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# WORKING WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

## DOG WALKER VOLUNTEER INFO SESSION



## What are some common challenges in shelter?

Jumping

Barking

Excessive pulling

Biting leash, grabbing clothes

Reactivity (barking, lunging)

Mounting

Not walking/not returning to kennel

Others?

# What are the triggers we often are dealing with?

Noise

Visual stimulation

People/dogs passing by kennel

Being approached

Being handled/harnessed

Being moved

Lack of choice/opportunity

Extended confinement

Extended isolation

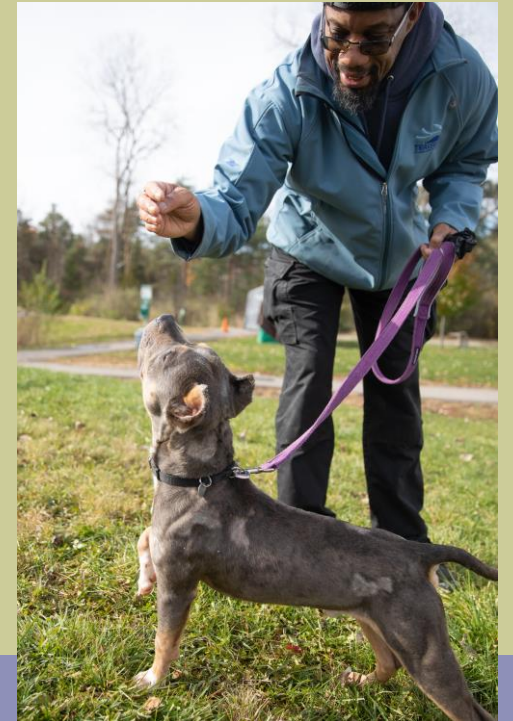
Lack of sleep



# Be Proactive, Not Reactive

Best strategy is to not let a problem start in the first place.

Being prepared and having a plan will *minimize* likelihood of problems happening.



# Gather information

**Walker logs**

**Behavior boards**

**Kennel signage**

**Communicate with each other**



# Use the correct equipment

**Leash – regular or metal?**

**Harness or leash wrap?**

**Licki mats**



# Have the required tools

**Treats**

**Poop bags**

**Small toy**

**Radio in Holding**





# Follow any specific instructions

Close dogs in  
Bowl Game (more later . . . )  
Use (or don't use) licki mat  
Deliver treats on ground  
No play yard  
Long line in play yard





# Stay aware

**Watch environment**

**Watch dog body language**

**Two second rule**



# Reinforce behaviors you like

**Catch the dog being right**

**Don't wait for a problem to start**

**Keep a high rate of reinforcement**

**Food and toys work better and faster than praise and petting**



# Helpful Exercises

- CLICK FOR CALM
- ENTERING/EXITING KENNEL: <https://youtu.be/dZYsx4qeH7U>
- BOWL GAME: <https://youtu.be/AuZ0xwv6ZQI>
- FIND IT
- 1,2,3
- UP/DOWN
- TWO STEP

# What Do We Do When the Problem Starts?

No great options

Calmly interrupt if necessary (the behavior is dangerous, destructive, self-rewarding, etc.)

Removing reinforcement is enough

Change the environment

Lower criteria for reinforcement

Increase rate of reinforcement and/or value of reward

Behavioral momentum: Ask for a highly likely behavior (a favorite trick, etc.) before continuing

**JUST THROW FOOD!!**

Ask for help/stop the walk

# Be Self Aware

**How are you using your body language?**

**Are you talking too much?**

**Are you rushing?**

**Are you making assumptions?**

**Physical limitations?**

**Current environment**

**Current stress level**

**Personal triggers and biases**

# If You Feel Unsafe

**Call for help**

**Be specific – where you are, what is happening (“Loose Dog on Back Trail”)**

**Stay calm. Breathe!**

**Protect vital areas (neck, abdomen, face)**

**Get away from the dog.**



# If You Witness Someone Needing Help

**Get yourself and your dog to safety**

**Call for help**

**Continue to call**

**Again, be specific – where person is, what is happening**



# Good Mechanics

# Body Positioning

**Always be able to move quickly**

**Don't kneel down**

**Stay on feet**

**Don't get cornered**

**Don't let dog get between you and exit**

**Sideways position**

**Boxer stance**

**Able to shift away quickly**

**Less likely to be knocked down**

**Less threatening to dog**

**Don't put yourself between dog and potential triggers**

# Leash Handling

## Leash Lock Hold

“Thumb through loop”

“Leash around index finger”

“Close hand on leash”

“Second hand on leash”

“Hands at core”



# Leash Handling

**Hands at core**

**Little slack between hands**

**Leash straight down to dog**

**Short leash in tight areas**

**"Accordion hold" on slack**

**Leash on right side of dog**

**Leash caught on leg**

**Quick shortening**

# Emergency Holds

**Straight arm**

**Run leash around something (“back tie”)**

**”Feed” item to dog**

**Get something between you and dog**



# Things to keep in mind

Sometimes we do everything right, and it still goes wrong.

There isn't one "magic" technique.

Being realistic about your physical limitations, your experience level, and your comfort level is important.

This often isn't the same as walking your family pet at home.

# Questions?

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**Resource: Michael Shikashio and Trish McMillan “Safety and Defensive Handling with Aggressive Dogs” webinar available on ASPCA website**

# Upcoming Sessions:

**Requests?**