



PEACE AT THE FENCE

Most of the time, dogs don't do well making decisions on their own, especially when there's something in the environment that causes arousal. It's like how I get when there's a big sale at a great department store! Many folks think that dogs will just make the right decisions no matter the situation. This is an unrealistic expectation for any dog.



First and foremost, we suggest that you don't leave dogs in the yard unattended. Many things could happen. Supervise when they're outside and check your fence regularly. Your fence can age and become less stable over time. Your fences are also a great place for things that cause a stir. For example, you're outside enjoying the day in the yard with your dog and your neighbor's dog who was left in his yard is bored and causes some trouble by barking or snapping at the fence. Squirrels often use the fence as an apparatus to tease your dog. As the human in charge, it's best to not let your dog even go there: don't let the aroused

state start where your dog is charging the fence, barking etc. You need to get your dog under control BEFORE he gets aroused, regardless of what the other dog or animal is doing. Just like we wouldn't let our 2-year olds scream and yell at neighbors, the same goes for our dogs.

What works for many dogs is to practice good behavior outside when the dogs, squirrels etc. AREN'T there. Practice calling your dog to you in the yard when it's easy. Use high value treats, especially at first (for folks who don't like treat training, you can fade these out very quickly - I do!) Call him to you and surprise him with a treat. Don't call him if you don't think he'll come to you, wait until you know he'll do it. Have the treat sitting on something or hide it. Don't hold it out and show it to him, otherwise you might have to bribe him every time. Keep your body in a natural position so he gets used to being summoned when you're relaxed and comfortable. Call him from different areas in the yard as he improves. Teach him that coming to you is way more rewarding than going to the fence!

Practice with more and more distractions as time goes on. Using our neighbor dog example, the minute you hear the neighbor's dog running toward the fence (and preferably before your dog hears or sees him) call your dog to you and reward him. If you wait until he's too aroused, he'll go into the "Sorry, Fido's not in right now!" zone and he may not respond to you. This isn't because he's bad or trying to ruin your life. He's just being an excited dog with no guidance as to what to do in that setting.

Once he's about 80% reliable on the recall, start fading the treats down to where you only have to treat once in awhile. Always use praise and really tell your dog how good he is for coming to you! Build a working partnership with him; of course, you can be senior partner in these scenarios. If you have more than one dog, practice with

each dog separately until they're reliable individually, then move to working with both dogs at a time, then all three, etc.

If you do have the neighbor dog scenario, try talking to your neighbor to see if he's willing to train together. At the very least, he might be willing to bring his dog inside more often to cut down on fence excitement. Also, hire a trainer to help you if you become unsure of what to do.

You really can control the fence happenings and have peace through positive management and being a good leader. You are in charge of your dog. As we always say in the Our Pack class, there's a reason that dogs don't drive cars or have jobs. They really do rely on us for guidance and, of course, we love them exactly as they are. Peace!

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