



Confidence building for dogs...

Background

Many problems with dogs can stem from a lack of self confidence, or relying on their owners for security.

This often causes problems like excessive barking, attention seeking, health disorders and sometimes self mutilation.

Dogs need to feel confident in themselves but not so confident that they become dominant.

Shouting or hitting a dog is never a solution, especially for dogs that have no self confidence, it will only make things worse.

You will never convince a nervous dog that you have a reason for getting angry and lashing out at them.

Language barriers

Contrary to popular belief dogs rarely know that 'they have done wrong' they are usually cowering from your anger.

Imagine a foreigner came to your house and started to shout at you, would you know what they meant? They may have a valid reason for their anger but they have no way of telling you about it.

Dogs don't speak our language, we simply cannot tell them off, for what they did while you were out. The only way to build confidence in a dog is by setting an example.

Nothing to worry about

If they are afraid of something, don't shield them from it or force them to inspect it. Just put it where they have to go past it and then ignore it and act as if there is nothing to be afraid of.

They will soon learn to ignore something once they become used to it and know it doesn't bother you.

Getting over-excited

Overcome this by introducing them to the trigger for their excitement without it leading to anything. For example, you can teach a dog that putting a coat on, or getting a lead down doesn't always end in a walk.

If you do this often enough they will learn that these things are a normal part of life and nothing to get excited over.

If they do become over-excited simply ignore them, walk away or put them in another room (20 to 30 seconds is sufficient).

If they get excited when you (or they) come back, put them out to try again. Dogs will only get excited if there is something to get excited about. If there is no reward for getting excited then they will learn not to do it.

If they have been doing it for a while then it may take some time to unlearn it. If you teach your dog to have some confidence then they will take many more things in their stride and will be far more enjoyable to you.

Keep leads loose

When walking do not keep your dog on a tight lead. Especially when you meet other dogs, you will only encourage them to be afraid of the other dog.

They can't get away because of the tight lead so their only option may be to attack before they are attacked. If you can relax around other dogs, it is more likely that your dog will too.

Remember that a dog will pick up behaviour patterns from their surroundings, if you are nervous and stressful then your dog will almost certainly be too, which will make you more nervous and stressful and so on...