



## Who's Scaring Spot?

When dogs enter adolescence, it is common to say that they act like teenagers. They can become a little more stubborn and sometimes a little defiant. But what is very common is being unsure of new people or situations.

You may notice that your dog starts barking during your walks or is unsure of people entering your house. But don't worry, there is hope. The key is socialization, exposing your dog to a variety of people. Socialization leads to confident, happy dogs. If you notice a change in your dog's behavior when interacting with new people, here are a few tips for you.

*Never punish your dog for being frightened.* Being nervous or frightened can be a common behavior with many dogs. It is important to help your dog, through positive reinforcement or redirection.

*Act happy when your dog is frightened.* Dogs sense when you are scared or nervous about a situation or person and respond accordingly. If your dog begins to bark after seeing someone, respond like it is no big deal. "Are you barking at him? You are such a silly dog". You want to change your dog's attitude from fearful to playful.

*Redirect your dog.* Dogs learn by repetition. If they learn that it is OK to bark at a person, they will continue that behavior. If possible, remove him from the situation, or have him do some sits or downs, using your "happy voice".

*Use treats when meeting new people.* If you know your dog tends to be shy with people, have the new person offer him/her a treat. This tells the dog people are great, they give you yummy snacks. Make sure to let the dog approach on his/her own. Never pull the dog into the new person; he may feel that he has no other choice but to bite them to keep them away from him.

*Don't be afraid to tell people that your dog is shy.* Often people see dogs and immediately try to pet them. This can be a bit scary for a dog. Think about it, how would you react if someone you don't know ran up to you and gave you a hug? Dogs react the same way.

*Have your dog join you for some coffee.* Exposing your dog to various people and children is extremely beneficial. Coffee houses or juice bars with a patio usually allow dogs to hang out with their owners. Make sure to bring lots of tasty treats with you or a favorite toy. If someone wants to pet your dog, you can say, "Sure, but she is a bit shy. So you can squat down to her level, hold out your hand with a treat and let her come to you".

Remember dogs do not "out grow" fears. If left ignored, they can become worse overtime. It is important to work with your dog to ensure a happy, confident companion.