



Aggression or Fear Part 2

Is your dog scared or nervous when people come into your home? Do they exhibit fear, growl, bark, lunge, maybe charge at them, or even bite? Are they unable to settle in the presence of people – excessive spooky barking and stress? If you said yes, your dog needs a safe and happy space!

***Note:** This is similar yet different from crate training. For information regarding crate training, please see our Behavior Blueprints.

What does this space do?

- It gives your dog an area where ‘scary spiders’ (people) cannot enter, providing them with a sense of security.
- It serves as an area to safely practice your dog’s training.
- It helps prevent the rehearsal of unwanted behaviors; charging, lunging, biting, etc.

Creating a safe happy space for your dog is vital when it comes to changing their emotions towards triggers. If you continue to allow your dog to react towards people (“Woof go away! Don’t you hear me! I’m scared of you! Woof!!”) then surely your dog will build a very strong habit of doing this. They will become an expert at telling people it’s their time to go, and things will only escalate from there. Of course, always take into consideration *why* your dog is communicating their fear and be their advocate. They aren’t purposefully giving you a hard time, they are having a hard time. It is not a fun mentality to be in.

This area alone will not solely help change your dog’s emotions. To be successful with this type of behavior modification, you must teach people how to interact with your dog so they can help change their emotions positively versus taking your dog ten steps back. Having your dog in this space helps prevent people from reacting towards your dog in a manner that causes fear or intimidation.

Keep in mind, this area means no human being or other dog will enter. It is your dog’s space, so keep the scary spiders out!

What does the set-up look like?

We recommend creating 2 spaces for your dog;

Space 1: To practice *with and without* triggers

Space 2: To practice *without* triggers. This second space is created so you can take a break, as well as your dog. Some days, you will want to have guests over and not worry about your dog, which is totally normal! This is when the second space would be used – your dog feels comfortable in the area and is not able to

rehearse unwanted behavior, and you do not have to worry about actively training. You ARE passively training – preventing the unwanted practice. Your dog may also need a break at times – maybe they had a bad day, a long week, or they’re just tired. You want both spaces to mean the same thing: this is the best spot! It is very important you practice creating a safe and happy space in both areas **while triggers are not present**.

Area with triggers

Play-pen or x-pen in living room
A baby gate (kitchen, hallway, etc.)

Area without triggers

Crate in bedroom
Play-pen upstairs
Bedroom area

Consider the material, shape, size, and height of the confinement set up:



Begin conditioning the 2 spaces:

- Place your dog’s meals (puzzle, snuffle mat) etc. in these areas for mealtimes so they become a designated happy space where meals are provided (if your dog is new to confinement, leave the gate open at first).
- Allow your dog to enjoy a chew (no-hide or bully stick for example), frozen kong, lickimat etc. in this space.
- Your dog can even nap in here with a cozy blanket and bed as well.
- Add blankets around the pen if your dog cannot calm down. Then when calm, try removing the blankets.

For space 1 - when triggers are present:

- Your guests should be foretold to pretend your dog does not exist. No direct staring, trying to touch the dog, or enticing the dog to come closer.
- They should become treat dispensers and that’s IT!
- Advise them to seem non-threatening by turning to the side instead of directly facing the dog, or even sitting on the floor at your dog’s critical distance if possible.
- For extra help read these blueprints:
 - “How not to greet a dog” and “How to greet a dog”

For dogs with a bite history or safety concern:

- Consider muzzle training to keep everyone involved safe. If you are unsure about whether a muzzle is right for your dog, please consult with one of our trainers. <https://muzzleupproject.com/>

Next steps:

- Once your dog is showing vast improvement with accepting strangers in the home while they are safely behind a pen, you may begin the next step of training/behavior modification. Please consult with one of our trainers to get you on the right track with continuing your dog's positive emotional response.