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Introduction

It's an unfortunate thing to report that a good chunk of people will report being bitten by a dog at some point in their lives. In fact, while recently attending a presentation with at least 500 people in attendance, when the presenter asked everyone who had been bitten by a dog to raise their hand, at least 75% of the people in attendance did. I should also mention that 50% of the people in the room were children under the age of 12.

Statistically it is well known that the two largest groups of people that are bitten are the very young and the very old. Statistics can't tell the whole story because many bites go unreported. The reason why: most people are not bitten by some random stray dog. They are generally bitten by a dog they know whether that is their own dog, a family member's dog, a friend's dog, etc.

There are a variety of reasons why a dog might bite. It is important to recognize that not all instances of biting are the same, and it can be very complex. It is also important to understand that a dog using his mouth comes very naturally to him. He doesn't have hands like us to experience the world with. Instead, he has a mouth that he can use to bark or growl or bite. This is kind of a foreign concept for humans, but we do have to acknowledge it when dealing with canines.

Most cases of biting could be easily prevented by the people in the dog's life. In this book, we will discuss how biting can be prevented and what you should do to make your dog the best dog he can be. We will also discuss different kinds of biting, what might motivate a dog to bite, and what you can do to work on the issues at hand.

One note as we begin our discussions, a dog that bites should ALWAYS be taken very seriously. There are degrees of severity, but every dog is trying to say something when he bites. Take this as a warning to be heeded. It is always recommended that you consult with a professional (visit the website for the Association of Pet Dog Trainers as a starting point and your veterinarian) about your dog's biting issue so that it can be viewed firsthand. This book is a good place to begin your journey to learn more about what might be happening with your dog, but consulting with someone in person can help you one-on-one develop a plan to correct your dog's behavior and understand it better.

Chapter 1 - Why Do Dogs Bite

There are many, many reasons that a dog may feel compelled to bite. Understanding the reasons behind your dog's behavior goes a long way to being able to develop a plan to change his behavior.

We'll look briefly at the reasons a dog bites, and in later sections go into more details about each type as well as specific examples and solutions.

In brief, here are some of the most common reasons a dog bites:

1. **Puppy related biting:** Every puppy comes pre-wired to bite, but none of his biting is meant to be harmful to the people. Instead, it is his way of trying to initiate play and contact with you.
2. **Attention or excitement related:** This typically occurs most often in puppies or very young dogs, but biting can occur when a dog becomes very excited (typically in play or during greetings) and tries to get your attention via nipping at you. It can also occur in dogs that are hardwired to follow/chase movement or herd. For example, a herding breed style of dog (shelties, corgis, heelers, etc.) becomes very excited when something moves. This could be a child or person running, a vacuum cleaner going back and forth, windshield wipers going, etc. The dog becomes excited and wants to grab and control the movement, and nipping will often result.
3. **Dominance issues:** This is rarer than many people are led to believe, but biting can occur when a dog is a more dominant natured dog. These are dogs that have many symptoms, not just one, but biting the people he lives with is a hallmark.
4. **Irritable or intolerant:** Some dogs are just intolerant kinds of dogs. This can sometimes go along with dominance, or it can be separate from that. These are dogs that might not like being woken up or might not be great with kids as they become tired of them. These dogs can also be unforgiving if accidentally injured by someone.
5. **Pain related biting:** It is not unusual for a dog, even a very friendly one, to bite when he is in pain. Sometimes the pain is not obvious for owners, but it is normally recognized when a dog undergoes behavioral changes and the biting that occurs is totally out of character for him.
6. **Defensive related:** All dogs have some level of defensive drive which means that they will protect themselves from perceived threats. Each dog is individual in what might be a perceived threat, but a dog that feels the need to be defensive may bite.

7. **Redirected biting:** This is just a dog that has become excited or frustrated at something in particular but can't get close to it, so the biting is redirected to whatever is nearest. This might be the person there or some inanimate object.
8. **Guarding related:** Dogs can be protective or possessive of what they view as theirs. This could be their toys, their dinner, their human, etc. Biting is a way of running off the incoming threat and maintaining the valuable item.
9. **Territorial issues:** A dog that is territorial is really doing guarding work, but territorial is more than guarding a toy or person. It is a dog that is very possessive of his space, normally his home or car. A dog is only territorial over some property that he is very familiar with and feels he owns. This might happen in new locations such as a park area or dog daycare, if he frequents often and feels as if it is his space.
10. **Fear:** So many times biting is related to fear. Some dogs opt to move away from those things that they fear and others attempt to move towards it to run it off. Many dogs that feel trapped without the option to run away will bite as a last resort. Fear can be an underlying issue for many cases of biting and can even exaggerate or be combined with other categories such as territorial.

It is important to recognize the various categories of biting so that you start to learn what your dog is doing. If you don't know why your dog is biting, there is no way for you to begin to correct the issue.

Keeping Track

While we will discuss each type in further detail, along the way you should consider keeping a record of your own dog's behavior. This is the only way for you to have an honest evaluation of what is happening. Additionally, this information will prove to be very useful for a professional should you consult with one further.

A record or journal of his biting should note each incident you have with the dog. This includes detailed information such as the activities and things leading up to the bite, who the bite occurred to, what the person was doing at the time, and any behaviors you noticed in your dog at the time.

For example, was the dog playing with a toy and your child tried to take it away? Did you have a guest enter the home and the dog was hiding behind a chair and then snuck out and nipped the person from behind?

How did you react to the dog? What techniques or methods did you try when the incident occurred, and importantly, how did your dog react to it? Every dog is an individual and not all methods will work for all dogs.

To identify the patterns in your dog's biting behavior and learn more about dog biting, fill in the journal

http://www.trainpetdog.com/Journals/DogBiting_Journal.pdf

Ideally, the journal will help you develop a pattern of behavior for your dog allowing you to develop a plan to deal with it better.

Chapter 2 - The Ins and Outs of Puppy Biting

The bad news: all puppies bite. The good news: it does get better and there are ways to work with it.

Many new dog owners worry that a biting puppy is being aggressive with them or trying to be dominant. This is very rarely the case. In most cases, a puppy is just being a puppy. All puppies have to learn bite inhibition or how hard is too hard when biting.

If you have the opportunity to watch more than one puppy at play or your puppy within his litter, you'll notice right away that play always involves biting and mouthing one another. This comes very naturally to the puppy. He will attempt to bite at his mother or other adult dogs as well. There is always a reaction from the playmate puppy or adult dog. The reaction he gets depends on the level of his biting. If his biting is appropriate and not too hard, most puppies and dogs will humor him or play with him. If his biting becomes too hard or intense, it's no longer fun, and he will lose his playmate. The dog will either cease to play with him at all and likely with yelp out or the dog will tell him the biting hurt by growling at him or snipping back at him. In both cases, play will stop at least temporarily.

This is how a puppy begins the process of learning bite inhibition. It is vital that a puppy stay with his mother and littermates until at least 8 weeks of age for this reason. They are his early teachers on how to use his mouth. He learns very early and quickly that if he bites too hard, no one will play with him.

When a puppy comes into the human family, the only way he knows how to play is with his mouth. This is compounded by his age and the teething process because during teething he will feel compelled to have things in his mouth. Additionally, the more oral breeds (those dogs that like to have things in their mouths, often many hunting and sporting breeds) are often 'mouthier' by nature and like to put things in their mouths more frequently.

Once the puppy leaves his litter, it becomes our job to teach the puppy bite inhibition. Everyone has their own idea about what is acceptable with a puppy. There are many trainers that don't attempt to stop all biting but rather to teach the puppy to have a soft mouth. There are other trainers that do suggest stopping all biting, especially if there are children in the home. What you personally allow will be up to you.

How to stop it

Sometimes we inadvertently teach a puppy it is okay to bite us because when a puppy does bite, we continue to give them attention or play with them. Instead, we have to be very careful about gently communicating that biting is not okay. The best

way to do this is to respond like another puppy or dog would. This might seem odd at first, but most puppies really do respond to this as it is familiar to them.

Here's what to do if you're petting or playing with the puppy and he bites you:

- First, if the puppy is very young, 8-12 weeks old, you can get one of his toys and offer that to him instead. Many very young puppies can easily be redirected onto something more appropriate than your hand.
- Second, if he doesn't redirect to a toy or is a little older than 12 weeks old, as soon as he bites, immediately yelp out OUCH! even if it didn't hurt that badly.
- Third, right after saying Ouch!, remove your attention from him for a minute.

How can you remove your attention from him without him biting you again? It depends on the situation:

1. Move your hands away from the puppy by placing them behind your back or crossed. DON'T flail your arms around or he will keep biting as moving hands and arms trigger puppies.
2. You can try to turn your back to the puppy or turn your head away from the puppy too.
3. If you're sitting on the floor, you can get up off the floor. You don't have to stay seated with a biting puppy.
4. If you're holding the puppy, put it on the floor.
5. If the puppy is being very persistent in attempting to bite, you can walk out of the room and close a door. Only be gone for up to a minute for very young puppies.

Puppies bite to interact with us, so using techniques that show the puppy he loses out on all the attention when he bites is very effective.

There are a few special situations or notes to be made about puppy biting.

Wild puppy!

All puppies go through periods during the day of just being wild. When the puppy is in this mood, he is likely to be more bitey than during other times. Don't try to pet the puppy or do things with him when he is in this mood. He will just bite! Instead, give him something else to vent that energy out on. Throw a few ice cubes on the floor, give him a chewing toy, or let him run the zoomies outside.

Exercise

The mantra of all puppy owners should be: "A tired puppy is a happy puppy." You will see overall better behavior in your puppy if you provide him with enough exercise and things to do. He will chew less, bite less, and be less hyperactive. As soon as he is old enough and is comfortable with a leash, take him for short walks and build

up as is appropriate for his age. Play toys with him. Give him plenty of appropriate chew items. Just sitting in the backyard is not enough exercise for most dogs.

Children

Puppies often treat children differently, and you might notice the puppy doesn't bite the adults but he does the children. He many times won't listen to their pleas to stop either. Why? First, most puppies view children on an even playing ground with them. They are physically smaller. Second, children tend to interact differently with puppies. They tend to tease puppies with toys or by playing chase games or wrestling. Third, children, particularly young ones, are very dramatic and do things that excite puppies. Children like to run, scream and yell, and wave their arms and hands around instead of stand still.

What this means for a puppy is that biting at a child in the family is likely to get a reaction and might be interesting. It might encourage the child to play with him or run from him.

It is always suggested that all interaction between children and puppies or dogs is supervised. This is for the safety of the child and the dog. Make sure that your children know how to interact with the dog. Do not allow teasing as play or any type of rough housing between the child and dog. Then, if the puppy doesn't respond when the child attempts to get him to stop biting, you, the adult, needs to step in and stop it.

Most puppies do respond to a light verbal correction like No Bite or Annh, Annh. Walk up to the puppy and clap your hands behind him to see if he can be startled out of biting. Give your verbal correction at the same time. Then, work to put his attention onto something else other than bothering the child.

Additionally, make sure the dog views the children as more than just play toys. Have them help out with feeding the puppy and training the puppy. This way you give the child a way to communicate with the puppy and vice versa that isn't just centered in playtime.

Chapter 3 - Attention and Excited Biting

Attention related and excited biting can go together but not always. It is more likely to occur in a young dog or a puppy that doesn't have a lot of patience yet or impulse control. He's kind of like the small child that can't wait his turn to talk and frequently interrupts conversations.

This type of biting is most likely to occur during playtime as the dog excites himself or during greetings with you or new people.

During playtime

When a dog is playing, he can get very excited and wound up. Biting might be linked to certain types of games that people play with dogs, and for this reason, games of chase and wrestling aren't always the best options for playtime. The dog may accidentally bite your hand during play instead of the toy or he may get overly wound up and quickly mouth at your hand or body.

If your dog bites you during play, you are best to immediately stop playing with the dog. You can use the technique we just discussed with very young puppies and teaching bite inhibition, even if your dog is older. By saying Ouch! and immediately ending play, you're showing the dog that you won't play like that. If it was just a minor accident and the dog quickly stops, you can continue playing, but on the other hand if the puppy is persistently biting and not listening, you may need to just stop playing.

Sometimes puppies or older dogs come with a bad habit of mouthing or biting during play. This is normally because someone has already played with the dog this way. That doesn't mean that you have to play that way. I would never suggest intentionally 'playing hands' with your dog. By playing hands I mean teasing your dog with your hands where he bites out at or lunges towards your hand and you move it to different spots around him. This just sets him up to bite during play. You need to be particularly careful with children as many children will play this game, so if you spot your child or any child doing it, quickly ask them to stop. It will only encourage a bad style of play that will persist far into adulthood.

Attention

Attention related biting can occur when a dog is very excited, and he's trying to excite you too or attention related biting is done to just get your attention. Dogs that bark for attention are far more likely to also bite for attention, and it also normally comes after you didn't listen to the bark! It is kind of like a second line of tactics. If you listen to the bark, the dog probably won't bite, but if you don't listen to the bark (and do whatever the dogs wants), he may very well bite to get your attention instead.

In order to stop this behavior, you have to stop all the issues surrounding the dog demanding attention. You have to communicate fully that you won't do what he wants you to do.

Now this can get a little tricky. You may find there are some times where you do want him to bark at you such as when he needs to go outside. There are probably plenty of other times you don't want him to do it too. You'll have to figure out what those times are and let him know that.

For example, if you like him barking to go outside, then you will continue to let him outside when he barks. But, if you don't like him barking at you when you are just standing there, then you will want to ignore that barking.

Here is the catch: If you ignore the barking, tactic #2 of biting may follow. That means that just standing there and ignoring him is likely to get the issue of biting because you're not listening, and the dog will rationalize that biting is more likely to get your attention, and it will! So rather than just stand there and ignore the dog, try walking out of the room when he starts to bark a good deal for attention. Wait until he stops barking and then return to the room. This way he understands that the barking doesn't work, and he won't move to level 2 which is biting for attention.

Chapter 4 - Dominance Related Biting

The good news is that a dog biting out of dominance is rarer than many are led to believe by television and other sources. Not every time a dog bites you is it related to dominance. Dominance is a more complicated pattern of behaviors, and the biting and aggression that occurs spreads across many behaviors.

Are these some of the things you have seen in your dog?

- Irritable at being moved. Growls or bites when woken up or moved.
- Hard to groom or brush. Can be hard to handle without growling or biting.
- Doesn't like being leashed or having things moved over his head.
- Has issues with you near his food, his toys, his treats, etc.
- Seeks out your attention but then growls or bites when you do pet him.
- Growls or bites when told No or any type of corrections.
- Will position himself where he leans into you or sits on top of your foot or body. Growls if you try to move him off you or you try to walk away.

These are the most common series of behaviors a dog with dominance problems will exhibit. A dog will have more than one of these behaviors. Just because your dog has one of them doesn't mean he has a dominance issue. There are also other reasons why a dog would bite other than dominance. For example, a dog that bites during grooming may have experienced pain in a prior grooming session or a dog that bites over his toys may have been teased and had toys repeatedly removed from him.

It is important that you have a professional diagnose this issue for you. It can be very difficult to deal with a dominant dog without that professional experience.

The best way to approach this is totally hands off. That might sound kind of funny to you, but dominance relates to the issue at the moment be it food, toys, touching, etc. If you become forceful with him, you are issuing a challenge to him that he is likely to accept. This is how you will be bitten. Instead, you can work with him in a much different manner that will be far more likely to work. Be forewarned, it will be a program for life and most dogs will struggle with this issue for their whole lives and can backslide into the old behaviors if you let up.

The training program that should be followed with these dogs is commonly referred to as Nothing in Life is Free. What that means is that the dog learns that his behavior is how he will receive all things he values in life. He will have to comply with behavior requests from you in order to receive his dinner, his treats, his toys, the ability to go outside through the door, etc. There is no force or touching him to get him to comply. Instead, you request a behavior he knows, and if he doesn't do it, he doesn't get the item.

Here is a good example: Dinnertime. It doesn't matter what behavior you ask him to do, and it doesn't have to be the same way each time. Basically what you will do is

hold his dinner bowl and request the behavior. When he complies, he receives his dinner. If he doesn't comply, the dinner goes back on the counter or in the closet for a few minutes. Then you will try again. Only when he complies does he receive the food.

What if he doesn't know any skills yet? You will need to teach him a few, but you can start with just Sit. Hold his dinner bowl and just wait for him to offer Sit. He will if for no other reason than he doesn't know what else to do. When he sits, give him his food. If you do this each time, he will begin to sit when he sees the food and you can begin to say the command too. This way he will start to have a command association to the action, and you can begin to use the new skill with other items too.

How long do you have to do the Nothing in Life is Free program? On some level, forever. How strict the system is depends on how bad the issues are with the dog. If they are very bad, you likely will be asking the dog for behaviors before he gets anything all the time. Additionally, with some dominant dogs, you don't even provide dinner in the dog bowl but instead keep it all to yourself. Then periodically throughout the day you ask the dog to do things and provide him with small, handfed portions of his meal. The reason for this is to really tie all food (ie survival value) rewards into you and not a bowl.

The role of the professional: In the case of dominance related aggression, it is very important to involve a professional be it a positive trainer or a veterinary behaviorist. In some cases, medication can be helpful in initially shaping the dog's behavior, and a veterinary behaviorist can be instrumental in selecting the right one to prescribe.

Additionally, the number of skills to keep you safe when living with a dog with dominance related biting is quite high. You have to learn to rethink how you work with a dog. For example, if your dog is irritable when being moved, you need to teach him how to hand target (touch his nose to your hand) on command. This way you don't have to touch him to move at all but rather can move him in a very hands-off method.

Chapter 5 - Irritable or Intolerant Biting

We discussed this as a component of dominance biting, but it can stand alone as well. There are a variety of reasons why a dog may bite when touched.

Medical

There could be medical related issues like pain or arthritis. Medication and a medical evaluation will greatly improve this type of irritability. In fact, a medical evaluation should be your first starting point to rule out any issues. Pain or some type of medical issue is likely to be the primary reason for biting in a dog whose behavior has recently changed. For example, if your dog began biting a few months ago but hadn't before, you really need to rule out medical issues.

Handicaps

Your dog may have hearing or vision deficiencies. This may occur as he ages or perhaps a dog is born deaf or blind or with limited abilities. His irritability comes from his handicap, and so it is less about him being irritable or more about him being surprised. It's for this reason that many years ago breeders would euthanize deaf puppies because the belief was that the dogs were more prone to aggression and biting. This doesn't have to be true at all, and luckily, more deaf puppies are getting the chance to demonstrate that.

What it requires is teaching it's okay (and actually really good) to be touched, even if surprised. This isn't as hard to teach a dog as it might sound. It is ideal if a puppy learns it early on, but it can be taught to an older dog as well.

How to do you teach this to a dog? First, you ALWAYS give the dog a heads up that you are there and going to touch. Say the dog's name first so he is anticipating you (if your dog is deaf, you clearly don't need to say his name, but you might try stomping a foot on the ground for a vibration instead). Use tasty treats that the dog loves. Touch lightly with one hand and give a treat with the other. This way the dog comes to anticipate touch with treats.

If your dog is around strangers or children at all, you will also have to prepare the dog for the event when someone doesn't say his name and just reaches out to touch him. This means that once your dog is doing well with you saying his name, touching and treating him, you'll have to move to sometimes touching and treating without saying his name. Ideally, he will become less and less startled and intolerant because touch becomes a very good thing for the dog.

Bad experience

If a dog has been injured or had pain when touched, he very well can become irritable about being touched again. This is often seen when a dog becomes growly towards children or bites at them. The dog may have been teased, physically handled roughly, or even been mistreated. The dog takes on the aggression as more of a defense mechanism than anything. This is why it is imperative that parents ALWAYS supervise interactions between children and dogs and make sure to fully educate their children on how to interact with dogs.

Another example of a possible bad experience association could be related to grooming. This is especially common with small dogs that have lovely long hair. This style of hair tangles and forms large mats very easily. When grooming and brushing occurs with this type of hair that has matted, it is painful for the dog. It is easy for the dog to become very distrustful and intolerant of the grooming process entirely.

The best way to deal with bad experiences is obviously to try and avoid them from occurring in the first place. Keep all experiences as positive and fun as you can. Start grooming practices early on, and don't allow terrible mats to form. Teach children how to properly interact with your dog. Avoid anything that might be perceived as scary, painful, or traumatic by your dog, and you should be able to avoid this style of biting.

Once the problem has occurred, it will be much harder to correct because the dog doesn't trust you or the situation it is in. You likely should have a professional work with you on breaking down the problem down into smaller, manageable parts and making it more positive for the dog in order to avoid future biting incidents.

Just intolerant

There are some dogs that just have a more intolerant personality for whatever reason. These dogs generally growl more than bite, and it comes out more when a dog is moved and doesn't feel like moving. This might be when the dog is on a piece of furniture like the couch or bed and doesn't move and you go to physically move him. He may growl at you or even attempt to bite.

Intolerance biting may also occur when a dog is touched in a particular location on his body. Quite a number of dogs are sensitive to having their back legs, rear end, or stomach and groin area touched. There may not be any particular reason other than they are just sensitive to that.

Some dogs handle being touched more roughly better than others. That's not to say you should rough handle any dog, but it is a part of the individual dog's personality. In fact, most temperament tests (used to evaluate puppies or dogs for service work and other purposes) include some type of test to see how tolerant/intolerant a dog is. The normal way to test it is to lightly pinch a dog between his toes. Does he ignore

it, try to leave, whine, or does he just go to biting? The faster he moves to growling or snapping when light pressure is applied, the less tolerant he is.

These more intolerant personality types don't handle touch as well as others, and they do have to be watched far more closely with children who may not touch the dog the way it wants to be.

When the intolerance relates to moving the dog, say off of furniture, it is best to not physically attempt to move the dog. This only invites the problem to occur. Instead, give the dog a new way to move. Give it a command. The easiest way to do this is teach the dog to target your hand. This simply means teaching the dog to touch the palm of an outstretched hand with his nose.

You may call this skill whatever you want, but Here is a good command. Lightly smear your hand with a treat so it smells good to the dog. Place your hand in front of the dog's nose (within a few inches), and he will naturally move his nose to your hand to smell the treat odor. When his nose touches, say Here and give a treat. Note: Only scent your hand with the treat the first few repetitions. Once your dog has the hang of it, no longer scent your hand and only reward him with a treat after he does the command.

Over repetitions, you will practice having your hand at different distances from the dog, you will use both hands (alternate so the dog doesn't cue into only one hand), and you will hold your hand at varying levels. The reason for the variety is so that the dog realizes that the command Here means to touch your hand, whichever hand is out, wherever it is held.

Now when you need to move the dog off of furniture or wherever he is located, you can simply hold your hand out and ask the dog to Here, and he will move to get off the furniture to touch your hand. See how much different this can be than trying to physically move the dog and possibly being bitten?

You can work on a dog's intolerance to being touched in specific places on his body in a similar way to working with a deaf or blind dog. Have a tasty treat or two ready and give a treat with one hand and quickly (and lightly) touch with the other hand. Just do it once. Over time the goal is for him to think that being touched in these spots means a treat is at hand.

Chapter 6 - Pain or Medical Issues Related Biting

We briefly discussed how pain may contribute to a dog being more irritable to touch, but now we'll cover just how much pain or medical issues should be evaluated.

In all cases of aggression, a good medical evaluation should be an owner's first place to go. Why? Even if the biting is fully unrelated to medical issues or you don't think it is related, the reason you should always do a wellness check for all types of aggression is that you can rule out everything first and know going into a training program that something physical isn't a factor at all. And if it does turn out to be medically related, then you have your veterinarian to start a program to address those needs.

There are so many medical factors that can contribute to behavioral changes in a dog or aggression. A complete blood test that also evaluates the thyroid levels is in order as well as a general wellness exam. Your veterinarian will look at possibilities like:

- **Dental:** Dental disease, loose teeth, red gums, diseased teeth, etc. can all contribute to irritation and behavioral changes in a dog.
- **Back:** If your dog has back pain, it is quite painful and can lead to snappy responses if picked up or moved in certain ways.
- **Legs:** Is there arthritis forming in hips and elbows? Are there any ligament or muscle strains or pulls? Could there be dysplasia in joints?
- **Eyes and ears:** Is your dog losing his sight or hearing? Are there any ear infections causing itching and pain?
- **Feet:** Are the pads cracked or open? Is there redness between toes? Is the hair on the bottom side of the feet tangled between the toes?
- **Skin:** Is the skin healthy or is there redness or hair loss? Are there any unusual bumps or lumps?
- **Odor:** Are there any odors being emitted by the dog?

A veterinarian will also listen to your dog's heart and breathing to see if there are any irregularities. This wellness check combined with the blood test will give your veterinarian a good picture of your dog's overall health. Make sure to discuss the aggression issue with your veterinarian so that it can be considered during the process.

What will happen is that you will learn whether your dog's biting is directly related to a medical issue or pain. The good news, if it is medically related, is that the biting will normally subside when the medical issue or pain is resolved.

Something medical should always be considered/ruled out in all cases, but it is particularly important in the case of adult dogs whose behavior changes. Has the biting recently begun to occur? Have you noticed other changes in your dog's behavior? This is a big red flag that it may be medical.

On one end it may be something as minor and treatable as arthritis that is causing stiff, sore joints. On the other end it could be related to something far more serious like seizures or a brain tumor. The point is you will have an answer, hopefully be able to resolve it, and to end the biting altogether.

Chapter 7 – Defensive Biting

Defensive related biting comes out when a dog feels threatened. It doesn't matter if you think he should feel threatened. It is about how he perceives the situation and how he feels within it. Anytime he feels threatened or trapped he may react with aggression, and it may be directed at you, other family members, strangers, the veterinarian, etc.

It is important to realize that this type of biting really, truly comes out of an emotional place. Here are a few common ways you may see defensive biting occur:

1. You have taken your dog to the veterinarian for his yearly wellness exam and vaccinations. He seems a little anxious when you arrive and has a hard time settling down in the waiting room. When you are ushered into the examination room and they close the door, he positions himself in the corner. When the veterinarian enters, the dog doesn't come out to greet him, and when the veterinarian needs to move him to exam him and give him his shots, he growls at him. The clinic staff put a muzzle on your dog which is a good thing because when he feels the first shot go in, he turns to grab at the doctor.
2. You're brushing your dog, and it's been a while since he's been brushed. You know you need to be brushing him more routinely because his hair easily mats. In the past you've had to try and brush out tangles or cut them out. Your dog sees you go to brush his back leg and down his flank area, and he whips his head around snarling and showing his teeth. What!?! You didn't see any tangles, but your brush is caught up in the hair and you let go.
3. You catch your dog doing something you don't think he should be doing. He's eating the whole end off your sofa, and you're really upset with him. This is your first dog, and you're not sure how to 'discipline him' and you yell No! loudly and smack at his face with your hand. You're so angry at him! He lashes back at you barking and snaps at your hand.

These are just a few classic examples of how defensive aggression may occur. It is always tied into the dog feeling threatened by you or someone in some fashion. It may relate to a past physical hurt or a hurt that occurs in the moment.

In example 1 with the veterinarian, the dog is already anxious about being in the clinic. He is scared, and when he is in the examination room, he also feels trapped. A scared dog would almost always prefer to leave the scary area, but in this case, he isn't able to. That's why when the veterinarian comes in and needs to physically move him, the scared dog reacts defensively to what he is scared of and threatened by: the veterinarian.

In example 2, this dog becomes defensive easily about being groomed, and it's likely tied into the fact that he has consistently been matted. For him grooming has never

been a good or positive experience, and instead it has always brought pain. The back leg or flank area is a sensitive part on most dogs anyways, and so matting here is likely to bring out a stronger reaction in some dogs.

In example 3, it is a well known and studied fact that physical or corporal type punishments of dogs get the highest defensive reactions in dogs. It is the easiest way to be bitten by your own dog. Think about it: imagine someone you love and trust in your life one day comes at you yelling and wailing at you. How are you going to react? You may cower or you may strike back to defend yourself. It's basically the concept of self defense that we easily understand when it relates to people.

Defensive biting should always be dealt with in light of the situation. Take stock of what is occurring, how is the dog feeling or reacting in that moment, and how might you change that situation for the better? If the biting occurs because of the way you currently choose to discipline your dog, the behavior will end when you stop that interaction and you stop making your dog feel threatened.

If your dog tends to react poorly in small, close spaces, you can ask your veterinarian to exam the dog in the larger waiting area. Most veterinarians are very accommodating, but it means you may have to come early or be the last patient of the day.

If your dog has established issues with grooming, having the dog wear a muzzle is not a bad idea. Instead, this protects you, but still allows you to work with him and show him a better way. You can reward him through the muzzle with licks of canned squeeze cheese. Pick his foot up, squeeze of cheese. Bring the brush close to him, squeeze of cheese. You may have to each day set aside 5 minutes to work on the routine. If he is sensitive to the brush, switch tools for a while and use a grooming mitt instead. Basically you are breaking down the behavior and changing how he feels.

As he feels more comfortable or confident, you can take the muzzle off. You can then switch to rewarding him by using a Kong toy that has been smeared inside with peanut butter or squeeze cheese and allow him licks along the way.

The muzzle can also be used in a similar fashion at the veterinarian's office, and if there is any doubt about whether he will bite someone, it is best it is used for everyone's safety. Just carry your squeeze cheese with you to reward him.

Additionally, in situations where your dog has shown a great deal of anxiety or worry, like a veterinarian's office, you might consider using a compression jacket like the Thundershirt or Anxiety Wrap. These look like pieces of clothing that you put on the dog, but they provide an even applied pressure (like a body hug) which has been shown to provide comfort for many dogs. It is similar to the theory of swaddling babies after their birth, and many people also use body hugs for autistic children to provide comfort.

Chapter 8 - Redirected Biting

Biting that happens out of redirection is sometimes misunderstood by the owners because they take it personally, when in fact, the dog isn't even thinking about biting you. They are just venting frustration that they currently feel.

Anyone that has ever lived with or known a cat has likely seen redirected aggression occur in a very pure form. For example, a cat may be lying down by a window watching birds fly outside. The longer the cat watches these birds, the more stimulated the cat becomes. His tail will twitch faster in short thumps, and his eyes will become very large and intense. If you touch him in this moment, you very likely will get hissed at, swatted, or bitten. The same is true if another cat approaches. Why? Because his hunting mode has been turned on; he is intensely watching prey, but he can't get to the prey. That energy is still trapped inside him, and because he can't get to what he wants to, it will be vented on whatever comes near.

This is the same thing that happens to dogs, but many times we can't see it is as clearly as when looking at cats. It is born of the same frustration. The biting may be directed at you or really whatever is closest to it.

Breeds that become wound up easily or become frustrated easily are the most likely to do this behavior. Terriers are notorious for doing it, and many herding breeds also do it.

Let's look at a few examples of how this might occur:

1. Your dog loves to play with other dogs and becomes very excited when seeing them on the daily walks. She starts crying, trying to walk on two legs, and pulling as hard as she can. Lately you've noticed that as she does these things, she has also started turning and grabbing your pant legs and violently pulling on them.
2. You have two dogs, and they both run for the door when the doorbell rings. Most days they just run to the door and bark and bark at each other, but a couple of days ago before you could get to the door, they turned and bit each other.
3. Your dog loves to watch things that run, and one day you walk by an area that is very stimulating. There are kids running around playing; their dog is barking and running too. Your dog becomes very excited and sits and barks. You decide it is easiest to just pick her up, but when you do, you're surprised when she reaches over and bites your hand!

These are just three examples, but can you see what the common denominator is in all of them? Excitement and frustration. This can also be seen with barrier frustration cases or when the dog has a fence or kennel in between him and another. For example, a dog may run and bark feverishly at the neighbor dog in the backyard,

but then have no problems whatsoever with that same dog if met on the street. It's the barrier that builds frustration.

It may come as no surprise to you, then, that punishment is NOT the way to solve this type of biting. Instead, changing the situation to limit the dog's frustration is the best way to fully prevent the issue.

Make sure your dog is getting a lot of daily exercise. Dogs can easily become more frustrated when they don't receive consistent daily exercise of levels that are appropriate for that dog. Try playing fetch and games with the dog before ever going on a walk (if the problems occur on the walk primarily) to wear some of the initial energy out. What is it on the walk that causes the problems? How might you change that walk to prevent the problems?

I'm not suggesting you are avoiding situations. Not at all. Instead, you are changing how the environment and you works with the dog so that he doesn't feel the need to become so frustrated.

During moments when your dog is overly stimulated, don't touch him. You know what it looks like, so you can avoid interaction during those times. Instead of physical touch, try to snap your dog out of the moment. Call his name, back up several feet and clap for him, ask him to do an easy command or trick he enjoys, throw a toy for him, etc. This way you're not physically touching him and inviting the problem, but you are giving him another thing to do.

Chapter 9 – Guarding Related Biting

Biting that is related to guarding can encompass several things. We are going to discuss territorial issues in the next section, so we will leave this section for when your dog bites out of the desire to keep something to himself. Commonly this is called resource guarding, but he can guard anything he wants to. The most commonly guarded items are favorite spots to sit or sleep, favorite toys, special chew items, treats or dinner, people, or even items the dog isn't supposed to actually have.

There are a variety of reasons why a dog may do this, and it doesn't necessarily mean he has a dominant personality at all. It can relate to dominance, but in most cases, the dog just wants to keep what he has. You can see very submissive dogs illustrate this behavior as well as the most dominant dogs. In most cases, dominant dogs don't need to create a scene to keep something. They just walk up and take it without much fanfare.

Dogs that resource guard the worst have a little bit of anxiety at its root. They can be almost paranoid about something being taken away. Why? Sometimes we accidentally create the paranoia; sometimes something in the dog's life or environment has done that; sometimes it's just that dog's personality. In every case the situation can definitely be improved!

Let's look at a few situations where resource guarding may spring up:

1. A young dog has lived with an owner for some time. Unfortunately, animal control has been called in to remove the dog. He is so terribly thin that all his bones are showing. When provided food at the shelter, he eagerly and quickly eats the food. Over the next couple of weeks he gains weight and continues to eat. Now the shelter feels a temperament evaluation is in order so they can re-home him. Unfortunately, during the test for food aggression, he demonstrates guarding tendencies and bites.
2. You get a cute little puppy, but you quickly find out he loves to dig in the trash, pick up things off the floor, and grab anything he can. Each time you take off chasing after him and forcibly remove it from his mouth and tell him no. A few months down the line you find that when you catch up to him he is growling, and when you try to remove the item, he bites you.
3. Your kids like to play with the dog and they can always be found with him and his pile of toys. You notice that when they play with him they tend to take his toys as soon as he has them and then they tease him. He never gets to have his toy for very long, and he appears to be getting frustrated. Then one day when your daughter goes to take his toy, he bites her hand.
4. You and your husband have a small cute dog. You dote on him like a baby, and he goes everywhere with you. Your husband hates the dog because each time you sit down, the dog jumps in your lap and refuses to allow your husband near you.

Each of these situations illustrates resource guarding, but how the issue came about is a tad different in all cases.

In case 1, this dog was very neglected and never had consistent food given to him. When he finally does have food to eat, he is afraid it will go away again like before. He has developed an anxiety related to this food and doesn't want it to go anywhere. Not all starved dogs will develop this issue, but for many this can happen.

In case 2, when a puppy or dog grabs things they shouldn't, our tendency is to chase after them. What that shows the dog is this stuff has a great value to it or we wouldn't chase them. Some dogs will just think of this as a game and a way to interact with you, not really caring about the stuff. On the other hand, some dogs will interpret this as they should try to hang on to this novel item that apparently has so much value that you want it back. He knows you will take it away from him, so he has to work to keep it from you.

In case 3, unfortunately, there are children that aren't taught that teasing and playing non-stop keep away from a dog isn't a good way to play with him. While some dogs will tolerate this, there are others that will tire of this game. Children should always be taught how to play with a dog and this isn't it!

In case 4, this occurs when a dog bonds tightly to one person, and that person dotes so heavily on the dog. It is often at its worst in opposite sex pairings (a female dog and male owner or vice versa), so that when a human member of the opposite sex approaches, the dog views that as a no-no! A male dog may perceive that female owner as his lady friend and vice versa with a female dog and male owner.

How resource guarding is handled depends on the situation that it occurs in.

Trade outs

When a dog has a tendency to guard toys, reaching for the toy is not a good idea. Additionally, trade outs are a way to prevent a problem from occurring in the first place. What trade outs means is that you have more than one toy at your disposal. You throw one toy and allow him to chase it and when he returns, you throw a second toy. He most likely will drop one toy to go retrieve the second toy. You can then either have a third toy or pick up the original item to again throw when he returns.

This way of trading equal value toys means the dog never loses out. There is no reason for him to become so tied to one toy or aggressive over it because there is another one just as good.

This also prevents a dog from forming an issue in the first place. It is the best way for a dog to play with young children and it never puts their hands near his mouth or the toy in his mouth. It also doesn't invite challenges. You can teach a dog to Give, but if he doesn't obey the command when the child asks, what then? Trading toys doesn't encounter such challenges.

No more chasing

You can't chase your dog for things he shouldn't have anymore. That just sets up a bad situation. Instead, try to manage the situation very carefully. What types of things does he like to steal and from where? Then, change that situation so he can't grab any longer. If he is a trash diver, purchase a can with a lid and put a heavy weight in the bottom of the can (under the trash bag). This way he can't dump it or just get in it. Keep your tables clean, put things away where they go.

That being said, there may be a time where he still occasionally is able to find something. First, don't chase him. Pretend you don't notice or even care. This limits his need to protect the item. Second, try calling him to you from another area so that you can heavily reward him for coming. This allows you to then let him outside, place him in another room, etc. and go retrieve the item without him. Third, trade outs can also work very well. Have a like value item (a very, very good treat) to trade out.

Food aggression: Breaking into small parts

This relates directly to food aggression. Dogs relate the food to their bowl, so often the best course of action is to not provide the dog with a whole bowl of food anymore. Instead, the dog needs to view the meals as coming from you directly.

How quickly you may be able to alter a dog's food aggression directly relates to how severe the issue is. First thing, don't put your hands in the dog's bowl or repeatedly try to remove his food to stop aggression or to prevent it. It just helps the dog become insecure about you being around his food.

Next, his meals will be fed in small parts by you. We also want the dog to know or learn at least one skill. Sit, and watching you while doing so, is a good skill to start with. It will take you more time to feed your dog this way, but it should help become less aggressive.

- Have your dog's whole meal on the counter in a bag or bowl.
- Have your dog's dinner bowl on the floor.
- Call your dog to come into the dinner area. He will eagerly look at his bowl, but there won't be anything there.
- Ask him to Sit and wait for him to sit and give you eye contact (focused attention). If he doesn't know how to sit, just wait for him to sit on his own.
- When he sits, praise and place a small amount of kernels in the bowl. Just a small handful or a tad less.
- Wait for him to finish (no moving around, no touching him or the bowl). When he does, ask him to Sit again and when he does, the same procedure of placing a small amount in the bowl.
- Have a few special items set aside as well. This might be a small chunk of chicken, a couple cubes of cheese, a few of his favorite treats or jerky. Periodically drop one of these in the bowl too.

- If there is any growling at any point, you don't feed him and you walk out of the room with the food. Wait a few moments before returning and try again. This way he sees who controls all of the food.
- If you are worried that he may bite you for any part of this, you can always invest in a pet tether. These are just to help you tether him to one spot near his food bowl. You can tether him before you ever start the process so that you have more confidence.
- If your dog will growl over an empty bowl, you can remove the bowl entirely from the situation. You can place the food on the ground or you can change to feeding him in training sessions or on the walk for good behavior so that he is entirely working for the food and you're hand feeding him instead.
- As the dog improves, you can gradually add more kibble at each time. Hopefully you can work up to where he can have a whole meal at one time, but it depends on the severity to begin with.

It is important to note that punishing the dog for his aggression or biting over food is not the best course of action. While you may think that you've got to let him know who the boss is, you're really encouraging the food aggression. How?

It's simple, really. If your dog is worried that he needs to protect his food from you, and so he growls or tries to keep you away, but you physically try to punish him, yell at him, or remove the bowlhaven't you reinforced the need for him to be worried or threatened by you? This is why this tactic rarely works well.

Let him have it

There are times when you should just let him have the item, like special chew items. Give it to him and walk away! That being said, there are ways to work around guarding of chew items, and it doesn't mean you can't give him anything at all.

1. Select chew items that don't last as long for him. Instead of a huge rawhide bone or a large knuckle bone, consider things that take less than 15-30 minutes for him to entirely eat. It might be an edible dental chew, a smaller beef tendon, a hard chicken jerky, or a thinner pizzle stick.
2. Select times to give him these items that would allow him to be undisturbed. That way he can go lie down and chew on it and finish it before anyone might need to bother him.
3. Don't bother him during these times. That way he has no need to protect the item.
4. If desired, you can work on walking through the room (at a distance from him). Carry a small food item he loves like a cheese cube or piece of dried liver. As you walk through, just toss the food item to where he is lying down and keep moving through the room. What this process does is desensitize him to your presence while he is chewing so that he views it as a good thing and not something to worry about.

Put things up

We already discussed managing the situation with things he's not supposed to have that might be left lying around, but putting away his toys or his dinner bowl is also a good idea if he has issues resource guarding them. When it's not dinner time, don't leave that bowl down.

With toys, you only ask for problems if they are left lying all over the floor. You may walk what he deems as too close to his toy and be bitten. Instead, just like with his dinner, make him realize who controls all of his fun with those toys: you!

Put away all toys and then only bring them out for supervised play time. Before you give him a toy or throw it at all, ask him to Sit and give you focused attention. Then throw the toy. Trade out a second toy with him when he returns.

No more babying

When a dog resource guards you from another member of the family, this is a very bad situation in the making. If allowed to continue, it will truly drive a wedge between family members and possibly cost the dog his home.

Some of the worst dog offenders are ones that are babyed by someone who finds the behavior cute. A LOT of small dogs have this issue because they sit in someone's lap and are continually pet all the while the dog is growling at someone. The only way to change this behavior is for the person the dog is guarding to stop it.

For example, let's say person A (which the dog guards) is sitting on the couch. The dog is sitting in person A's lap when person B approaches. The dog begins to growl as the person B gets close. If person B continues to move forward, that person will be bitten. We don't want that.

Okay, there is a two pronged approach:

- At the first sign of any growling (as person B approaches), person A should immediately say No or Annh, Annh to the dog and remove him to the floor.
- Don't allow the dog back on your lap!
- Wait a few moments, then place the dog back on the lap or furniture.
- Have person B approach again. Each time the dog growls, off it goes (even if that is 15 tries) and person B just stops and waits.
- The dog will wait longer to growl each time. When the dog doesn't growl at person B and allows that person to get within 4 feet or so, person B should toss a treat or two to the dog and then retreat.

What is happening with this is that the person being guarded must tell the dog that no, that behavior is not accepted. If he does it, off he goes! But, if he doesn't growl, he gets to stay right where he is and also will get tasty things to eat from the

approaching person. With repetition, person B should be able to get closer and closer to person A.

Also, sometimes this happens because the dog is just more tightly bonded to one person over the other. It might be that one person does everything with the dog. I would also suggest that the person that is getting growled at should step up the involvement with the dog. Take him for walks, feed him dinner, play with him, take him to a positive training class, etc. This will allow the dog to equally bond with both people, and this very well may be enough to change his opinion as well.

A parting note about resource guarding, your dog will bite and bite hard during this. These are generally not light bites or just being mouthed. It is quite likely the dog will leave marks or break the skin. But, the dog will generally provide you with a lot of warning signals prior to actually biting you. Please heed these signals as they will prevent a bite from occurring. Some of these signals include:

- Taking an item and trying to hide with it
- Quickly grabbing the item in his mouth when he sees you
- Lying down on top of an item
- Watching you intently as you move
- Becoming stiff and not moving. This means that if he was chewing or playing and then he sees you and he suddenly stops and doesn't move a muscle, this could be a problem.
- Growling
- Raised lips to show teeth
- Barking
- Lunging with a bark

If you proceed forward after he has given you signals, he will bite you.

Chapter 10 – Territorial Biting

Territorial aggression is a form of guarding, but it is related only to what is perceived as a dog's property. It doesn't extend off of his property at all. His property may be defined as his car, his crate, his yard, and his house. There are ways this issue can be extended into a larger problem as well:

- If he views his crate as his property, he can become crate aggressive at home or in a new location.
- If you don't have a fenced yard and allow him to roam, he may view his territory as much larger than your yard to perhaps include parts of the road, the sidewalk, neighbor's yards, etc.
- He may become territorial in other locations that he frequents enough for him to view as his own. For example, if you frequent a doggie daycare or a dog park a lot, he can view these spaces as his too.

If he barks and becomes aggressive in a brand new location, this isn't him being territorial. Instead he is likely to be insecure in this new spot or fearful and reacting poorly due to this reason. Territorial tendencies only come out when a dog is comfortable and views the space as his own. This is an important distinction.

It is not uncommon for a dog to be territorial on some level. In fact, it is really normal for many breeds. Some dogs just like to sound the alert that someone has entered the property whereas other dogs are more suspicious of strangers on their property and will take further measures.

Herding breeds of dogs and natural guardian breeds tend to be some of the more territorial breeds. There are quite a few small breeds of dogs like dachshunds and Chihuahuas that can also be territorial.

Territorial dogs are generally suspicious of someone entering their home and will want to greet that person at the entrance to the property. They will bark at the person, sniff them, and attempt to follow their movements in the home. Problematic territorial dogs will often bite someone that attempts to move into the home or will possibly bite them at any point while the person is in the home and attempts to move. These dogs will block a person's entrance entirely. The problem can be exacerbated if a dog is distrustful or unsure of strangers due to lack of socialization or personality issues like fear or anxiety.

Owners of these types of dogs, particularly ones that have already bitten someone, have to be very careful with these dogs. Those that have shown they will bite someone should not be allowed to have these same freedoms around people as those dogs that eagerly greet people and enjoy company. Unfortunately, too many bites occur because owners allow these dogs too much freedom without any restrictions. This can pose a legal issue for an owner down the line and potentially cost the life of the dog.

There are levels of severity of territorialness. The best approach to dealing with the issue is based on how severe it is. Since we are looking at the aspect of when the dog is biting due to his territorialness, we'll look at options for dealing with a dog that has already bitten at least one person who entered the home.

It is imperative that a set of rules is established for the dog. There has to be a structured system so that the dog can learn a new way to behave with guests. Here are a few of the things that will need to be in place in order to work with his issue.

Teach him a place to go when the doorbell rings

1. Pick a location (room) that is away from the front entrance that the dog can go to when the doorbell rings. It is best that it is in a room with a door that closes rather than a crate in the same area. This is going to be his calm-down location.
2. When there is no one there at all, you will want to teach him that this is the room he goes to when the doorbell rings. It will be taught just like any other obedience command.
3. You'll want to practice this a few times a day. The more he practices it, the more ingrained the behavior will become.
4. Select very yummy treats for your dog that he really loves.
5. In the first practice sessions, you're going to just work on teaching him which room he is going to run to without the introduction of the bell. You want him to eagerly go to this room because it means goodies for him.
6. Select a word or phrasing for him to associate with the action like Go to Bed, Away, or something easy to remember.
7. In these first few practices, just say his name with the command and run to the room. Ideally, place a small pile of a few treats in the room before taking him to it so that when he does get there, it's like the room gave him something special. If this is too hard to orchestrate, simply give him a few treats once in the room from you.
8. Once he thinks this is a great room to go to, you've got to introduce the sound of the doorbell. A remote wireless doorbell can be the easiest option so that you may ring the doorbell from the inside by yourself or you will need to invest in a second person to ring the doorbell on the outside for you.
9. He will be more agitated when he hears the bell, so once the bell rings, wait a moment and then call him to follow as you have in the past. Once he goes inside the room, hand a few treats and shut the door behind you for a moment.
10. Wait for him to stop barking and settle down, then return and open the door and praise him.

What we are working on teaching the dog is that when the doorbell rings, he should run to this back room for lots of goodies. With repetition, he will ideally run when he hears the bell rather than wait for your commands. By closing him in this room, this allows you to bring your guests in the home and gives him a chance to settle down. He shouldn't be brought out of this room until he is calmer and no longer barking.

Make your guests wonderful

Let all guests know that you are training your dog through this issue, and that they need to please follow all the rules.

Rule # 1: No touching the dog or paying much attention to him. Territorial dogs are not in the mood for petting and loving on. It will only make them worse.

Rule # 2: Everyone should be in place when the dog comes out, so have everyone be seated or standing wherever they will be for a while.

Rule # 3: All guests will be given a baggie of tasty treats. They will give these to your dog by tossing a treat towards your dog. The goal isn't to hand feed the dog if he has bitten before. Instead, the goal is to make your dog more interested in having guests in the home.

Limit the dog's freedom

A dog that has bitten people can't be trusted around strangers so that means he shouldn't be allowed to simply run right out of the room. You will need to have a leash that is no more than 6 feet long (no retractable leashes allowed!). He should be on a collar he can't slip out of. I would strongly suggest no correction collars. My favorite style of collar is a martingale-style of training collar which, when sized correctly, can't harm the dog but is also very difficult to slip out of. It is very safe for the dog and people.

When your dog has stopped barking and has calmed down in the calm-down room, return to him and leash him up. Bring him out to the room with the guests on leash and HOLD the leash.

How to bring it together

We've talked about the components, but now let's put it together to make sure it makes sense.

Step 1: When the doorbell rings, give your dog the command (and make sure he follows through) with going to his room and shut the door.

Step 2: Get your guests in the home and settled. Hand them each a baggie of treats and explain that they will toss treats to the dog when he enters the room.

Step 3: When your dog isn't barking and has calmed down, return to the room and leash him up.

Step 4: Bring him out into the same room as your guests. Keep him a safe distance from all.

Step 5: Have your guests periodically toss treats to your dog without paying attention to him or trying to touch him at all.

Additional components

There are a couple of other things to be aware of when working on this issue with your dog.

- Have a special chew item on hand like a bully stick or Kong toy smeared with peanut butter inside. Once your guests are settled and have given several treats and your dog is relatively calm, ask him to lie down next to you and give him this special chew item to preoccupy him with.
- Have several toys available to him that he can play with. Some dogs prefer to keep themselves busy with toys so provide him with several of his favorites that he can play with. If desired, one of the guests can even toss a new toy to him instead of just treats.
- Be prepared for when a guest wants to move. Most owners let their guard down when the dog appears calm, but most territorial dogs have a terrible time when someone moves. Try this easy way to help him not notice: Ask your guests to let you know when they might need to move before they actually do it. Then, someone (either them or you) needs to toss a few treats for him in the opposite direction from which they plan to move. This way he will move away from where they are going and he will be busy locating food. This isn't just about distraction. It's partly about putting his mind somewhere else and also about getting him to realize that good things happen when people move.
- As he improves over time, he may be able to come off the leash and do well with close supervision. You may also be able to have guests hand feed your dog treats.
- Allow the dog to move at his speed. Don't assume because he isn't barking at your guests means that he wants to be pet. Just because he comes close to a guest or even sniffs him doesn't mean he wants pet. Making these assumptions could be a setback.

Chapter 11 - Fear Related Biting

Fear is at the center of many, many cases of biting. Even with some of the most aggressive looking dogs, fear is a large piece of the puzzle. These dogs are threatened by whatever frightens them (whether a person, animal, or something else) and bite as a result.

There are two main types of dogs that bite out of fear:

Type 1: This is a dog that cowers, hides, or tries to get away when frightened. He always chooses to flee from a scary situation, if given the opportunity. If cornered or if he feels trapped without an escape route, he will resort to biting.

Type 2: This is a dog that tends to be a more assertive dog and when feeling threatened he will actually choose to move towards the scary thing instead of fleeing from it. He may retreat at various points and alternate with moving forward again. This dog may bite when charging at someone or will run in and bite someone from the rear as they move by.

Fear biters can be dangerous, especially if the dog reacts quickly or isn't predictable. What also makes working with these dogs more difficult than some other types of biting is that the fear doesn't have to be rational fear. In many cases it is irrational, but it is very real to the dog. It can be hard to overcome all the dog's fears, but in some cases you can work to help limit the issue, if not fully overcome it.

Let's look at a few ways that a dog can be fearful:

1. Your dog hasn't been around children before or very infrequently. Perhaps he has seen them on a walk, but that's about it. Now, you have a grandchild that you would like to be able to visit your house only your dog doesn't seem to like the child. When your grandchild visits, the dog barks but leaves the room. You want them to be 'buddies' so you force the dog to come out. The dog tries to get away, but you won't let him, and one of the times the child reaches towards him, he snaps at her and catches her hand.
2. When you take your dog on a walk around the neighborhood, he barks, pulls, and lunges towards any dog he sees. You can't figure out what is happening, but he can't focus or settle down when he sees another dog. You wonder if the dog attack when he was younger has anything to do with it.
3. When your puppy is 6 months old you decide it's time to go a training class. When you arrive, you just about have to drag the dog through the door, and he is shaking and won't move. Once you're finally in the room, he positions himself right by your side like he is glued to you. When the trainer comes by to welcome you, your puppy growls at her and tries to bite her leg.

These are just three examples of what a fearful dog may look like, but there are many, many more ways that fear can present itself. There are a couple key factors in these examples that are at the foundation for the majority of dogs that bite out of fear: lack of socialization and bad experiences.

Lack of socialization

In both example 1 and example 2, the primary reason for the dog's behavior and reactions is fear but also lack of socialization.

Many cases of child aggression come as a result of a dog that just lacks the necessary socialization to kids, but then when it happens, owners tend to blame the dog. It's not the dog's fault. If he hasn't ever seen a child or has very limited experience with them, a child can be very scary. They are loud and tend to scream and make interesting noises. They are quick moving and tend to run, jump around, and stomp about. They are at a lower level to the dog, and for large dogs, that can be eye level. They tend to be rough handed or pet heavily or pull hair, and they tend to want to have a lot of close contact with a dog. It is not unusual to see them try to pick dogs up, hug them, kiss them, or follow the dog around without letting it rest.

In example 1, not only had this dog not been socialized ever to children, the owner felt that forcing him into interactions with the child would be best. Instead, it intensified his fear and made him feel trapped. That means the only way he had to get rid of the scary child was to bite her.

Fearful dogs should never be forced to interact with people they find scary or placed into situations where they have no outs.

Socialization is a word that is thrown about, but most people don't fully understand what exactly that means or how critically vital it is for a dog's development. Each puppy has a window of opportunity for it to be exposed to life. It is generally agreed upon that the most critical time for socialization is 8-12 weeks, but up to 16-20 weeks is a secondary critical time period. Puppies are like a blank slate, and they soak up every experience like a sponge. They are most receptive to experiences prior to 12 weeks of age as they have no experiences yet to base anything on.

This is the time period that a puppy should start to be exposed to everything in the environment. That includes other dogs, all kinds of people (all ages, races, and abilities), new places, different flooring surfaces, different sounds, novel experiences, different animals like cats, etc. He has the greatest opportunity to learn and accept all of these things at this early age.

The more he experiences in a positive way, the more comfortable he will be throughout the rest of his life. If he gets to 5 months of age and hasn't had these experiences, the owner risks having a dog that has fears or behavioral issues going into adulthood. It may manifest itself as shyness, anxiety, full blown fear, aggression, etc.

Once the dog hits the magical 5 month age, socialization doesn't just stop. You continue to take him places and do things, but the frequency level doesn't necessarily need to be as intense as when he is younger.

What happens if you don't do this socialization? Your puppy has the potential to develop behavioral issues. What exactly happens largely is dependent upon your puppy's genetic nature. If his personality is going to range on the shyer end of the spectrum due to his genes, lack of socialization can make him very fearful and reluctant in life. If his genetic makeup would make him more suspicious of strangers (such as with guardian and herding breeds of dog), he may very well develop aggression problems or distrust of strangers. There are some breeds and individual dogs that handle lack of socialization better, but it's not ideal for any dog.

Socialization makes the dog the best dog he can become. A puppy with a shy or reserved personality by genes can learn to become more confident and outgoing with socialization. A puppy that is predisposed to be a guardian can be an excellent guardian when he has learned a lot about things and knows what is safe and okay and what actually is a threat. No one wants a guardian dog that doesn't know the difference!

If a puppy or dog has missed out on these critical time periods for socialization, you're then at the task of working with whatever behavioral issues are as a result of it. This is not the position you want to find yourself in, if you can avoid it.

Bad experience:

In example 2, our dog has had a bad experience with other dogs when he was attacked as a younger dog. This one traumatic experience has shaped his behavior, and it is out of fear that he reacts to other dogs. It's the expression of 'the best defense is a good offense.'

This example is extremely common, and most cases of dog aggression or problems as in example 2 stem directly either from a bad experience or lack of socialization. If the incident comes when a dog is very young or impressionable, the results can be even worse.

Here are two very real examples that I personally know of:

1. A lady bought a German Shepherd puppy when he was just 8 weeks old, and all was great until he was about 6 months old. On their daily walk one day, she spotted two loose dogs in the area. Both were very large dogs, and when they spotted her and her puppy, the dogs came charging at them. Within just moments, the largest of the two dogs attacked her puppy while the other one barked and tried to jump in. She began screaming for help and trying to get rid of the dogs best she could. Luckily, her dog wasn't seriously injured in this event, but it was very scary for both she and the dog, and it occurred to a younger, impressionable dog. For quite some time into his adult life, he had issues with other dogs and seeing them in public and on walks. He would bark and growl each time he saw them.
2. A lady had a weimeraner who loved to greet everyone, people and dogs alike. She tended to like to walk him on a retractable leash so he was

always a good 15-20 feet in front of her on walks. That meant that when he spotted people or dogs on walks, he'd always be to them before his owner. She thought it was okay to allow him to greet all these strange dogs even though she didn't know anything about them. One day when he was over a year old, he came across a dog and all seemed okay for a few seconds. He was near the dog's face saying hello, when the other dog deemed he was standing there too long. That dog bit him in the face before leaving. As a result her dog didn't know how to handle new dogs. He still wanted to say hello, but if he stood near a new dog more than 10 seconds, he would growl and back up and stand there. He was terribly conflicted.

These are two examples from people/clients I know, and while these were one time incidents in both cases, they were scary and traumatic for both dogs. It left them with permanent behavioral issues.

It is always important to try and prevent bad experiences from happening to our dogs, especially during puppyhood. It is a survival tactic for a dog to burn a bad experience into his brain cells so that he won't ever allow it to happen again. A bad experience only need happen one time for a dog to try to never recreate it again!

It may be out of your control at times and a bad thing does accidentally happen. The majority of things are within your control, and this means that you need your dog to trust you to protect him. Don't ever put him into situations that are very scary for him. Don't lose your patience and do something that will affect your dog forever.

As a final note on bad experiences, one shouldn't assume a dog has had a bad experience. This is often the assumption when we see an adult dog in the shelter system or one that we've adopted. It is possible that the dog was mistreated or abused, but the majority that show issues are more likely to have not received the correct amount of socialization.

How can you help your dog when he is afraid?

Generally, you have to work on changing how your dog feels about the scary thing. This can take a good deal of time, depending on the severity and the situation. The more you can control the variables in the situation, the better it will be for training purposes. It is always more difficult if you can't control some of those variables.

Here are a couple of the most common ways to work with fear:

Desensitization

This is a process of slowly introducing the scary stimulus to your dog at a very low levels and gradually increasing at levels that are comfortable to your dog.

This is used to work with human phobias very commonly. For example, if someone is afraid of spiders, the process may be started by just having a photograph of a spider in the same room, on the other side of the room, as the person. The person

may only be in the room for just a short time period. As the person is comfortable with the process, it is gradually made more difficult to include a real spider in a box at closer and closer ranges.

This same process is what can be done for a dog depending on what the scary thing is. The goal is that the dog is slowly introduced to it at levels he can handle and never put in a situation that is too stressful or scary for him.

For example, let's say a dog is frightened of joggers, and you happen to live in an area where lots of people go jogging. The dog becomes worried with people running up behind him or around him and has nipped at several people that surprised him. A way to desensitize him to joggers is to try and find a location where he will be able to see a lot of joggers at a distance. Perhaps there is a park where you can sit and watch people jogging at a comfortable distance, maybe 25-50 feet away.

People-watching is actually a great technique for dogs that are fearful of people. It is a way to desensitize a dog to new people in a way that feels safe for him. It doesn't require any interaction with the people which makes it easier and less stressful for the dog. Sometimes people-watching can be done from inside the safety of a car.

Counter-Conditioning

This is a way to help condition a new response in the dog. Right now he is afraid, but with time, he can hopefully feel different in the situation. Desensitization is paired with counter-conditioning a good majority of the time for the greatest effectiveness.

Food is usually the number one thing used to help a dog feel differently about something scary. It generally has to be a very high value food item, so standard run of the mill dog treats usually don't fit the bill. Things that are smelly or meaty are usually your best option. Things that can work well (that I've had good success with) are roasted chicken, liverwurst, and salmon jerky treats. Each dog is different, and you'll have to judge for your own dog what the right treat is. The goal is that he will still take the treat when he is stressed.

If a dog is very frightened or stressed, he may not eat any treats. Your goal should be to keep him at a comfortable distance from what is scary while pairing it with something he loves to eat so that he will take the treats from you.

For dogs that absolutely love to play toys, even more than food, this can sometimes be a good choice. The dog has to love toys, though, or it won't work.

How it would work

- Try to determine what scares your dog. In what situations does it occur? How far away from the dog is the stimulus when he becomes upset?

- Try to determine what treat items will work best. Invest in a treat training bag you can hang on your waist to carry your treats. Take a toy if you think it will work.
- Now, how can you set up a scenario where your dog can see the scary thing safely and without pressure?

Let's look at an example of how this might work:

Problem: Your dog is afraid of children.

Solution: Start your training program by thinking of places you can take your dog to watch children at play. The easiest spots are parks or school grounds. These locations allow you to take your dog to watch kids at play at a safe distance.

Take your treats with you and a favorite toy or two. Try to position yourself at a distance where he can watch the children playing and hear them but not so close that he becomes frightened and wants to run away or bark.

Give him several treats as he watches the children. If he is doing well and isn't too stressed, see if you can get him to play with a toy with you. Tug toys work well for this purpose. If he will play toys with you, it will allow him to transfer his attention to something else and not feel overly preoccupied with the children.

Keep these initial watching sessions to just a few minutes before moving on. What you're doing is giving him a chance to learn about the scary children at a distance that is comfortable to him to desensitize him to the movements and sounds of children, but then you're also pairing them up with something positive: yummy treats and playtime with you (if he'll play).

Each time you try this, you will stay longer while watching the children and move him closer. The goal is to get to where he can walk by the park or the school grounds and not become too frightened.

If he proceeds well, you may be able to progress to children tossing your dog treats.

NOTE: If your dog has bitten the scary item before (whether children, people, dogs, etc.), you must exercise extreme caution! Your goal needs to be realistic for your dog. For example, if your dog has bitten multiple dogs and barks and lunges at dogs, your goal isn't to make your dog suddenly best buddies with every dog he meets. Instead, your goal should be to increase your dog's comfort level with new dogs and to teach him how to control himself when in the presence of new dogs. Always be realistic with a goal for your dog because setting him up for failure won't be a good thing for him or you.

The role of punishment

One must be very careful with employing punishment based training techniques with a fearful dog. It is my suggestion that you not. The reason why: If your dog is very afraid of something and barks to tell you about it and you punish him with a correction, why would he feel better about the scary thing? He wouldn't. He likely would feel more frightened or justified for feeling that way.

Many owners think that if the dog growls or barks at something it is frightened of, they must immediately correct that behavior. The trouble is that dogs vocalize to express themselves. If he is barking or growling, he is giving a warning that something is wrong. If you punish him for those barks or growls, you take away his only way to express discomfort or fear. Many dogs will then no longer vocalize and instead move to biting. You don't want this to happen!

The role of medication

While the medication may have a role with other forms of biting issues, it is likely to be most beneficial for cases that involve fear. Fear based issues can also be tied into other forms of aggression. When this happens, the other aggression issue will be enhanced. For example, a territorial dog that is also fearful will be a far worse issue than just a territorial dog. Medication can also be warranted in cases of dominance aggression.

The medication doesn't cure the problem. This must be stressed. Instead, it is used to complement a behavior modification plan. It will require you to work actively with your veterinarian or a veterinary behaviorist as the medication is by prescription only.

The medication that is commonly used was originally used for people. Human brands names like Prozac, Zoloft, and Xanax have been used in dogs to treat aggression for some time. There are now dog formulations of the same base drugs, but many veterinarians still prescribe the human variations as it is generally less expensive this way.

These drugs are used to treat a variety of things in people, but depression and anxiety are the primary uses.

There are other medications that can be used to treat behavioral issues in dogs, but at this time, these medications are some of the most widely used. They are generally safe for the dog, but as with anything, there can be side effects. Your veterinarian will determine the best medication to use based on the dog's individual behavior and issues.

Medication is often suggested when a dog is very impulsive and reactive and has a hard time settling down. It is hard for a dog to learn in this state and to change his own behavior because he can't focus and think. He is stuck in reaction. While medication doesn't eliminate the behavior, what it does do is slow down his

impulsivity. For many dogs this allows him a better chance at learning how to change his behavior.

It is not a failure to use medication to help your dog. It is not a crutch. Instead, it is to be used only as one tool in the training program, and it's not forever.

Chapter 12 - Issues with other dogs

Not all dogs do well with other dogs. There are some dogs that just do best as only dogs. Certain breeds may have a tendency towards this behavior, and it is important to know about the individual breed or mix your dog is.

There are also cases where a dog just doesn't mix well with another particular individual. This has to do with pack dynamics and can be tricky at times.

Issues with stranger dogs

This is actually easier to deal with than when the issues arise with a known dog. There are cases when the aggressive dog is just not that friendly a dog. It is not true that all dogs are dog friendly, and you can't really force a dog to be. That's like saying you have to like every single person you've ever met and be willing to run up and hug them. Granted, maybe there are some Golden Retrievers amongst the human race, but generally, this isn't how most people are, and it isn't true for dogs either.

When it's not related to a genetic personality quirk, aggression towards strange dogs is normally related to fear. It may have to do with a bad experience with other dogs or it may just relate to not having enough exposure to other dogs.

Dogs that are raised as only dogs or have very limited experience with strange dogs (no training classes, no socialization opportunities, no dog play dates, etc.) tend to kind of forget how to 'speak dog.' That means they don't always have the skills to interpret what another dog is saying to them. They may view a dog's intentions as threatening when in fact they aren't. They may be more reactive to strange dogs.

It is also possible that a fear based response has a genetic component as well. If a dog genetically tends to have a more fearful personality, he may also exhibit this towards strange dogs.

Fear based responses normally look quite aggressive. The dog may bark, growl, lunge, pull his owner towards the dog, and bite if confronted. This is just the dog putting on a show. Barking and growling are designed to be distance increasing signals, so the goal of the dog when barking isn't really to bring the other dog closer to it. The goal is to keep it away with the aggressive display.

Most of the time actual bites won't occur until the dog's personal comfort zone is invaded. At that point in time a bite is the only way to remove the other dog.

If your dog exhibits aggression towards other dogs, you have to be realistic in your goals. As a trainer, I always tell people the realistic goal should be for a dog to be able to control himself better when seeing another dog. The goal shouldn't be to turn

your dog loose in a dog park and have friends. For some dogs, they may be able to slowly make new friends, but the real goal is just to get control of the dog.

The methods described in the section on fear (desensitization and counter-conditioning) are the same methods that work best with most issues of dog aggression on walks.

Let's go through it step-by-step:

1. You need to have physical control of your dog. Correction collars are not the best thing to use. Instead, a head halter is the most controlling item to use and after that a front clasp harness like the Easy Walk harness. The goal is that your dog can't pull you.
2. You need to figure out what treats your dog loves. They will have to be super value treat items, and as mentioned before, I find that very smelly and meaty items work best. I personally use roast deli chicken pieces and liverwurst. I combine the liverwurst with breadcrumbs and roll into little balls.
3. You need to have a treat training bag that can hang on your waist. This will be filled with treats and taken with you on all walks.
4. You need to figure out exactly what your dog does when he sees another dog and how far away that happens. This is very important. Does your dog become upset at first sight, 50 feet away or at what distance does it become an issue? Some dogs only become upset the closer the dog gets. Every variable you can identify is helpful.
5. If you know anyone with a calm dog, this dog can be used for training, otherwise you will have to make your environment work for training.
6. If using just the dogs you come across, you will have to help your dog maintain his comfort distance at all times.
7. When you spot another dog, you want to give your dog several treats when he sees him BEFORE he becomes upset. This is where it is key to know your distance. This allows your dog to begin to make a pairing between the dog and something good (food) at a distance he can handle.
8. BEFORE he gets upset, turn and walk another direction away from the dog. Give him several treats after turning to keep his mind now focused a different way.

This sounds harder than it is, but it can be tricky if you've not done it before. You're basically letting your dog see other dogs at a distance that doesn't currently upset him (desensitizing him to their presence), and then you're trying to change how he feels about them with the use of the treats and removing him from the situation. By letting him out of the situation you are teaching him to trust you because you won't force him to do something he can't do.

So, in shorthand, your dog sees another dog at distance he can handle, you begin giving several treats. Walk a few feet (only to a point he can still handle) giving treats; then, turn and go a different direction away from the dog, again giving a few treats.

Gradually as he can handle his comfort distance, you can get a few feet closer before turning away. How quickly this progress will occur depends on your dog and

many variables. The goal is for him to develop an okay personal distance of a couple of feet but remain calm and in control on your walks.

Issues with known dogs

This is a far trickier issue to deal with. Aggression between known dogs normally occurs due to pack dynamics, which can be hard to correct because of the environment and our role in it.

In all groups of dogs, there is going to be a social structure. Contrary to what some dog people may say, you will have no influence at all over which dog will be the top dog and which will rank out lower. How you feel about it doesn't matter at all.

For example, just because you have had one dog for 7 years and he's used to being the #1 dog doesn't mean squat when you bring in a second dog. If dog #2 has the personality characteristics to be in control, then that is what is going to happen.

Another example that often occurs: An owner has a small dog and then also has a large dog. The owner often allows the small dog to have a privileged role. The small dog gets all sorts of things that are perceived as unfair privileges by the larger dog. While there are some large dogs that will tolerate this, there are also many that won't tolerate any attitude from a small dog.

Ideally when you have one dog you evaluate the personality of the individual dog before adding another dog. For example, if your dog is normally extremely bold and pushy with other dogs, getting a dog with a similar personality isn't going to work. Instead, you need to go with a dog that is softer and gives in to other dogs to offset the pushy nature of the first dog.

Mixing dogs of the same personality type almost never works in the long run (unless they are both soft natured). Additionally, just because two dogs are siblings or some other relation doesn't mean they will get along either.

It's all about the social dynamic. Dogs are actually very similar to us in that there are always going to be leaders and followers. In any group of dogs, there is a distinct leader dog, a few dogs in the middle, and then those content to be at the bottom. It's the dogs in the middle area that can cause the most issues as they are likely to challenge that top dog over time. This is why you might have a couple of dogs that get along well into adulthood and then develop issues.

Additionally, some issues only arrive once dogs reach adulthood. That's because dogs will often be more lenient with one another when they are still of puppy age. Once a dog reaches social maturity, between 2-3 years old, they are generally not nearly as tolerant.

Once a dog fight has broken out or there is repetitive aggression between dogs, it is hard to correct because a habit is being established and supported by the environment. Separating the dogs doesn't make it go away, but putting them together doesn't work either. This is when every owner has to decide if they are

willing to put in the time and effort to try and make it better (but know that it might not get better) or if it would be best to rehome one of the dogs.

If you opt to try and improve the situation, it will require a lot of management and patience. The exact methodology will directly relate to the severity of the issues and how long they have been occurring.

Here are some ideas you can work with:

1. If the issue is very severe, the dogs will have to be separated and rotated so they aren't loose together.
2. In some cases, medication may be of assistance, but it doesn't work in all cases. The medication that is used is the same used for other types of aggression with the most common being Prozac.
3. Always have on hand a spray deterrent. Citronella based sprays should be used to break up a fight, and you should never put yourself in between fighting dogs.
4. Two people always make the situation easier than one.

The basic method of working with warring dogs is that you have to get them to break their habits and establish a new relationship. That means separating them or removing what causes the issue and trying to establish new and positive things when they are together. This is where two people is better than one.

Take a walk together where the dogs are parallel to one another. Start on opposite sides of the street and gradually come together closer so that the dogs are walking together. This helps build new relationships between many dogs.

When in the same space together, try having each of the two people have one of the dogs on leash. Provide petting and treats while the dogs are behaving. If one acts up, remove that dog for a timeout before returning a few minutes later to try again.

Don't allow the dogs to maintain prolonged eye contact with another. Say a dog's name to break that focus and put it back on you.

The main issue will be looking at how damaged the relationship is and what caused the issue. You may not be able to correct all the problems with the relationship. You may not be able to prevent fighting between the dogs.

The best thing to do is to have a training professional evaluate the dogs in person and offer a prognosis and step by step instructions tailored to your individual dogs.

Chapter 13 - The Role of Training

If your dog has never had any type of formalized obedience training, this could be a very important component of the process. You need your dog to be able to listen to you and you need a common language to speak to him in. Dogs that have had training are bonded to their owners in a different way. They are used to listening to someone, which is imperative with a dog that bites.

Training should be positive formatted, but the dog also has to understand that his rewards in life are contingent on his behavior. This means that you should teach the initial skills via treat based rewards for ease, but then make sure you ask your dog to perform skills he knows for other rewards like toys, his dinner, or affection. This way his skills are practiced a lot throughout the day but also so he isn't stuck on treats too much.

Of all dogs that need to have reliable and possess competent skill levels, aggressive dogs sure rank up there! You need to make sure that your dog has a reliable walk on leash, sit, down, come, stay, focused attention (watch me), and leave it. These are all skills that will come in handy!

Always be sure to look for a trainer that is comfortable working with aggression. Not all trainers are. A trainer that owns a facility may be able to allow your dog into a training class if it can be done safely or can work with you one-on-one.

Chapter 14 - Final Thoughts

Aggression is a very complicated behavioral issue, and it doesn't form overnight in a dog, so one's expectations shouldn't be that it will resolve overnight either. Modifying a dog's behavior takes many months and a lot of patience and commitment on the owner's part.

Because of the complexity and seriousness of aggression, you should always seek the assistance of a professional trainer or veterinary behaviorist to help tailor a behavior modification plan. Additionally, a professional can give you a very realistic prognosis of your dog. There are times when you have to evaluate the risks of the dog's behavior in the environment. For example, a dog exhibiting territorial aggression or biting is not a dog I would want in a household with children for safety reasons. These households tend to be busier and have a lot of people coming in and out. Unless you can realistically manage this environment to be safe at all times, the situation may not work out well.

In all cases of biting, there is room for improvement. How much improvement will be made is determined partly by the dog and his nature and partly by the owner and the commitment level to working through it.

Always error on the side of caution! This is best for the dog and safest for the public. Don't take unnecessary chances. If your dog has issues with people coming close to him, consider purchasing him a vest or coat that can have a patch applied that says Don't Touch Me! Never underestimate how many people may get too close to your dog for comfort. Don't put the dog into situations he can't handle! I once knew someone who walked a young dog through a busy, crowded street during a festival after I had told her the dog had aggression issues that needed to be dealt with. This dog bit a child on the walk, and unfortunately, it didn't have to happen. Please take your dog's biting seriously, even if it's only one time, and address it right away.

You've started the process by reading this book, and now the real work begins! Best of luck to you and your dog.