminish, as the dog acquires new associations. Imagine if every time you spoke, whistled, sang or yodeled. Someone yelled "BAH" at you to stop or grabbed your mouth with their hand, most humans wouldn't allow that, plus it doesn't make for a very balanced relationship)

Barking under all of these circumstances brings the dog relief. Because relief is the most reinforcing phenomenon there is, so barking can become a severe problem.

- You can never stop Pup from barking, but you can use response control procedures to minimize arousal and frustration and teach Pup alternate ways to solicit your attention.
- Here is how.
 1. Pup barks. You pick up floor cord or leash and toss food or a toy on the ground. Pup stops barking, and either no longer wants your attention or is distracted from the object that aroused him. S/he wants the food or toy.
 2. You become a post and hold the cord so Pup cannot reach his prize. Pup struggles and tries to reach it, but in vain. Finally s/he sits and/or looks up at you. You say "Yes" and immediately let him have the treat or toy.

3. The sequence is repeated a few times so Pup rehearses the correct alternative of calming down and then sitting and making eye contact.
4. Mission accomplished! But this is only possible because a response control device was in place and you committed to teach Pup how s/he should respond.

Your dog barks. You pick up floor cord and toss food or a toy on the ground. Your dog stops the activity of barking and no longer wants your attention. S/he wants the food or toy. Hold the cord, so your dog cannot reach his prize. Your dog struggles and tries to reach it, but s/he cannot. Finally, s/he sits and/or looks up at you. Say "Yes" and immediately lets him have the treat or toy. The sequence is repeated a few times so your dog rehearses the correct alternative.

The way the sequence works is this: Barking caused your dog further frustration. Something good was tossed and s/he could not have it. Sitting and making eye contact brought relief. It resulted in him getting the prize. Your dog learned that sitting and looking at you is more reinforcing than barking. Next time s/he is more likely to sit and make eye contact with you than bark. Magic!!! But this is only possible because of a response control device (a floor cord or leash) and the commitment to teach your dog how s/he should respond.

Another consideration is that the environment is always full of very reinforcing phenomenon. When Pup is out of confinement, s/he should be under complete response control. The best, most practical response control device for use around the home is a "floor cord".

Barking for attention and alert barking can quickly become a real problem unless two things happen: the barking is stopped and your dog is taught an alternate way to solicit attention and/or your dog is interrupted and given something else to do to prevent rehearsal of that behavior (barking). Consistent rehearsal of any behavior without interruption can quickly become **habitual**. Ignoring barking is not effective, because it is self-reinforcing.

For example, shepherds are an ultra sensitive breed of dog and are naturally suspicious because they are bred to be guard dogs and/or herding breeds (ex: Australian shepherd, Corgi). Their emotional state is directly connected to their bark, so when they get the least bit aroused they start to bark. And the more you try to shut them up, the more aroused they become, and the more they bark.

This is a tough and frustrating situation with many dogs. You need to change their emotional state before you can address their behavior, which takes skill and the right philosophy.

If you have ever tried to bribe and/or give your dog food while out on a leash walk to stop his barking, you know that it generally does not work. The environment is too stimulating and your dog is unable to ignore the distractions. Your dog's food drive is diminished and will not work to focus his attention on you. Rather, you and your dog should immediately turn and go the other way when a person is approaching. If you are going to be doing anything besides turning around and going the other way, you should cross the street, staying behind your dog, and see if s/he will go into a sit/maintain. Once you have crossed the street, have your dog sit while facing the person who is walking, and then move to stand behind your dog. Please note: The sit/maintain calming skill must first be taught in a different context before you can realistically expect the dog to respond with distractions. Often times redirecting the dog to tug of war will work redirecting their energy release. All approaches depend on the individual dog and human's emotional state and past associations.

Do not drag your dog away with the head halter and/or front attachment harness or any other management tool you may be using. You need to be able to take your dog away from the distraction while s/he is still able to see it. If you try to use the head halter to pull your dog's head away, it will only frustrate him and exasperate the problem. Your dog will not turn away until s/he is satisfied that s/he is no longer threatened. It has to be your dog's choice to finally turn away.

If you come across something and your dog alerts, you need to catch it before s/he starts barking. Immediately back away from the distraction while keeping your dog with you, and just keep moving away from the distraction. At the same time, allow your dog to watch what's happening because this will prevent him from struggling to see what s/he is afraid of. Wait for your dog to feel safe. Or move yourself in front of your dog and cue him to sit, hold his collar to prevent him from breaking the sit and wait for the dog or person to pass.

Teach your dog our three foundation games -- voluntary eye contact, how to calm himself down, and how to relinquish the environment.

I find the majority of dogs are on a fixed schedule of reinforcement. This often leads to frustration barking.

Frustration Barking

This is one of the most common and perhaps most irritating... After working with me here is what one of my clients shared: *"Thanks for replacing my frustration with something to do! I realized I need to find more interesting thing for Bula to do, she is getting bored with the same chewies and toys".*

Since the barking problem is a primarily when she is sitting still, lets refrain from distractions to use these particular methods.

The methods described below will not work when she is distracted or over stimulated like with another dog in her presence, that would require another approach like a gentle head lift, pivot, and redirect.

1. The following method works with dog in the crate as well as tethered:
When the dog starts barking or whining while you are with her already via standing in front or next to her or when she is tethered or in her crate or in the sit position... In the event that the dog starts barking or whining, all you do is close your eyes, turn away, count silently to 3, open your eyes and turn back to the dog again. If the noise- making continues, repeat this sequence over and over until the time when you look back at Molly and she is doing anything but making noise. Immediately indicate (say yes), reinforce by dropping food into the crate or giving with your hand if pup is out of crate, and then remain looking and smiling at your dog. If pup starts whining/barking again, begin the look away/look back sequence until your pup does anything but make noise. If she stays quiet, but does not look at you, continue to smile and look at her while calmly and silently waiting to see what Molly will do next. When Molly finally chooses to look at you, you will immediately indicate and open the crate door or release Molly from sit/maintain – eye contact.
2. Doing the sequence of “close your eyes, turn away, count to 3, open your eyes and turn back to your dog again” correctly is very, very important. A smile on your face is also a must. This will be prompting technique that is used to discourage demanding or pushy barking/whining that is a result of frustration. It is effective because it will enable the dog to become less agitated so it can offer alternative behaviors.
3. “Demanding” barking on the other hand got its start when the dog or pup was frustrated and made noise at the guide. The guide responded in a way that brought relief to the pup. Always remember:” Relief” is very reinforcing. So barking/whining became the default behavior when the dog was frustrated or didn't know what else to do because it resulted in some kind of relief. Usually it continued and got worse because the guide kept responding in some way to the barking. To further compound this problem, the act of barking results in physical satisfaction to the dog. Barking then became a habit.
4. Once it became a habit, even if misguided humans starting doing things to the dog in order to curb the habit, such as saying No bark, smacking their muzzle, or spraying apple in their mouth, the barking continued. It even increased in intensity, duration, and frequency because the dog became much more frustrated by the negative tactics used to try and stop it.
5. Briefly here is why the look away/look back approach works best to curb frustration barking. It sets the dog up to be successful, not fail. It diminishes frustration instead of increasing it. It allows the dog to volunteer

alternative behaviors that then can become the habitual response to frustration.

6. Frustration happens when an animal feels that its situation is unpleasant. It intensifies dramatically when the animal changes behavior and the unpleasant situation still continues. A dog must know that a change in its behavior will immediately change its situation, in order for it to offer a change. By turning away then immediately turning back, the trainer helps the dog become less frustrated because the trainer is able to have something pleasant happen immediately when the dog stops making noise.
7. Now the dogs' situation can begin changing from pleasant to unpleasant. As pups' situation starts to result in more pleasing consequences, the frustration becomes lessened as so does the noise. The dog will begin offering more behaviors that are not motivated by being agitated, but are a result of transferring into a calmer state.
8. Calmness induced behaviors, such as sitting, standing still, or eye contact are offered more frequently. They are more desirable responses so now the trainer is continually rewarding the dog. The dog is being reinforced so frequently that the situation changes rapidly from pleasant to unpleasant. The more rewards the dog can earn, the less frustrated the dog becomes. As frustration dissipates, so does the frustration-induced barking or whining. This positive cycle continues until the barking ceases because the frustration has been alleviated.
9. In contrast, actions such as turning away indefinitely, walking away completely, startling by yelling or shaking a can with pennies, smacking the crate, spraying something at or in the dog's mouth, or other unpleasant acts are very traumatic for a dog. The poor dog is already frustrated which is why the barking is happening in the first place. Causing the dog more unpleasantness only adds fuel to the fire. When a dog changes behavior and it doesn't change, stop, or prevent an unpleasant situation, the dog will become even more frustrated. Increased frustration results in agitated-induced behavior such as barking or whining in such intense form that it becomes obsessive.
10. Once the behavior becomes obsessive, the dog becomes so oblivious to other possibilities that it is almost impossible to get them to try an alternative behavior. At this stage all attempts to stop the noise, especially tactics based on force, just cause additional agitation and will not work to change the behavior.
11. Force tactics further compound the problem because the negative action most often happens immediately following the dog ceasing to bark! For example, to spray something in the dog's mouth, the guide must first grab and hold the dog so the spray ends up in the dog's mouth. All this

commotion causes the dog to stop barking. That is usually when the spray hits the dog's mouth!

12. Instead the trainer must strive to diminish the agitation and alleviate the frustration by looking away and then looking right back at the dog. It is paramount to minimize the dogs' frustration and resulting agitation to prevent the dog from coming obsessed with barking that they are oblivious to any other possibility. By looking away and then looking back right away, the trainer is poised, ready and seeking some other behavior to reinforce. Something desirable and pleasant, not something undesirable and unpleasant which begins the cycle to quiet a frustrated dog.
13. Barking and whining that is a result of fear will be handled differently. Fearful barking or whimpering is handled by removing the dog from the frightful situation. The reason to remove the dog is because no mammal is equipped to cope with fear. They are only hard-wired to escape from fear. Forcing a panicked animal, which naturally wants to flee to cope with the terror instead, purely and simply increases terror. Only by removing it far enough away from the fearful situation to the point where it is no longer scrambling to escape, can it begin to assess the circumstances and start the process of adaptive learning.

To understand "fixed schedule of reinforcement" can you identify with a person whose car starts every time they turn the key in the ignition? They are on a fixed schedule to expect the car to start every time they put the key in the ignition and turn it. This person would become irritated and frustrated when turning the key did not immediately start the car. In the same way, your dog becomes agitated and frustrated when he sits and does not immediately get food or will not perform without the presence of food. The usual response to this frustration is barking, just as most people explode with expletives when their car does not start as expected!

Your Dog can get frustrated because he might have been taught another behavior such as "sit" instead of learning eye contact first.

Once your dog is already on a fixed schedule with another behavior and that behavior is cued by the presence of food, it will be necessary for you to switch to another method to teach eye contact. You must use other motivating methods that do not require the use of food.

He has learned to sit on cue and be immediately reinforced. His "cue" to sit might have become the sight of food in your hand. And you may have accidentally put him on a "fixed schedule of reinforcement" for sitting because you always rewarded him immediately with food when he sat.