



The WoofGang Wag Rag



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Free

Guardian Angel?

I recently met a beautiful German Shepherd Dog. German Shepherds always attract my attention, as they are truly my favorite breed, but this one especially stood out when she barked fearfully at the man I was with. Whether it was his baseball hat or his glasses, his being a man or simply his being a stranger, it wasn't clear what she took offense to, but she was clearly scared of him. She might, in fact, have been afraid of me, too, as I was also a stranger, but she was preoccupied with his presence.



When people learn that I'm a trainer, they tend to share things with me about their dogs, and this time was no different. The owners mentioned that she barks and lunges at many people they pass on the street, but their more immediate concern was the extent to which she pulls on leash. When I commented that it might be worth also working on her fearful behavior towards strangers, they expressed their unconcern about it, saying that she was really just protecting them from unknown people and that they actually didn't want to discourage this.

My heart sank.

Through the Trainer's Lens

German Shepherds tend to be stressy and hypersensitive, especially if not from the best breeders. True to the breed, they are highly attached to their owners and aloof to, sometimes to the extent of distrusting of, strangers. Because of this, it is that much more crucial that German Shepherds are thoroughly socialized to their life-scape as puppies, and specifically to the many different types of people they will meet in their lifetimes.

This beautiful dog was fearful due to under-socialization and she was confronted by this fear every day. Strangers were, to her, ogres and villains and the boogey man let loose from under the bed. That she was left to struggle with and experience this fear day in and day out broke my
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Introductory Training Offer

Get a FREE 30-minute introductory basic training session when you purchase a 4-session package. (Offer details based on location.)

Call **WoofGang** at **646.345.5116** to make an appointment.

Talkin' Trash on the Street

Dogs who lunge and bark at passing dogs on the street are usually doing so due to fear or anxiety. Giving your dog a correction for her behavior tends to make it worse. A more effective approach is to change her feelings about other dogs from one of fear to one of happy anticipation!

Call **WoofGang** at **646.345.5116** for help with your trash-talkin' pooch.

Growing the Bonds

Our pets have become members of the family, working, playing, eating, and sleeping at our sides.

WoofGang can help you strengthen the bond with your canine family member. Call **646.345.5116** today.

About the Trainer

Dog trainer **Laura Garber**, CPDT, is a professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) and is certified by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT), the first national certification for dog trainers.

Laura has authored articles about dogs and dog behavior in dog-centric magazines and on-line resources.

Laura believes strongly in strengthening the bond between human and companion animal. For this reason, she regards training as an exercise in building relationship rather than obedience. Such an approach promises greater understanding and symbiosis within our family packs.

Log on to www.myWoofGang.com.

Territorial Behavior

Allowing your dog to peer out the window at passers-by can develop into a more dangerous behavior called territorial aggression. Your dog will start to think that it's his barking that's keeping the passing people and dogs away and, over time, this can potentially put your guests at risk.

Call **WoofGang** at **646.345.5116** for help with this dangerous behavior.

Main Article (cont.)

heart. She was not trying to protect her people – she was trying to protect herself! In her mind, she was not *ever* assured of her own safety.

The Message Misunderstood

I don't blame the owners for not being able to read her body language and, therefore, for misunderstanding her motivation. Aggression looks like aggression to most people and so fear-based aggression might well get confused with protective aggression. But what I *do* hold these owners responsible for is putting their dog at risk.

There will come a day when these owners are caught unawares, when they might not have a firm grasp of the leash or don't have a leash on her at all, and a stranger comes out of nowhere. What if, on that day, this dog is absolutely certain that this stranger has ill-intent and that she is in grave danger? Might she bite? My own father was bitten by a fearful German Shepherd who got loose one day as he walked down the street carrying a violin case, something this dog had never seen before. My father got a tetanus shot and some stitches and that was the end of it, but not all bite victims will let it go at that.

The Lesson Learned

When a dog sends a message, it is only as strong as it needs to be in order to communicate her feelings. If a dog growls and the receiver, let's say a human, responds by ceasing his actions, such as stopping an approach, then the dog learns that growling successfully gets the message across. If, however, the receiver continues to approach despite the growl, the dog might feel she must escalate the behavior in order to get attended to – the dog may now need to bite. If the bite makes the person get farther away,

which is what the dog was trying to affect in the first place, then the dog learns that biting successfully gets the message across. Not a safe message delivery system for the humans involved. This is why dogs who have bitten once are more likely to bite again – because they have learned that biting works.

The Moral of the Story

So someday this German Shepherd will likely bite when a boogey man gets too close. And, biting once, she will likely bite again because she learns that boogey men tend to go back under the bed after they're bitten. But a dog with a multiple-bite history is not looked upon as a safe dog, is she?

So this beautiful dog, who lives every day in the shadow of fear for her safety, has good reason to worry – the only problem is that she knows not where the real danger lies.

For this article in its entirety, log on to www.myWoofGang.com.



Delco is a true gent! A picture says a thousand words: He is a beautiful boxer with a soulful gaze that will melt your heart no matter how hard you resist. Visit Delco at the Liberty Humane Society, and see if he isn't the canine friend you've been searching for!



Ask Woofie...

Woofie, I read your article, "The Bark Stops Here!" My dog, a 30 lb. spaniel mix, barks unstoppably at squirrels, deer and birds. She gets all excited, trembly and wants badly to go out to chase them. She barks at them while indoors at the windows, or while outdoors. The only current solution is window shades and blinders (neither of which I can consider doing). She is impossible to take down to the beach because she will not stop barking (nor leash pulling) at any seabirds flying above or feeding in the sand at the surf. It's downright embarrassing. I'm wondering what category of barking you would place this behavior in and how I may start to curb it? Any advice would be so greatly appreciated.

Hiya, Caroline! Well, for starters, it's going to be difficult to change the behavior if you can't inhibit her ability to do it from inside the house, especially while you're not around. If she has opportunity to practice the behavior in your absence, then she is perfecting that behavior. Shades or blinds would help, or keep her out of the room with windows out onto the yard would also work. So the first step is inhibiting her ability to do the behavior in your absence.

The next step is to give her something else to redirect her energy onto. If she has a favorite toy, like a squeaky, then withhold it from her the rest of the time so she doesn't get her fill of it during the day. Rationing its access will make it more valuable. Then, when she sees a squirrel, introduce the toy and offer to play a lively game with her. Characteristics of the toy that might make it more enticing: squeaking will help attract her attention to it; also attaching a rabbit pelt to the squeaky toy to give it a real animal scent. That will make it a very exciting toy indeed! Only allow her to play with this toy when on a walk and in the company of critters. As soon as the critter runs off, tuck the toy away.

Hope this helps!... **Woofie**