



Canine Body Language 101: Volunteer Information Session

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Tips On Reading Body Language

- ▶ Read the dog's entire body.
- ▶ Body language is fluid, not static.
 - ▶ Watch what dog is doing.
 - ▶ Watch for overall impression what is being communicated.
 - ▶ Easy to misinterpret still pictures.
- ▶ "Tails Lie"
 - ▶ Wagging tail = arousal (positive or negative)
 - ▶ Look at tail carriage (high vs low) compared to normal for that individual/breed type
 - ▶ Look at rest of the body



Happy Dogs

What We Want To See: Relaxed and Happy

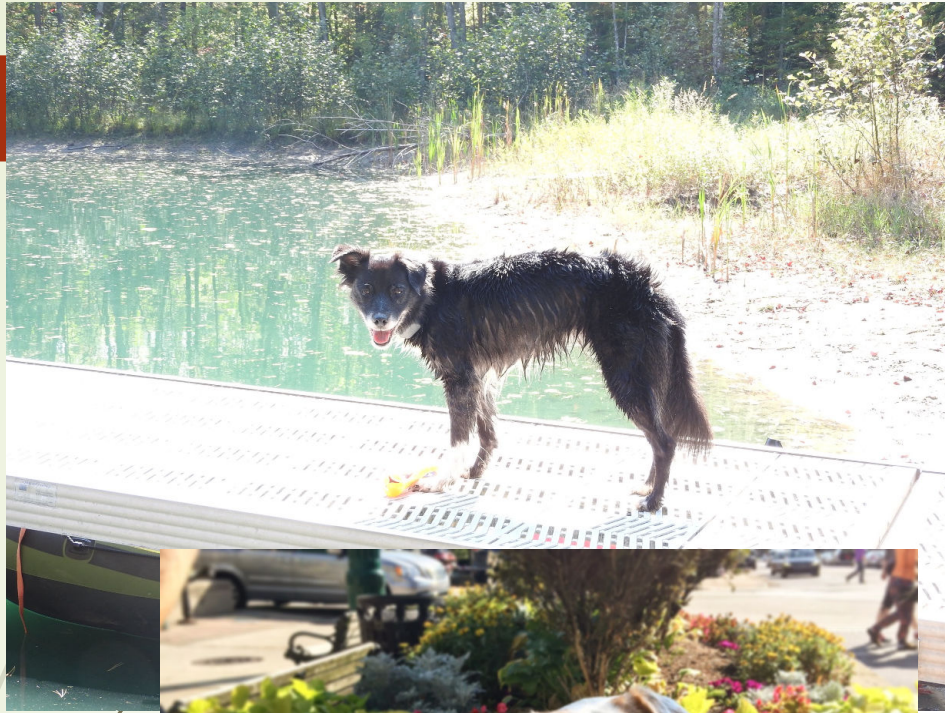
Eyes relaxed and
oval-shaped


Muscles free of tension



Ears forward and natural

Mouth open and loose




A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a solid red arrow pointing to the right, positioned horizontally. Behind the arrow and extending upwards and to the right are several thin, dark, curved lines that resemble stylized grass or abstract brushstrokes.

The Four “F’s” of Fear



Beyond Fight or Flight: The Four “F”s of Fear

- Fight
 - Flight
 - Freeze
 - Fidget
- 



Physiologic Response

- ▶ Sympathetic nervous system activates, causing:
 - ▶ Increase respiratory rate
 - ▶ Increase heart rate
 - ▶ Pupils dilate, eyes widen
 - ▶ Piloerection
 - ▶ Loss of appetite
 - ▶ Possible emptying of bladder/bowel
 - ▶ Sweating (dogs sweat through pads of paws – may see wet footprints)



Fight

- Reactivity, aggression
 - Remember that aggression is fear!
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Tail high

Muscle tension

Weight shifted forward



Ears high, forward

Hard,
direct
stare

Tooth display

Vocalization

Short lips, forward commissure, "agonistic pucker"





Flight

- Moving away, avoidance, escape
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Body Low

Tail down



Ears back

Mouth
closed

Head low

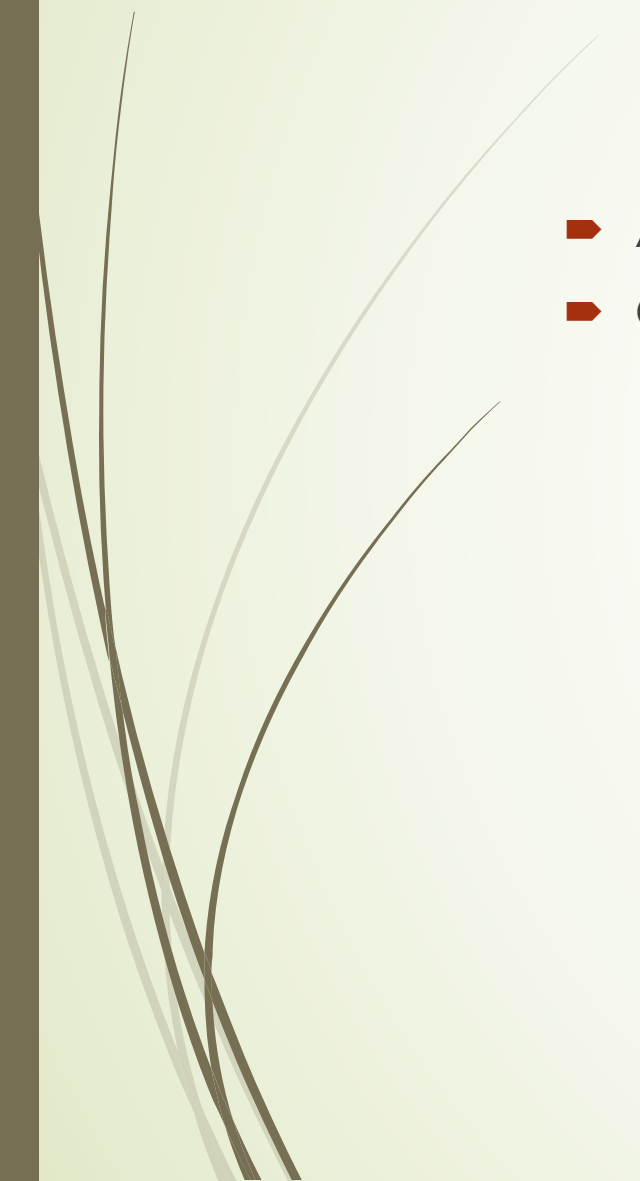
Moving away

Avoiding eye contact





Freeze

- Absence of all behavior, becoming still and rigid
 - Often misinterpreted – dog is “fine” at the vet, groomer, dinner party, etc.
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Ears back

Body still, tense



“Whale eye”: whites of eyes visible, sideways look

Mouth closed

Lowered head, ears

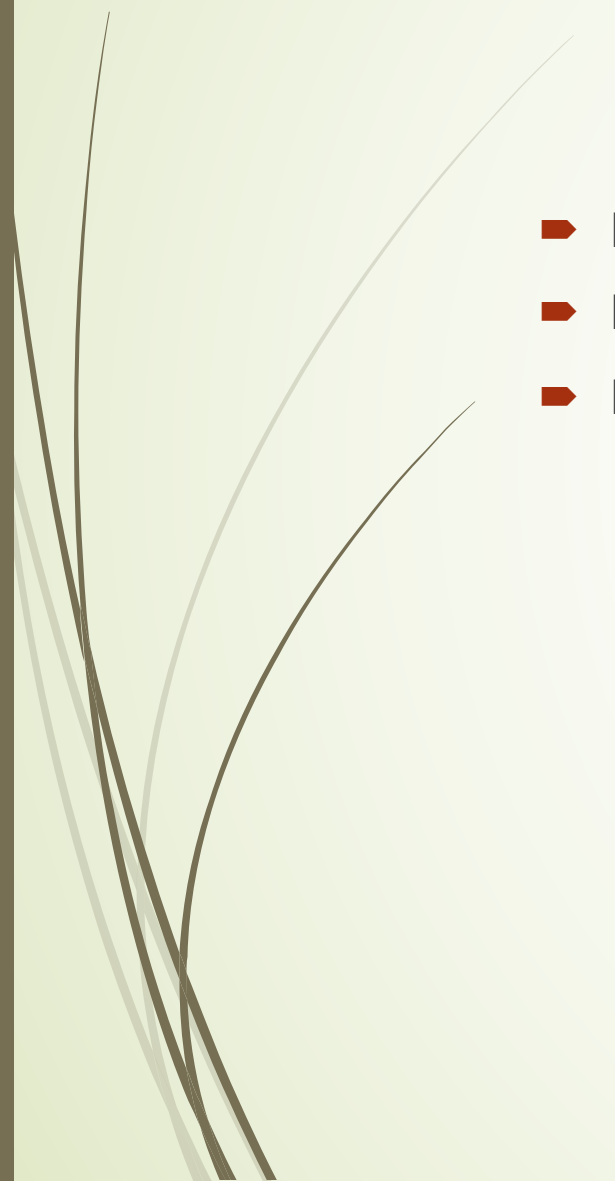


Head turn, eyes averted

Curled, low, still body



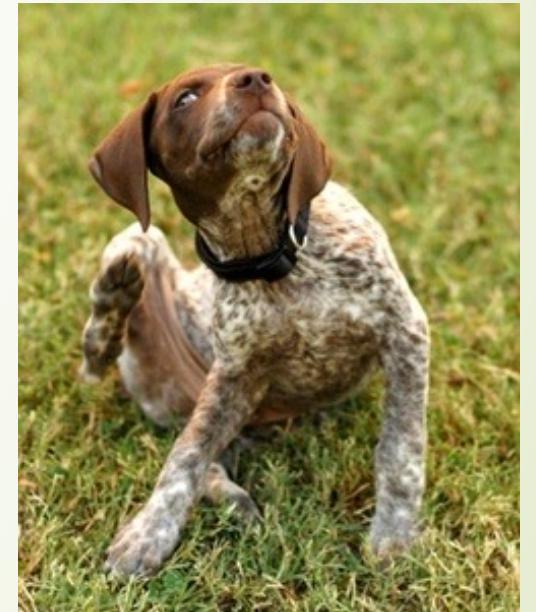
Fidget

- Displacement Behavior: Normal behaviors out of context
 - High activity
 - Frantic, desperate, “pushy,” or over the top play/greeting behavior
- 

Common Displacement Behaviors



- Sniffing
- Shaking off
- Yawning
- Scratching
- Digging
- Grooming
- Lip licking
- Looking away
- Mounting
- Mouthing/chewing
- Hypersociability





Stereotypic Behavior

- Pacing
- Circling
- Tail Chasing
- Vocalizing
- Wall-surfing: <https://youtu.be/zQi9iljl3Eg>
- Light chasing
- Wall licking: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/LEzagnHRKMAoErnq7>
- Self-grooming/mutilation

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a solid red arrow pointing to the right, positioned horizontally. Behind the arrow and extending upwards and to the right are several thin, dark grey curved lines that sweep across the frame.

Let's Practice!!



Group Exercise



- Divide into small groups
- Find a picture of a dog (I'm guessing you all have plenty on your phones!)
- As a group, discuss what you see:
 - What are eyes doing? Ears? Tail? Body? Etc.
- What do you guess this dog is communicating?
- Send me the picture (angela@harmonyk9.com) so I can put it on the screen, and we will then discuss them as a group.