

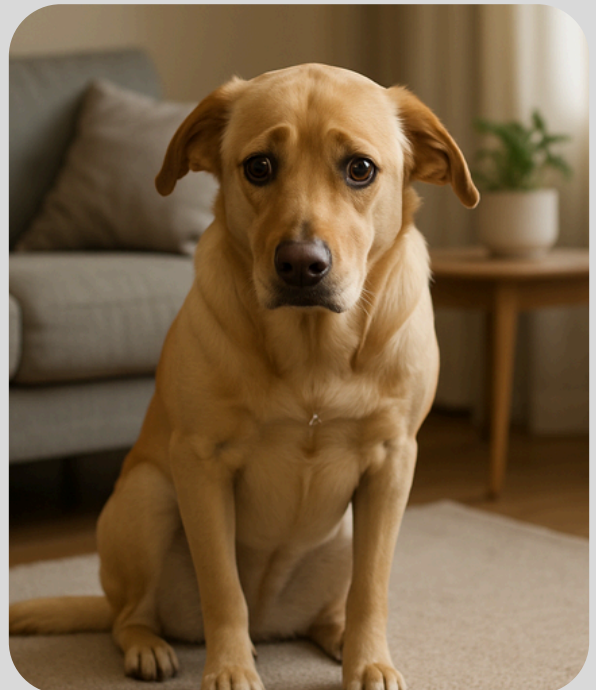


Understanding Prolonged Reactions in Dogs: The Threat That Persists

Dogs, like humans, can experience anxiety and stress in response to perceived threats. When faced with a persistent perceived threat, such as a person entering the house and staying for an extended period, a dog's anxiety reaction may follow a specific pattern over time. This handout aims to shed light on why this occurs and the associated hormonal responses.

The Anxiety Cycle:

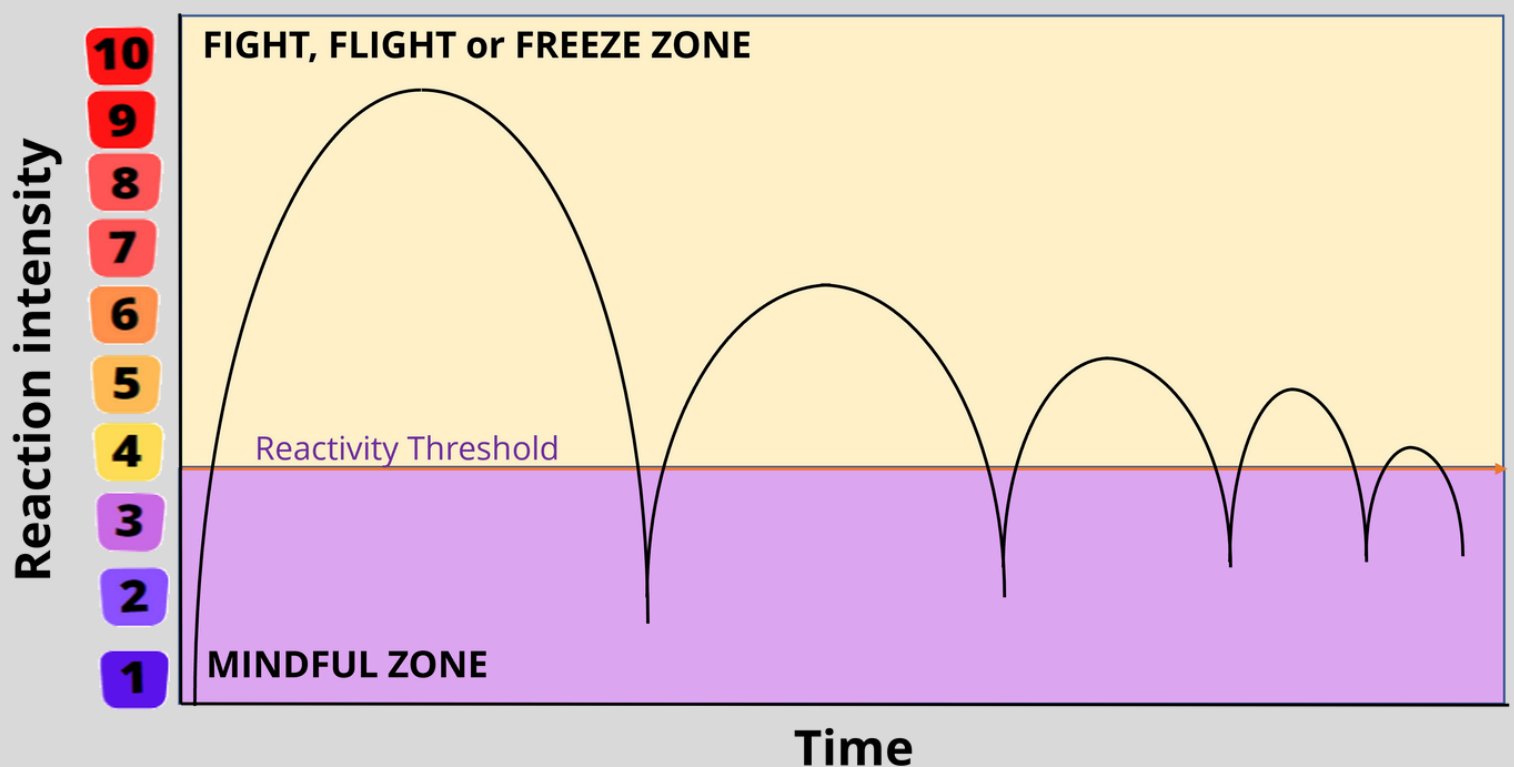
- **Initial Intensity:**
 - **Behavioral Response:** The dog's initial reaction to a perceived threat is often intense. This may include barking, pacing, or displaying other signs of distress.
 - **Hormonal Response:** The body releases stress hormones, such as cortisol and adrenaline, preparing the dog for a potential threat.
- **Brief Calmness:**
 - **Behavioral Response:** After the initial intensity, there may be a brief period of calmness. The dog may assess the situation and, if the threat doesn't escalate, start to relax.
 - **Hormonal Response:** Stress hormone levels start to decrease during this period of relative calm.





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- **Recurrent Intensity:**
 - **Behavioral Response:** As the perceived threat persists, the dog may cycle through repeated episodes of intense reactions, each time potentially decreasing in intensity but with shorter intervals of calmness.
 - **Hormonal Response:** Hormone levels may experience fluctuations, with a rise during intense reactions and a partial decline during calm periods.
- **Decreasing Intensity and Duration:**
 - **Behavioral Response:** Over time, the dog may become somewhat habituated to the presence of the person, resulting in less intense reactions, over a shorter time period.
 - **Hormonal Response:** The body may still release stress hormones, but in decreasing amounts as the dog adapts to the ongoing situation.





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Adaptation or Shutdown:

- **Behavioral Response:** The dog may eventually adapt to the constant threat, showing minimal reactions or, in extreme cases, may shut down and withdraw from the situation.
- **Hormonal Response:** Prolonged exposure to stress may lead to a state of chronic elevation of stress hormones, contributing to exhaustion and emotional withdrawal.

Understanding Hormonal Responses:

- **Cortisol:**
 - **Role:** Released in response to stress, cortisol prepares the body for a "fight or flight" response.
 - **Impact:** Prolonged elevated levels can contribute to anxiety and other health issues.
- **Adrenaline:**
 - **Role:** Provides a rapid energy boost in response to perceived threats.
 - **Impact:** Frequent releases can contribute to heightened arousal and a persistent state of alertness.
- **Serotonin:**
 - **Role:** Often referred to as the "feel-good" neurotransmitter, serotonin plays a role in mood regulation.
 - **Impact:** Chronic stress can lead to imbalances in serotonin levels, affecting the dog's overall emotional state.

