

While you may enjoy the sounds of a spring thunderstorm, your dog may be hiding under a table, shaking with fear! Most dogs are afraid of something: firecrackers, thunder, or even an object in an unexpected place. When your dog is showing fear, how do you help? Take our quiz to see how your methods match up.

- 1) On walks, your dog is skittish of garbage trucks, and frantically pulls you when one approaches.
You:
- a) Learn to avoid the days and times that the garbage collection occurs.
 - b) Step back from the street, place your dog in a sit, and focus his attention on you while the truck passes.
 - c) Talk to your dog in soothing words, petting him while the truck approaches.

Best Response: (b) Teach your dog to focus on you and follow your calm example. Avoidance does not help him conquer his fear, and “soothing” him only reinforces his fearful state.

- 2) In the midst of a short but violent thunderstorm, your dog hides in a closet, nervously chews shoes, and shakes uncontrollably.
You:
- a) Move into the closet with him; why should he suffer alone?
 - b) Put him on his leash, calmly heel him out of the closet, and keep him by your side until the storm subsides.
 - c) Correct his insecurity with a sharp “NO!”

Best Response: (b) It is ok for a dog to seek a safe space in a storm, but it is never ok for a dog to engage in destructive behavior.

- 3) On city trails, your dog panics when he approaches a bridge, refusing to cross.
You:
- a) Find creative routes that bypass the bridge.
 - b) Brace yourself and pull him across the bridge.
 - c) Briskly lead him by your side onto the bridge, giving him a small treat when you reach the half-way mark.

Best Response: (c) Lead by example and encourage bravery with praise and treats.

- 4) Each time you take out the vacuum to house clean, your dog barks and runs in anxious circles.
You:
- a) Turn on the vacuum for short periods of time, keeping the dog on his leash near you, to accustom him to the noise.
 - b) Ask another family member to walk him when you vacuum.
 - c) Push the vacuum toward him so you prove to him that it won't hurt him.

Best Response: Desensitization takes time, but is well worth the effort. Patience is the key; never try to push fearful stimuli on a dog too quickly or too dramatically.

- 5) Your neighbors are shooting off fireworks for the New Year. Your dog whines and repeatedly jumps up on you and others.
You:
- a) Pick him up, or if he a large dog, sit on the floor to hold him.
 - b) Play music and create an upbeat commotion in the house to distract him.
 - c) Put the dog in a down-stay, or if he cannot hold a down-stay, put him in his crate.

Best Response: (c) Fearful behavior such as jumping can be controlled with established obedience work. Do not reinforce his fears by rewarding him with affection, and do not overwhelm him in an attempt to provide distraction. Do, however, provide him with a quiet place to settle.

Thanks to Lara Stonesifer, trainer and owner of Lara's Canine Solutions in New Braunfels, Texas, for her input.