



## **Fetching Facts & Noseworthy Notes**    **March 2015**

**Contact Us:**  
**Melissa@htdogtraining.com**  
**www.htdogtraining.com**  
**616-698-2237**

### **Upcoming Classes**

Spring 2015

Puppy Class:  
Wednesday May 6 – June 10

Doggy Manners:  
Wednesday May 6 – June 10  
Saturday May 9 – June 20\*

Advanced Manners:  
Saturday May 9 – June 20\*  
Monday June 15 – July 20\*

Tails on the Trails:  
Tuesday June 9 – 30\*

*\*Outdoor class!*

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 Check out our blog:  
[www.htdogtraining.com](http://www.htdogtraining.com)

### ***Happy Clients!***



## **Dog/Dog Reactivity on Leash: Scout's Story**

*A new feature of the newsletter!! A quarterly article about an actual case and how the issues were addressed and resolved.*

Last fall I was contacted about an adolescent Saint Bernard, Scout. She was fearful of dogs and people while on a leash walk or outside in her driveway. Developing fear toward unfamiliar circumstances is not uncommon for adolescent dogs. Scout's owner sought help as soon as she noticed these changes, a very wise decision. Dogs do not "outgrow" these problems. Using a proper behavior modification will improve the dog's emotional response and address the underlying fear.

On leash walks, Scout reacted to unfamiliar dogs and people with barking, growling and lunging. Her goal was to exhibit behaviors that would create distance from the "scary thing." Since most people and other dogs tend to walk away from a dog barking and growling, these behaviors were working for her.

The goal for Scout's owner was to eliminate these behaviors, as Scout is a large dog and can be intimidating due to her size. Also, she wanted Scout to be a friendly dog both at home and on walks. In addition, she wanted Scout to enjoy her walks and feel safe at her home.

With young dogs like Scout, it is important to start with some basics. The first task was to establish better focus from Scout with her owner. Without focus, the behavior modification for the barking, lunging and growling would not be effective. We taught Scout to make eye contact with her owner on cue; first in calm situations and then with increasingly challenging distractions.

Food rewards were used to motivate and reinforce Scout. Using high value food rewards motivates a dog to focus on her handler rather than the other exciting distractions. In addition, the food rewarded Scout for her calm, focused behavior. We needed Scout to establish the connection between calm, focused behavior and

high value treats. This provided the foundation to work Scout around the distractions that caused her to react.

The next step for Scout was introducing her to controlled situations with a relaxed unfamiliar dog and person.

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## Q'S VIEWS



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@Quincy Joe Simpson

Some dogs are afraid of other dogs and people. Others – like me! – love other dogs and people. Since I was a baby puppy, I have been taught to control my responses to exciting situations. I do not bark or pull on my leash because I was taught to ignore exciting things and only say Hi when given permission.

However, some dogs are not taught these skills. If I had not been taught otherwise, I would pull on my leash and bark with excitement when I see other dogs. It is so hard to control an emotional response!! Just like fear, over-excitement is an emotional response. And it is not acceptable – manners are a must!

It is important for ALL dogs to be confident, comfortable and relaxed when meeting others. Whether it is fear or over-exuberance, learning a proper emotional response is a key to success. So if your dog does not behave well when meeting others, there are ways to make him better!

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*(continued from Page 1 – Scout's Story)*

Because Scout was afraid, we needed to provide her an experience where she was comfortable and did not feel fear. To be successful, the distraction needed to be a calm dog (and handler) placed at a distance far enough away Scout did not feel threatened, but close enough she was aware of their presence. The job of the distraction dog and handler is to adjust the amount of movement, the distance from the client dog, and the direction they approach as needed throughout the sessions.

I worked with Scout for four outdoor sessions approximately two weeks apart. Each session, the distraction dog was closer in proximity and increased his activity level. We worked at Scout's pace; watching her closely for feedback for signs of stress or discomfort. It was absolutely crucial not to push her too quickly; or instead of eliminating her fear we would have made it worse. In addition, Scout's owner practiced daily between sessions.

At session one the distraction dog was in a sit or down stay, across the street while Scout walked by. Scout did not react and received high value food rewards for her good behavior. Session two, the distraction dog remained across the street but stood up and walked parallel with Scout. Because Scout remained calm and focused on her owner, we were able to gradually increase the difficulty at each session. By our fourth session, Scout was able to both pass by the distraction dog while on the same side of the street AND walk calmly side by side with the distraction dog.

Scout is now able to calmly and happily go on walks. Occasionally, a very rambunctious dog may startle her, but her owner knows what to do and Scout recovers very quickly. Scout and her owner continue to work each day on their walks. Scout's improved responses need to be continuously reinforced as she matures to ensure the long term success of her training program. As the saying goes, Use it or lose it! And that is true for ALL your dog's skills!

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## KIRB'S BLURB



Finding a calm "distraction dog" and experienced handler is often the most challenging part of being able to help a dog like Scout. Lucky for my Momma, I am excellent at working these cases. Best of all, she has one of my favorite people as my handler. That way, I am calm, confident and comfortable in all situations.

My job as distraction dog is to be as still or as active as needed to help my fellow canine. Since I used to be a reactive dog myself, it is great I can now help other dogs find peace, confidence and be relaxed. When I am at work, I have to do exactly as my handler tells me to; stay, walk close, and focus. I cannot say hi to the other dog until he is ready to meet me in a calm manner. Of course, the number of times we work varies by dog. Helping other dogs change their emotions takes time!