



Scaredy Dog: Understanding and Rehabilitating Your Reactive Dog

Ali Brown

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Dogs that growl at other dogs, lunge at people and bark at everything are often labeled "aggressive." Such fear-based behavior is more appropriately called "reactivity" and these dogs can be helped with the exercises in this book. Well-illustrated with photos.

Scaredy Dog: Understanding and Rehabilitating Your Reactive Dog Details

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Matthildur says

I gave it 5 stars even if I didn't agree with the "holistic" chapter. No need to mark it down when I enjoyed most of it.

This book is pretty human in its approach. Owning a reactive/fearful dog is very humiliating experience and this book is both helpful in offering a method to work through it but also encouragement to not lose hope even if things don't always progress along as a dog owner might want to. It also does a good job explaining why the dog behaves the way it does.

I got a few new tools I'll take with me on my own personal journey. Through the counter conditioning methods modern trainers are employing to tackle reactivity I have seen progress with my own dog. I must say that I was grateful to read the author of this one reminding owners not to focus on WHY the dog is like it is but rather focus on HOW we can help them. It's so easy to get stuck wondering what went wrong and forgetting that whatever it was, it's too late to change it and the solution will always be the same.

I'm glad I picked this one up :)

Cicada says

This is a great book to handle a reactive dog, it's also very good at recognising your dog's body language and what to do to calm him. My dog is only a puppy but is finding EVERYTHING scary! This has helped me understand his stress levels (and what to do) and also help me calm him down in "scary situations" (I.e. when we're outside) as well as make our walks a more "positive experience".

I am a bit skeptical about the homeopathic food stuff and doggy-drugs. The latter; I feel it is just covering a symptom and not the actual problem. I would also say that this book is helpful if you have a dog that lunges, barks, or is aggressive towards dogs, cats, people, etc. not so much for my situation where my pup is just frightened of the outside world.

Lois Brandt says

Some very helpful advice here for those of us with dogs who are frightened of/reactive to other dogs and strangers. "Stuff the puppy" has become our family motto and has worked well. Small training tips, like how to take your dog out the door for a walk without being run over, were easy to follow. I enjoyed her gentle understanding of dogs and also the idea of giving a dog a break and not pushing too hard. If you have a reactive dog, this book will help you.

Clare says

Having had a scare with my dog and a child she had bitten, there was obviously a very strong need for me to read more about why my dog has what has always previously been referred to as 'fear aggression', and for me to try and train her out of her aggressive behaviours. She was attacked as a pup by a man in the park, and had grown more and more afraid of anyone she didn't know and other dogs she didn't know, ever since. This book described my dog perfectly (i.e. she has a piranha bite, reacts to everything, is hyperactive/hyper responsive to any stimulus, barks at strangers, lunges, and yes she has bitten a few times). Imagine my relief to realise that a) these are researched and understood behaviours in dogs and there are good reasons why they behave this way and b) there are very simple and practical ways for me to 'train' those behaviours out of my dog. More importantly, the training methods offered in this book by the author are ALL positive, kind, solid and good methods. The book also explains why the training methods employed by the likes of Cesar Milan et al (she doesn't name him - she doesn't have to) are so damaging and potentially lethal to both dogs and people (and to our relationship with our dogs). Furthermore, this book explains why the half-arsed and old-fashioned training methods to stop dogs lunging, barking, etc. that I had picked up along the way were actually having the reverse effect to the one I wanted - I have been teaching her to bark more and react more all along, by shouting and becoming stressed myself. I had probably also inadvertently been transferring my own nervousness back onto my dog. Stupid, stupid. Now I know to remain calm, firm, walk my dog away from a potentially bad situation (or minimise a bad situation by removing ourselves quickly and calmly), reward her when she's calm and ONLY when she's calm when other people are about, and so on. I'm still reading the book, after first skim reading it, and now writing up notes as I work with my dog using all of the author's training directions. My dog is definitely calmer and quieter already, and we are both more confident. We seem to have a better bond now, too; my dog seems to know that I fully understand her behaviour problems now. I know I'm becoming a much better dog owner as a result of reading this book. 10/10 to Ali Brown, the author of 'Scaredy Dog', who clearly understands reactive dogs inside out, and has written such an easy to read and easy to follow book. This book comes highly recommended by me.

Laurie Davies says

Great book

Wonderful ideas in dog training for reactive dogs, also in positive training. Really great information on the selection of dog food, the ingredients and the role it can play on the dogs mood changes and interactions with other dogs and people

Robin says

I enjoyed Ali Brown's book but I must admit that compared to others I've read in the last two or three years, it was thin on the ground in terms of either new materials or research to back up her reasoning, nor was it nearly as well organized as some other similar books on the same themes.

Brown, like people like Rugaas, Donaldson, McConnell and Pryor is obviously a trainer with both personal experience as a trainer, and a human who loves the dogs who share her life. Unlike the others I've listed here, however, she is not as systematic in how she lays out her training recommendations and methods as Donaldson - who is particularly exceptional in her approach, or even as Rugaas who struggles with the English language. Nor does Brown, despite being well-educated, document sources that would provide credibility to her assertions, which both McConnell and Pryor do while maintaining a pleasing and

accessible a narrative-type tone as Brown is aiming for.

The one thing that stands out for me, and it is not a matter of the book per se - because all of the authors touch on the needs for patience, repetition, repetition and more repetition and the singular needs of the fear reactive dog - but rather of Brown's training practice, and I would hope that other trainers would take note, is that she offers a class, a **small** class tailored and designed particularly to the needs of reactive dogs and their humans, to helping them develop partnered skills that will minimize the reactive behaviours but also to understand that a reactive dog will always be, to some extent, more reactive and sensitive than non-reactive dogs, but no less capable of being a valued, loved and loving companion.

Barbara says

Very good ideas to help with my rescue dog.

Lee Tyner says

Meh. It had a few good pointers but they were surrounded by redundant examples and psycho babble.

Amy says

i see my dog and multiple dogs i've known in these pages. good, clear instructions for helping a reactive dog.

Karen E. Miller says

Thank you, Ali

An excellent book for people whose dogs don't behave like we want them to. I have spent a fortune on dog trainers who never told me my dog was "reactive" and couldn't explain why he went nuts when my doorbell rang, someone walked by the house or he saw a person when we were out walking. He got so excited (happy) and could not contain himself, trying to jump up on everyone he met. I got to where I couldn't have anyone come in my house. Then I got a puppy, who misinterpreted his excitement and quickly became a fear biter. I made an appointment with a certified Veterinary behaviorist, but the earliest appointment was 6 months out. I got this book, immediately started some of the exercises and noticed a huge difference in the younger dog. I did not realize that he was totally stressed out. I still won't let a stranger pet him but he now sits patiently at my side when we stop to talk to someone. The older dog is still very excitable and I am now working on him. This book has been a Godsend!

Leslie D. Soule says

This is one that the dog behaviorist suggested to me a while back. It's excellent reading material, and has good information.

Sean says

Has some good ideas, but could be better organized and more systematic. Still worth reading for any dog owner no matter how experienced. But time and training will tell if her methods work for our dogs and I.

Johanna says

Probably one of the best, if not the best, books I have read on reactivity and aggression. This book is very comprehensive and looks at all of the surrounding aspects involved in proper management and rehabilitation of fearful / reactive / aggressive dogs, including:

- natural dog behavior and body language
- how things like health and nutrition can affect behavior
- the chemical and hormonal components of stress and how it affects learning
- discussion of differing training methodologies (rewards-based vs punishment-based, including quadrants (but don't worry, it's all explained in a beautifully simple way so that anyone can understand) FOR THOSE WONDERING - this book is based on scientifically proven rewards-based training principles, NOT oldschool choke and prong, etc.)
- management techniques for keeping everyone (including the dog) safe
- calming techniques (massage, DAP, etc.)
- training strategies to help your dog overcome their reactivity

Given the title, I was a little hesitant to purchase this book because I felt it would be mostly focused towards shy/fearful dogs, rather than fear-aggressive dogs (like mine), but I'm so glad I gave it a chance. All of the suggestions in the book translate beautifully to dogs in both camps, whether shy/fearful or full-out aggressive. While I felt there could have been *more* in the book on actual training, it does provide you with the information you need to get started on a plan for rehab training, with pictures and some basic strategies. I'm hoping to pick up a copy of Brown's other book, *Focus, Not Fear* for more in this area.

Overall, this is the most encompassing book I've read so far on helping reactive dogs, and is perfect for those who are struggling with their dog's issues and don't know what to do- Brown really takes readers by the hand, reassures them, and lays the groundwork for effective rehabilitation. I wish I had picked up a copy of this book years ago when my girl first started showing signs of aggression- oh the humiliation, tears, and aggravation we could have avoided! Still, after several books and years of research, I learned some great new ideas and information. If you own a reactive/aggressive/fearful dog, this should be the first book you get IMO. I also highly recommend Grisha Stewart's *Behavior Adjustment Training* for in-depth training strategies, as well as Pam Dennison's *Bringing Light To Shadow*, which was extremely helpful for me in understanding clearly what an effective rehab program / strategy looks like for a human-aggressive dog. Other very worthwhile books include *Click To Calm* by Emma Parsons, *Control Unleashed* by Leslie McDevitt, *Fired Up, Frantic, and Freaked Out* by Laura VanArendonk Baugh, *How To Right A Dog Gone Wrong* as well as *The Complete Idiot's Guide To Positive Dog Training* both by Pam Dennison, *Fight!: A Practical Guide to the Treatment of Dog-dog Aggression* by Jean Donaldson, and *The Dog Aggression*

Workbook by James O'Heare.
