

PROTOCOL FOR UNDERSTANDING, MANAGING, AND TREATING DOGS WITH IMPULSE CONTROL AGGRESSION

Anxiety and Aggression

The most common behavioral problems for dogs involve anxiety. Among the common anxiety disorders are those associated with aggression, including fear aggression, and the diagnosis discussed here, impulse control aggression. This condition was previously known as “dominance aggression,” and the name of the diagnosis is still debated, although the condition and its recognition are not.

Dogs who are fearfully aggressive use distance-increasing strategies as their first choice to deal with humans and other animals whom they fear, and these dogs signal from long distances their fear through facial and body signals and vocalizations. Fearfully aggressive dogs continue to withdraw while threatening as long as is possible, and are only aggressive when they have no other choices, or when the opportunity to “chase” those they fear by nipping from behind.

Dogs with impulse control aggression do not withdraw from social situations involving humans, and instead seek them out and approach, *decreasing* the distance between themselves and the human focus of their concern. Dogs with impulse control aggression appear compelled to monitor such interactions. Paradoxically, rather than providing them with more information that could calm them, such interactions usually increase the anxiety of dogs with impulse control aggression. Impulse control aggression is best defined as abnormal, inappropriate, out-of-context aggression (threat, challenge, or attack) consistently exhibited by dogs toward people under any circumstance involving passive or active control of the dog’s behavior or the dog’s access to the behavior. Any intensification of any aggressive response from the dog upon any passive or active correction or interruption of the dog’s behavior or the dog’s access to the behavior confirms the diagnosis.

In summary, fearfully aggressive dogs back away from situations that those with impulse control aggression would approach. Fearfully aggressive dogs respond aggressively and out of context to behaviors initiated by those they fear, but dogs with impulse control aggression initiate the interactions, themselves, in situations where they may not have even been the focus of the human involved, and which are inappropriate given the human’s behaviors.

The Diagnostic Label

“Impulse control aggression” has variously been called “dominance aggression,” “impulsive aggression,” and “conflict aggression.” Here, we have chosen the label of “impulse control aggression” because it is the most informative. Some of the concerns about the other labels are that all aggressions can appear “impulsive,” external “conflict” is at the heart of all aggressions, and internal “conflict” is rooted in anxiety and uncertainty, making these labels less clear and informative. There are at least two broad forms of this condition: a truly impulsive one, and one that can become seemingly impulsive when attempts by the dog to address his own anxiety by controlling people’s actions fail.

The label of “dominance aggression” allowed relatively easy recognition of the set of dogs who shared this diagnosis,

but the concept of “dominance” as applied to pet dogs is flawed and it has encouraged techniques that are dangerous to owners and dogs, alike, and unfair and often abusive to dogs. For more information on this issue see the **Protocol for Generalized Discharge Instructions for Dogs with Behavioral Concerns**, the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior’s (AVSAB) Dominance Position Statement (www.avsonline.org/avsabonline/images/stories/Position_Statements/dominance%20statement.pdf) and the Dog Welfare Campaign Position Statement (www.dogwelfarecampaign.org/why-not-dominance.php).

What This Condition Involves

In some areas of the world, the relative frequency of impulse control aggression has been greatly decreased because at least one form of it has a clearly heritable basis. Not breeding dogs in affected family lines has decreased the frequency of the condition for some families/breeds.

Any dog who is aggressive for any reason can be potentially dangerous to humans. Dogs with impulse control aggression can be particularly dangerous because their problem is rooted in a struggle with people over control of all aspects of the social environment. **This struggle is not because most of these dogs are mean and malicious.** Instead, they struggle and provoke people because this is the only way they can get information from and about the social environment and interactions. Dogs with any form of this diagnosis are unable to sit back and take the cues about the appropriateness of their behavior from the contextual environment. They also are unable to distance themselves from people about whom they are unreasonably concerned. Most of these dogs’ people have not done anything malicious to them, are not deliberately provoking the dog, and are usually not even aware that their behaviors may be provocative to any dog. Some of the behaviors to which the dogs are most reactive are behaviors that are similar to those seen in rough play or social challenges with other dogs (e.g., reaching over the dog’s neck or back, standing over the dog), but affected dogs are usually good with other dogs, and no correlation has been shown between this diagnosis and those pertaining to other animals.

Because the pattern of the dog’s reactivity may depend on that dog’s relationship with individual people *plus* his threshold for reactivity at that time, people may view these dogs as “unpredictable.” Once people understand the pattern of the dog’s behaviors, these dogs no longer seem “unpredictable.”

By definition, impulse control aggression is a manifestation of *inappropriate, out-of-context responses to specific situations related to, or access to, control*. These dogs are very different from those who are pushy or assertive. Pushy and assertive dogs are usually confident and do a good job of reading contextual cues. Many people prefer pushy, assertive dogs because they work well in competitive obedience and trial situations, and because some people feel that these dogs are “personality plus.” Being pushy or assertive does not mean that the dog has impulse control aggression.

Dogs with impulse control aggression have a focus on control that is *abnormal* and out of context. A normal and

confident dog might stand in your way by the door because he wants attention or because he wants to go with you. If you do not give him attention or take him with you, he is disappointed but accepting. A dog with impulse control aggression stands in your way at the door because he is anxious and realizes that doors can signal changes in social contexts or interactions, and he must monitor all potential changes. When he is uncertain about whether the change will affect him, he provokes the situation—by stiffening and blocking you, by grabbing you—in an attempt to get information. Part of the pathology often involves a further misunderstanding of the response received.

Because dogs with impulse control aggression have problems with all forms of social control—even forms that their people do not intend, like reaching over them or petting them—it is imperative that you do the best job possible in recognizing and aborting even subtle behaviors associated with the dog's inappropriate responses, no matter how irrational these responses seem. These dogs cannot just sit back and get information from observing the patterns in the social context because they have a problem and are abnormal. These dogs function by provoking or deforming the social environment, getting information from the response to their behaviors, and moving forward event by event. Clients are often concerned that this makes no sense. If the dog's response made sense, given the context, the dog would be normal, and not have a behavioral problem. By definition, then, these dogs behave bizarrely under circumstances that would not provoke an ordinary, "normal" dog.

There are at least two broad forms of impulse control aggression: (a) a truly impulsive one, and (b) one that can become seemingly impulsive when attempts by the dog to address his own anxiety by controlling people's actions fails.

The Second Group of Impulsive Dogs

- Dogs in the second and more common group of dogs with impulse aggression use behavioral challenges to deform the social environment and get information about risk. Most dogs ask questions through observations and solicitous behaviors—these dogs are impaired in those abilities. Dogs with impulse control aggression can be particularly dangerous because their problem is rooted in a struggle with people over control of all aspects of the social environment. **This struggle is not because most of these dogs are mean and malicious.** Instead, they struggle and provoke people *because this is the only way they can get information from and about the social environment and interactions.*
 - Dogs with any form of this diagnosis are unable to sit back and take the cues about the appropriateness of their behavior from the contextual environment. Here, dogs use provocative behaviors to get information.
 - They also are unable to distance themselves from people about whom they are unreasonably concerned.
 - Most of these dogs' people have not done anything malicious to them, are not deliberately provoking the dogs, and are usually not even aware that their behaviors may be provocative to any dog.
 - Some of the behaviors to which the dogs are most reactive are behaviors that are similar to those seen in rough play or social challenges with other dogs (e.g., reaching over the dog's neck or back, standing over the dog), but

affected dogs are usually good with other dogs, and no correlation has been shown between this diagnosis and those pertaining to other animals.

- Because the pattern of the dog's reactivity may depend on that dog's relationship with individual people *plus* his threshold for reactivity at that time, people may view these dogs as "unpredictable." Once people understand the pattern of the dog's behaviors, these dogs no longer seem "unpredictable."
- These dogs are so uncertain of their relationships with humans that every time the human exhibits a behavior that *might* be construed to be a "challenge" or "threat," the dog pushes back to learn:
 - whether the human is a threat,
 - which human behaviors are offered in response to the dog's "threat," and
 - whether the human's response depends on context.
- Accordingly, dogs with this form of aggression may victimize only certain groups of people.
- Dogs with impulse control aggression have a focus on control that is *abnormal* and *out of context*. A normal and confident dog might stand in your way by the door because he wants attention or because he wants to go with you. If you do not give him attention or take him with you, he is disappointed but accepting. A dog with impulse control aggression stands in your way at the door because he is anxious and realizes that doors can signal changes in social contexts or interactions, and he must monitor all potential changes. When he is uncertain about whether the change will affect him, he provokes the situation—by stiffening and blocking you, by grabbing you—in an attempt to get information. Part of the pathology often involves a further misunderstanding of the response received.

The First Group of Impulsive Dogs—Truly Impulsive Dogs

- Truly impulsive dogs are always anxious and always uncertain. Depending on the other stimuli contributing to their arousal they may be more or less likely to react at different times.
- Dogs who are truly impulsive (the first group) may also use the rule structure above, but the extent to which they react may depend on their overall response to all stimuli at that time, rather than on a specific behavior that caused them to react. In other words, there is an internal aspect of heightened arousal and reactivity that may be independent of the social environment.
- The dogs in this group of truly impulsive dogs seem more unpredictable than the dogs in the second group (although the same stimuli provoke them) because at times they are better able to control their impulsivity.
- If clients pay attention to these dogs they realize that they are never fully relaxed and always anxious, even if they are attempting to seek interactions with humans which are usually viewed as calming (e.g., petting).
- These dogs act as if they are always trying to control their reactivity and to find some way to not react. When they are unable to do so we see the impulsive, aggressive explosions.

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situations related to, or access to, control. These dogs are very different from those who are pushy or assertive. Pushy and assertive dogs are usually confident and do a good job of reading contextual cues. Many people prefer pushy, assertive dogs because they work well in competitive obedience and trial situations, and because some people feel that these dogs are “personality plus.” Being pushy or assertive does not mean that the dog has impulse control aggression.

This is a very discrete definition of impulse control aggression and has the advantage of not coupling the challenge to food (food-related aggression), toys (possessive aggression), or space (territorial aggression). These aggressions can all be correlates of impulse control aggression and when associated with it, may be indicative of a more severe situation. The keys here are control and access. Most of the problems with diagnosing the condition arise from the human’s misunderstanding of canine social systems, canine signaling, and canine anxieties associated with endogenous uncertainty about contextually appropriate responses.

This diagnosis cannot be made on the basis of a onetime event. The behavior, once it begins, will become more visible and consistent, but data on early signs, patterns of change with experience, and changes in intensity are lacking.

Some of these dogs, especially those in the second group, only victimize very forceful humans, because by “disciplining” the dog verbally or physically the human has convinced the dog that the human is a threat. In contrast, some of these dogs only victimize uncertain people or those who are less certain with or more worried about the dog. In this case, the dog continues to provoke these people because their uncertainty makes it hard for the dog to clearly understand the rules for the interaction, and they push further to get clearer information about how they are to interact with these people.

Patterns of Behavior for Dogs with Impulse Control Aggression

If we understand that abnormal aggression is an anxiety disorder, we can use the dog’s patterns of aggressive responses to help us treat them. The patterns of problematic behaviors that these dogs use are actually a rule structure that the dog is using to deal with his world.

Normal dogs also use rule structures and we recognize these based on patterns of behavior (e.g., you pick up your car keys and the dog sits by the door; you get a food toy, the dog goes to his crate; you pick up a food dish, the dog sits and waits for it to be placed in front of him; you pick up the dog’s leash and he barks and jumps around). *For dogs with behavioral diagnoses the rule structures, themselves, are pathological.* Because of this, the rule structure may be hurting the dog (e.g., he mutilates himself as part of his obsessive-compulsive disorder or when panicking and trying to escape from a storm). Pathological rule structures do not make the dog’s world or his interactions in it any easier to negotiate.

The behaviors affected dogs use represent a rule structure that has basically gone wrong. The dog tries to use a set of rules for interaction, but these rules fail to help his anxiety or to make more sense of the situation. Most good and benign rules in normal situations make things clearer and help us all to be

less reactive, but in pathological situations, the “rules” make things less clear and cause the dog to be more reactive.

Because a need for control is such a clear rule, we can treat these dogs by substituting a more benign rule that removes the dog’s need for control by providing him with information about what will happen next and what the expected response should be.

Specific Behaviors That May Cause an Aggressive Response

As part of the scenario involving control, dogs with impulse control aggression dislike any form of passive or active, or social or physical control: being pushed from a sofa or a bed, being stared at (and they may misinterpret benign eye contact as a stare; remember that these dogs are not normal, so they misinterpret otherwise “normal” signals), having their shoulders or back pushed on, reaching over their head (even if this is only to put on a leash), “corrected” verbally or with a leash, et cetera. *Virtually all dogs affected with impulse control aggression will intensify their aggression if physically punished.* This response makes sense: prior to the interaction the dog was not sure if the human was a threat; now, if the dog is physically punished or threatened, the dog is certain that the “threat” of the human is real, and intensified aggression can be his only response.

Many of these dogs are subtle and will cause you to redirect your activities: these dogs will lie in front of doors or furniture so that you avoid those areas. These dogs often lean against or put a paw on you at any opportunity, but you learn not to touch them, because if you do, they become aggressive.

Because these behaviors are also associated with attention-seeking behavior in normal dogs, clients often ask how they can be certain that their “normal” dog is not showing signs of becoming “problematic” by using these behaviors. The key distinction is that the pathological dog is always seeking information, whereas the pesky dog may just be seeking contact and comfort. You can learn to carefully test and evaluate whether the response is appropriate given the specific context. If the dog is leaning against you just to get attention, you should be able to physically move him without the dog becoming aggressive. This may be too risky a test for some dogs who are thought to be severely affected with impulse control aggression, so look for more subtle cues. Dogs who are leaning on you to be close or for attention do not stiffen, open their eyes, and then move so that they are again touching or pressing on you as most dogs with impulse control aggression will. Dogs who are seeking closeness will usually respond to verbal cues to get off or down, and then use solicitous behavior (turning their head on their side, rolling over, whining, wagging their tail, putting their ears loosely back, et cetera) to get you to attend to them. Dogs with impulse control aggression may “talk back,” become stiffer, or become aggressive. Oddly, they seldom growl or vocalize as a precursor to lunging, but may do so as they grab someone. **Caution is urged.**

Victims of Impulse Control Aggression

Not all household members may be equally victimized by these aggressive dogs.

- Young children are often perceived as a threat by some of these dogs because they are at the same eye level as the dog and their “staring” is seen by the dog as a threat.

- The more compliant person in the household may be victimized more frequently than the person who is firm with the dog, because the dog is clear about the intent of the person who is clear about rules for social interactions. The dog needs to push to get the required information to make social decisions, and uncertain people—from the dog's perspective—make the dog's concern worse.
- Conversely, some of these dogs know that they can compliant people are never threats, and so do not challenge them. These dogs challenge the person who is more forceful because they worry that threats could be involved. Impulse control aggression is a highly variable condition.

Can Impulse Control Aggression Be Treated?

It's important to remember that any dog who is aggressive for any reason can be potentially dangerous. The first rule in treating aggressive dogs must be to take all precautions to keep people safe. *These same precautions will also keep the dog safe.* If the treatment employed for these dogs is humane and aimed at addressing their anxiety disorders, the vast majority of these dogs will improve to the extent that few people will even realize that the dog has a problem.

How Important Is Age and Developmental Stage with Impulse Control Aggression?

Impulse control aggression almost always develops at *social maturity* (~18 to 24 months of age; range: 12 to 36 months). This is why your dog seemed perfectly normal as a puppy and then at about 2 years of age seemed to "suddenly" change. Although the majority of dogs who suffer from this form of pathological aggression are male, this condition is not controlled by hormones, although hormones may affect the form the aggression takes and the presence of testosterone may exacerbate the aggression. Testosterone can make a dog more reactive, but does not *per se* cause aggression of any kind. The fact that this aggressive condition occurs most often at social maturity is another hint that you did not "cause" the problem.

Females can also be affected by this condition and when they are affected they are often young (8 months of age or less), suggesting that the mechanism for the aggression may be related to in utero factors, rather than to the social maturity factors that affect most of the patients with this condition.

The key to treating all aggressive dogs, and especially dogs with impulse control aggression, is to avoid all the circumstances in which the dog might be "provoked" to react inappropriately. This means that you have to be a good observer of your dog so that you can avoid anything that the dog thinks is provocative, no matter how foolish this may seem.

For example, if your dog growls whenever you stare at him, do not stare. Think about using his troubled logic: If you stare at the dog you are asking the dog to respond to your challenge (the stare) with a challenge. He has no choice. Whereas if you walk away, you are telling him you are not a threat. You are not "giving in" to the dog; you are avoiding a confusion you know the dog will experience and you are keeping yourself and the dog safe.

As you progress through the behavior modification protocols discussed below you will gradually teach the dog that if he defers to you and looks to you for guidance, he will get attention and information that will help him replace his reactive rules with less-reactive rules. Later you will desensitize the dog to situations in which he responds inappropriately. You cannot do all of this at once. Please do not even try. **Remember that every time a dog has an inappropriate response, three things happen:**

1. The dog reinforces his aggressive response at the level of molecular learning.
2. You reinforce your associations with the experience of the inappropriate behavior simply because it continues to happen.
3. The dog backslides because he is upset by an aggressive event. Most dogs act as if they find the circumstance of their exhibition of aggression traumatic: they realize that something untoward happened, but cannot escape it. *Remember that these dogs are not "disobeying" you; they are behaving this way because they are abnormal and need help.*

The safest strategy in dealing with any aggressive dog, particularly those with this condition, is to **only** give the dog attention when he defers to you. See the **Protocol for Deference**. This is a simple rule that generalizes to every situation in which the dog can ever find himself. This rule will help to enforce the very types of behavior that not only help your dog, but that you desire. *By using this simple rule, the dog learns to look to you for the cues about the appropriateness of his behavior, learns that you are reliable and trustworthy, and learns that he can be less anxious in social systems when there are humane rules.* With time, then, these dogs can lead happy, safe, and humanely interactive lives. We also benefit by becoming more understanding and humane in our behavior toward all dogs.

Tick List of Actions to Take to Treat Impulse Control Aggression

1. Make a list of all of the situations in which your dog reacts. These are the situations you must avoid. The following are some common situations to avoid. You have watched your dog so you should be able to add other situations in which your dog reacts:
 - reaching for or pulling on the dog's collar,
 - pulling on the dog's legs,
 - pushing the dog down,
 - pushing the dog from the sofa or the bed,
 - yelling at the dog or pulling his legs,
 - disturbing the dog while he is sleeping or resting,
 - stepping over or on the dog,
 - pushing back if the dog paws at or jumps on you,
 - playing aggressively with the dog,
 - trying to take a toy from the dog's mouth,
 - allowing the dog on your lap where he can press on your head or shoulders, and
 - physically punishing the dog.
2. Now that you know all the situations in which the dog can react, you need a plan to deal with them. Consider these options:
 - Do not reach for or pull on the dog's collar; instead, ask the dog to come to you and sit, tell him he is good.
 - Do not pull on the dog's legs; instead, ask the dog to sit or lie down, and reward him when he does so.

- Do not push the dog down; instead, turn away and let the dog slide from you, then ask him to sit and tell him he is good.
 - Do not push the dog from the sofa or the bed; instead, move away from the bed/sofa and ask the dog to come off the bed/sofa and out of the room, then close the door.
 - Do not yell at the dog; instead, speak softly and calmly, or not at all. The dog will offer behaviors, reward the good ones.
 - Do not disturb the dog while he is sleeping or resting; instead, talk to the dog to wake him up and when he is fully awake ask him to come to you and sit, and reward him.
 - Do not step over or on the dog; instead, go around the dog or, if you cannot, ask him to get up and come to you, ask him to sit, and tell him he is good.
 - Do not push back if the dog paws at or jumps on you; instead, fold your arms, ignore him, and walk away. If he follows you, ask him to sit, and reward him when he does so.
 - Do not play aggressively with the dog; instead, play by throwing toys or balls and allowing the dog to retrieve them. Throw a new toy every time he brings back the old one.
 - Do not try to take a toy from the dog's mouth; instead, ask the dog to drop the toy, reward him when he does, and offer him another toy so that you do not have to reach in front of him.
 - Do not allow the dog on your lap where he can press on your head or shoulders; instead, ask him to get down. If he doesn't do this, stand up and slowly leave or have someone else call him, and do not let the situation occur in the future.
 - Do not physically punish the dog. You may be angry, but anger will make him worse; walk away until you are both calm, then ask him to sit and reward him when he does.
3. If necessary, walk your dog only on a head collar. All head collars will allow you to control the direction of the dog's body and allow you to more safely control the dog. Depending on the shape of the dog and the type of head collar, some will allow you to close the dog's mouth. Warn your friends and neighbors that head collars are not muzzles. Explain that these will help keep your dog calmer and safer.
 4. Play *only* with toys, not your hands. These dogs, by definition, have trouble with fine contextual distinctions. Help them. Make the difference between your hand and a potential threat and toy and assured play clear. See the **Protocol for Choosing Toys for Your Pet** for some guidance.
 5. Do not let your dog sleep on your bed if you cannot ask him to get off and have him comply. Do not allow your dog to sleep in your bed if he becomes aggressive when you bump into him while you are asleep. For some dogs, this means that you may not even be able to let the dog sleep in the bedroom. This minimizes the potential for an inadvertent threat when you are sleepy and least able to anticipate problem behavior. Remember that your movements are less predictable to your dog when you are asleep, and all of our thresholds for reactivity are lessened when we are asleep. Accordingly, if you startle your dog, the response may be explosive. Again, the key is to set your dog up to succeed, not to fail.
 6. Feeding time may be a reactive situation. Many dogs with impulse control aggression may also have food-related aggression (most dogs with food-related aggression *do not* have impulse control aggression). If necessary, feed your dog in a separate room with the door closed in order to avoid any aggressive incidents. If you have small children, you should be able to lock the door. If you like to give your dog table scraps, all scraps should be placed in the dog's dish. Your dog is not allowed to beg at the table, and must sit and wait at all times before approaching his dish. If you cannot safely do these things, please put your dog behind a locked door or gate while you eat. Please do not feed your dog from the table if he does become aggressive around food, because this creates a potentially explosive and difficult to control situation. See the **Protocol for Understanding and Managing Dogs and Aggression Involving Food, Rawhide, Biscuits, and Bones** for more help.
 7. **Do not physically punish your dog!** You will convince your dog that you are a threat and untrustworthy, and he will become more aggressive. If your dog stiffens, growls, or lunges, you may softly tell him "no" to interrupt the situation. If your dog has learned that the word "no" is a punisher with bad associations, please do not use it. You wish to interrupt the dog to lower his arousal, not punish him to raise his arousal. Any word or sound to which he calmly attends can be an interrupter. You can do this by asking your dog to come into another room and sit, or by leaving him. If your dog is wearing a head collar, gently pull the collar forward to close his mouth, softly say "no," then lead him from the inciting event quickly. If it is necessary to remove your dog from the room or from a situation, wait for the dog to become calm, then practice a few of the sitting and breathing exercises so that he realizes he must act appropriately to get "good" attention. See the **Protocol for Teaching Your Dog to Take a Deep Breath and Use Other Biofeedback Methods as Part of Relaxation** for more information. Remember that the preferred choice is to avoid any aggressive events. Most people find it easier to ignore the dog than to distract him, so this may be a safer and more effective tactic.
 8. Please warn your friends and neighbors that any aggressive dog is potentially dangerous, and for this reason they must comply with your instructions to minimize danger to the dog and to themselves. This may mean that they are not to open the door to the room where you have placed your dog. This may mean that you will only bring your dog to the party on a head collar when everyone is calm and that no one can reach toward him. See the **Protocol for Handling "Special-Needs Pets" During Holidays and Other Special Occasions** for help.
 9. If you are working with one of the behavior modification programs with your dog and he persists in challenging or ignoring you—stop. You both need a break. Either put your dog in another room and leave him alone, or leave the room he is in and leave him alone (and for this reason you may wish to work only in rooms that have doors or gates). By separating yourself from your dog you have removed his ability to control any part of the situation



All three of these "Dog on Premises" signs are on the same driveway gate. Anyone should have the expectation that at least one dog lives on the property.

- and provided him with the opportunity to become less reactive and anxious.
10. Get a "Dog on Premises" sign, or make a sign that announces that there is a dog living on the property. This is not an admission of a dangerous dog, but it is a civically responsible reminder that a dog is on the property. Anyone who has a dog should have such a sign.
11. Once your dog has successfully and happily completed the **Protocol for Deference, Protocol for Teaching Your Dog to Take a Deep Breath and Use Other Biofeedback Methods as Part of Relaxation**, and the **Protocol for Relaxation: Behavior Modification Tier 1**, you can move on to desensitizing him to gestures that may still startle him (**Tier 2: Protocol for Desensitizing Dogs Affected with Impulse Control Aggression**). You may need help with any or all parts of these programs. Talk to your vet to see if anyone in the practice is trained in behavioral modification techniques. If not, look for a good, kind and certified dog trainer who understands true behavior modification (in the United States, www.ccpdt.org and www.petprofessionalguild.com).
12. When your dog is as improved as everyone thinks is possible, please continue to reinforce appropriate behaviors for the rest of your dog's life. Lapses invariably result in regression. These dogs have anxiety disorders; they will always need good, clear information. We don't cure aggression, but we do a good job of controlling it. Dogs with impulse control aggression are not normal, but can learn to behave normally.
13. Anti-anxiety medications are likely a good idea for any dog with impulse control aggression and may help some dogs who otherwise are not able to succeed with the behavior modification programs. Please remember that medication is to be used *in addition* to the behavior modification, not instead of it. The biggest benefit of anti-anxiety medication for these dogs is that it enhances the rate at which new behaviors are able to be acquired.

Good luck! If you are calm, understand that your dog is abnormal, and work to humanely give the dog clear cues about expectations, your relationship will improve and the dog will surprise you with how well he can get.