

morley vetcentre

TRIGGER STACKING

WHAT IS TRIGGER STACKING?

Ever had 'one of those days' where nothing seems to go right? You sleep through your alarm, get stuck in traffic, the computer crashes at work and the phone just won't stop ringing....then you arrive home and open the mail to find an unexpected and expensive bill...then the family arrive home and are hungry...they ask 'is dinner ready yet?'aaaarrrrgggghhh!



These events (TRIGGERS) on their own do not trigger a reaction, but built up on top of each other through out the day can **STACK** up and you reach a point where you become over threshold and react!

Now let us have a look at the world from our dog's point of view—trigger stacking is the reason behind dogs reacting to what we may perceive as a small event....they may be having 'one of those days' too.

POTENTIAL TRIGGERS IN THE HOME

Here is a list of common potential triggers for your dog (this is not an extensive list..but it will get you thinking!)

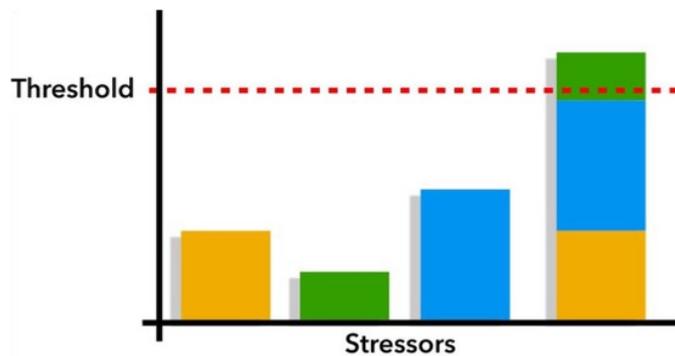
- Visitors (adults)
- Visitors (children)
- Sounds within the house (vacuum, home repairs—hammer, drill etc)
- Sounds outside the home (neighbour's kids, neighbour's renovations, neighbourhood dogs and other animals, thunderstorm, wind, rain, traffic, rubbish truck etc)
- Change of routine (this is a big one—as dogs are such creatures of habit—they like consistency)



POTENTIAL TRIGGERS OUT AND ABOUT

Here is a list of common potential triggers for your dog (this is not an extensive list...but it will get you thinking!)

- Traffic
- Kids playing
- Sports games
- People on bikes/skateboards/scooters
- Other dogs/cats/livestock
- Unfamiliar people
- Shopping trolleys/prams
- Loud noises



POTENTIAL TRIGGERS AT THE VET

Here is a list of common potential triggers for your dog (this is not an extensive list...but it will get you thinking!)

- Travel in the car
- New environment
- Previous negative association
- In pain/feeling unwell
- Owner nervous/stressed
- Smells
- Noises
- Surfaces
- Other animals
- Veterinary staff
- Owner not present
- Restraint
- Procedures
- Wearing a muzzle

ADRENALIN

We also need to take in to account the effects of adrenalin:

- Adrenalin and corticosteroids are released in stressful events
- Controlled by the sympathetic nervous system
- Change the thought processes in the brain
- Dog is more reactive to stimulation, rather than thinking before responding to a stimulus
- Up to **6** days to normalise (*Dwyer 2011*)

To combat the effects of trigger stacking we need to give our dogs plenty of POSITIVE associations with their environment and potential triggers. By reducing the number of triggers in your dog's life we can help them stay under-threshold, calm and relaxed.

If your dog is already showing signs of fear/stress to environmental triggers it is important to seek professional advice—it is vital that a well structured behaviour modification program is implemented—as going too fast too will worsen the issue.

For further advice please contact us at

dogtrainingmorleyvetcentre@gmail.com

