



Socialization

One of the top reason I get calls for private training is “aggressive” behavior. The reason I put the word in quotation marks is because this is typically the term owners use. When getting to specifics, typically I learn the behavior has actually become anxious. Anxious dogs often react defensively. Examples include charging, lunging, barking, and snapping.

More and more dogs are experiencing social anxiety in my experience. The reason for this is they are simply under-socialized. These dogs are losing, or have lost, their social skills. They have lost self-confidence. Most owners who have experiences like this assume they have an unfriendly, and so avoid society. Many times as the problem progresses, owners give up on taking the dog out of their own yard. We think it’s socially responsible to keep an unfriendly dog locked up when it actually exacerbates the issue. How many stories have you heard of a dog jumping a fence to attack another dog, or a child mauled by a chained dog?

Think how you feel when you’re stuck in the house. After just a few days, you’re itching to get out. Now imagine that you have that you and a friend have a party to go to, but you haven’t been to one in a year. Most likely you would be excited, but at least a little nervous as well. And the longer time passes between social engagements, the more anxious you will be, right? It’s the same for dogs. Social skills take practice.

The ONLY way to re-socialize a dog is to provide positive social experiences for her. It’s critical to contact an experienced trainer and/or behaviorist to work with any anxious behavior. A dog that hasn’t been out of his own yard for two years, can’t just be thrown into a dog park to play. A professional will help determine the severity of the anxiety, address safety issues and provide an appropriate positive-reinforcement training program.