

Behavior Threshold in dog training is the **distance the dog can withstand a trigger without reacting or getting upset** and when your dog crosses from one emotional state to another.

A real life example from a client:

I am tired of Maizie going absolutely berserk at times when she sees something that sets her off. Today, a woman using a walker was going past my apartment when we went out. We started walking and Maizie went nuts and kept it up well after the woman passed. This is the same behavior that occurs time and time again. I have to hold her leash so that she is right next to me with no room to spare, not an inch. I'm beginning to think that she will always do this.

The “Beserk Behavior” Maizie displayed is crossing the Behavior Threshold. She crossed from a calm behavior to an instinctual behavior. When your dog is triggered from a resource: a woman using a walker, it is our job to direct and redirect the dog to move the dog from the instinctual behavior to a calmer behavior.

We train our dogs to learn the foundation behaviors so we as humans can communicate to our dogs specific behaviors to direct and redirect them from one emotional state to another. We instill positive behaviors such as sit, down, and recall to direct our dogs. We form patterns of behaviors such as our stop, back, figure six exercise to redirect our dogs to bring them from one emotional state to a calmer state, close to you so you have the ability to decrease the trigger which causes your dog to cross the behavior threshold.

I follow a standard protocol.

First, I make the foundation behaviors “known behaviors” A known behavior is one where your dog can offer the behaviors asked on cue without enforced compliance. The example I use often is when a dog jumps on you or others when entering the home. I will direct the dog with the “Off” cue telling the dog that his paws are off the floor or ground. I will redirect the dog to a sit, or a patterned behavior of sit, down, focus so the dog has a preferable behavior to access in the generalized situation instead of jumping on people entering the home.

Second, I practice the behaviors so I, as a human, can act instead of react. . By forming patterns of behaviors, the dog can learn to offer the behaviors on cue, without enforced compliance. An example of this is our redirect exercise: Stop, Back into a figure six to At-Ease then Heel. Here is where we can move the dog from one emotional state to another and continue onto what we were doing.

By becoming more aware of your environment, acting instead of reacting we can effectively redirect the dog crossing the behavior threshold or when the dog has crossed the behavior threshold we can direct them to a calmer behavior.