



Your dog is allowed to have fun

I have mentioned this a few times already, but I just want to make sure that everyone is really on the same page about this. Your dog is allowed to have fun. In fact, I want your dog (and you of course) to have fun. In our reactivity training there is no reason whatsoever to stop doing things your dog enjoys if they don't trigger him.

Many reactive dogs, as we know, have varying levels of reactivity towards different triggers and in different situations. And usually they have settings in which they are completely happy and carefree, without being triggered at all. I really want you to create those settings for your dog so that he can have good times. His life should definitely not consist only of management and counterconditioning sessions.

The most common example for this is leash reactivity. A lot of dogs that are very reactive on leash are fine with other dogs off leash. We see this very often, for example in German Shepherds. I have met so many German Shepherds who sounded ferocious on leash but as soon as they were off-leash they were perfectly appropriate, social dogs.

So, if you own a dog with leash reactivity but there are certain off-leash settings in which your dog is fine (at a daycare or at his favorite dog park or such), then absolutely - take him there to have fun.

Another example is dogs that are very social and love human attention when they are NOT at home - but they feel very protective of their home and are quite unfriendly to visitors. These dogs definitely are allowed to go out and have fun while accompanying you to a restaurant patio or a stroll in the park. For them, it is a totally different setup than having unwelcome visitors come to their door.

So you just would want to make sure that around your property, you manage your dog well and practice counterconditioning.

Your dog will let you know what he perceives as a trigger and what not. Every setup in which your dog can be happy and have a good time, he is definitely allowed to experience!

For some dogs this also means going to certain classes or activities. I know that we have quite a few agility competitors among our reactivity students. If your leash-reactive dog is



having fun running agility - absolutely, go and do agility with him! Manage him on a leash around the other dogs of course, but do enjoy your time at agility.

So, please do not think that just because we are working on specific triggers of our dogs, we have to micromanage and control and regulate every aspect of their lives. The more of a normal life our dogs can have, the better! And everything that they are already doing and enjoying can only be beneficial for their overall happiness and wellbeing.

Having fun is a great way to get rid of stress, both for humans and for dogs. Definitely allow your dog to have fun doing what he already likes to do, as long as it doesn't trigger him.