

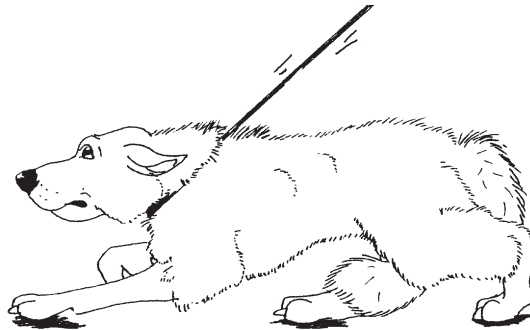
## How to have a happy puppy

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### How does fearfulness develop into 'fear aggression'?

A dog that is apprehensive of people or other dogs will keep its distance from them by moving away.

Often flight is not possible e.g. because the dog is on the lead, because it is indoors or in the car etc., so it has to make the person or dog go away. To achieve this it may show defensive behaviour. The distance at which it decides to show this aggression we call the 'critical distance'.

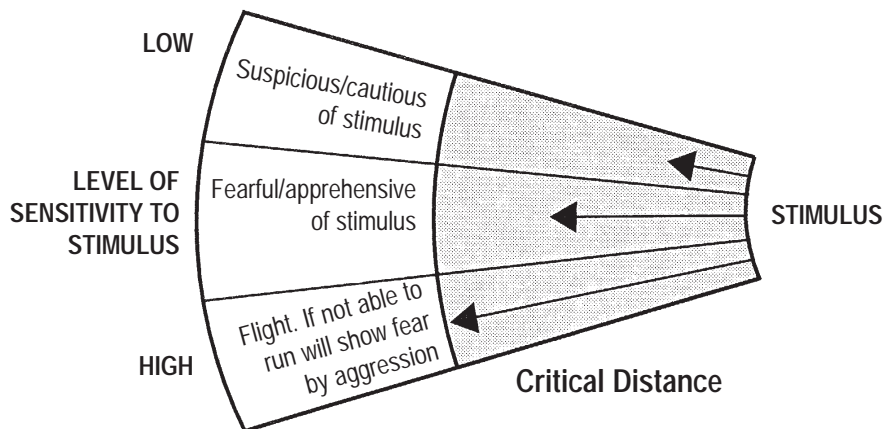


Often the other dog or person does not want to approach e.g. when passing in the street or when the postman turns and leaves, having delivered the post. However, to the dog it seems as if its behaviour has worked. Its confidence in the display of aggression grows and it is increasingly inclined to use it in that situation. It can become so confident in the effect of showing aggression, it will move towards people or dogs it is afraid of, intent on attacking them because it sees it as the best form of defence. What makes such a dog more dangerous is its unpredictability i.e. anticipating what or who will make it apprehensive and likely to attack is difficult.

### How does early behavioural organisation prevent fearfulness?

Whether or not a dog will try and get away from or be defensive towards a stimulus (a stimulus can be anything e.g. adult, child, dog, black plastic bag rolling down the street, traffic etc.) depends on its emotional response to it. The more stimuli it developed a positive emotional response to in puppy-hood the less likely it is that fear or fear aggression will occur.

The more a puppy is surrounded by stimuli it is already confident with the more it can rely on these and the more able it will be to cope with new stimuli. Confident puppies grow into confident dogs.



#### What is the right age to start a puppy's behavioural organisation?

In the traditional view events that occur in the period up to 12 to 14 weeks have more effect on a puppy's development than those that occur in later life.

However, reinterpretation of research conducted in the 1960s and 70s and more recent research suggests that the most sensitive period occurs before eight weeks the most important part of which is three to five weeks. Why this period is important can be explained by the fact that behavioural organisation is achieved by associating things with an emotional reaction. Up until three weeks puppies are blind, deaf and immobile and their experience is limited to the feel, warmth, scent and taste of their mother, littermates and nest site. Between three and five weeks a natural state of relaxation occurs, manifested by a low heart rate. The development of the other senses and mobility after three weeks means that new things are encountered but because of the natural state of relaxation they are almost automatically associated with a positive emotional state.