

## Aggression

music and training to calm  
fearful, reactive dogs  
training protocols by Victoria Stilwell



## The iCalmPet™ Mission

We believe auditory awareness helps everybody live more comfortably in a complex sensory world.

We create specialized music and sound recordings for dogs, cats, and the people who love them.

Worry and unease are soothed by calming tempos, warm sounds, and familiar patterns.

When we are calm, life feels sweeter, safer, and easier.

### For more information on Canine Aggression:

Visit [www.Positively.com](http://www.Positively.com)

or purchase a copy of *Train Your Dog Positively* by Victoria Stilwell

## Understanding Aggression

Aggressive behavior addresses a dog's need to increase distance from a perceived danger and includes threat and action displays, ranging from a subtle lip lift to a deep bite. In most cases the intention is not so much to harm the threat as it is to change the threat's behavior by making it go away. Genetics, health, age, sex, fear, an imbalance of brain chemicals, hormones, and whether the dog is intact or neutered are all factors that influence aggressive behavior.

Aggression is deeply rooted in a dog's instinctual need for safety. Growling, snapping, lunging, and biting are critical ways of communicating intent, and whether that intent is to warn, intimidate, resolve conflict, increase distance, defend, or cause harm, it's designed to ensure personal safety and survival. Even on an emotional level, when a dog is fearful, frustrated, angry, anxious, stressed, or in pain, safety is of paramount importance.

Helping an aggressive dog become more confident by teaching him to see a perceived threat or potential loss of a valued resource in a different light is the key to successfully changing the behavior. For some dogs this can be achieved

in a relatively short period of time, but others require more time; each dog learns at a different pace. Positive reinforcement is the most effective philosophy to use in these cases, because positive methods have a lasting impact, even on the "red zone" dogs.

Although aggressive behavior is an effective way for dogs to control their environment, affect behavior in others, ensure priority access to resources, and achieve reproductive success, using the dog's supposed desire to be the 'alpha' to explain why dog's aggression does not do justice to what is really going on in the dog's mind. If a dog is aggressive towards you it is more likely because he is fearful or is protecting something that is important to him and not because he wants to be above you in the 'pack.'

The pack idea is based on outdated theory that misunderstands a dog's social intentions. A more accurate explanation lies in the fact that if a dog has not been taught how to function successfully in a domestic environment he will behave the only way he knows how.

He may control access to food, space, furniture, or other things that provide comfort and pleasure, by aggressing, but this is more likely done out of fear that he will lose access to those resources and not because he wants to be 'above' you or anyone else in the household.

## Understanding Aggression [cont.]

People understandably want quick fixes for their dog's aggressive behavior because they worry about what damage their dog may do, but the 'quick fix' idea demeans a dog's emotional experience and is psychologically unachievable.

A dog needs time and support to change the way he feels emotionally; punitive training only puts a bandage on the problem without really addressing the cause and changing the way the dog feels inside. Even though it may look like the dog is "behaving" better, continual suppression of aggressive behavior through punishment is very dangerous because every incident creates another negative experience for a dog that is already a ticking time bomb.

Regardless of its origins or intent in the dog's life, aggression is almost never a useful or wanted behavior in any domestic environment and must be treated appropriately in order to preserve the well-being of the dog, his environment, and his human family. Aggressive behavior must never be ignored as failure to treat it will make it worse. It can also be a very difficult behavior to deal with and oftentimes requires additional help from a qualified force free trainer.

## Rituals of Behavior

To find a trainer visit:  
[www.positively.com/trainers](http://www.positively.com/trainers)

Reactive and or aggressive dogs are often fearful and insecure and do not cope well in unpredictable situations and environments. Making your dog's environment more predictable will help your dog be more confident and cope better in certain situations. You can achieve this by setting up Rituals of Behavior which are sequences you can follow each time your dog experiences a situation that he has historically found uncomfortable. For example, if your dog is fearful of a guest coming into your home, make the sequence the same each time a guest arrives, regardless of who it is. You can either teach your dog to go to his bed or safe zone when he hears the doorbell so he is safely contained when someone comes into your home or put him on a leash and greet the person outside if he finds outdoor spaces more relaxing, before coming back inside.

Another example of a Ritual of Behavior is when you are walking with a leash reactive and/or aggressive dog that lunges at other dogs. You can cue your dog to look at you or play with a toy as the other dog walks past instead of lunging and this is a ritual that you perform each time your dog catches sight of another dog. After a number

of repetitions you will find your dog looks at you as soon as he sees the other dog without being cued as he now expects the ritual to happen. This will not only give him something more positive to do, but will also make him a lot more secure. Now the sight of other dogs means good things happen to him, which is the first step in making him more comfortable around them.

You can either establish a Ritual of Behavior yourself or work with a qualified professional force free dog trainer.

Get more information on Rituals of Behavior by reading *Train Your Dog Positively* by Victoria Stilwell, available on [www.positively.com](http://www.positively.com)

## Sensory Education

On an emotional level, aggression causes extreme stress for dogs, especially if triggered by a traumatic incident, abusive handling, fear or an inability to cope with continually changing environments. Using sensory education techniques such as sound therapy reduces stress and helps dogs become more emotionally balanced.

Physical exercise is important for relieving stress, but providing opportunities for relaxation throughout the day also helps promote a state of calm. Sensory techniques such as stroking and massage help relieve stress, promoting relaxation.

## Instructions for Use

### 1. Introducing your dog to the source of the music.

At this stage the iCalmDog speaker or other device which may be new/unfamiliar to a reactive dog must be turned off. Begin promoting a positive association to the sight of the device by holding it in your hand and showing it to your dog.

As soon as your dog sees and investigates the device with his nose, praise him and give him a treat or toy. Take it away and hold it behind your back, wait a few seconds, then present it again for your dog to investigate and immediately praise and reward him. Repeat ten times and then put the iCalmDog/device away out of sight.

Repeat this process at intervals throughout the day so your dog begins to build up a positive visual association with the device. **Put it out of sight after each session.**

Once you have completed a few sessions you are ready to start playing the music.

### 2. Introducing your dog to the music

If at any time your dog is fearful of the speaker when you present it to him, stop the session and go straight to playing the music. To avoid any negative reaction hold the iCalmDog closer to your body than to your dog's face.

Set the volume to a level that you find comfortable but not too loud as to be overwhelming for your dog. Place the iCalmDog in a safe area where your dog cannot access it.

To positively habituate your dog to the music find times when you can either relax together or engage in a low-energy activity that you both enjoy while playing the music from Track 2. This will help calm your dog and build up a positive association with the music being played. The time you spend can be anything from a few minutes to half an hour or more as long as your dog chooses to engage with you, relax or go to sleep as the music is being played.

### 3. Linking tracks to activities

Even though all the musical tracks can help relax your dog in many different ways you can link each separate track to its own activity. Some believe that dogs, like people, can recognize the subtle differences in a musical sequence and so can associate a certain sequence with a specific activity.

For example, you can link Track 3 to a massage session, Track 4 to a game such as hide the treat and go find it, Track 5 to chew time and so on—you choose an activity your dog likes. You do not have to associate the music in these different tracks in this way but as humans easily recognize musical sequences, linking each piece of music to a specific activity will also help you remember which activity goes with which track if you decide to link it.

After a period of time your dog will associate the music with an activity he or she enjoys and simply just playing the music will trigger a good feeling.

**Only when your dog is at the stage when he feels good or is calm when the music is played is it time to move to the next level.**

### 4. Final Step

Find time at various intervals throughout the day to relax with your dog while playing the music and you will find that your dog is more able to follow your direction, learn new things, problem solve and listen to you during situations that might cause him stress. For example, if your dog is stressed when new people come into the home, play the music and do the activity fifteen to thirty minutes before they arrive and at intervals when they are present. This will allow your dog to be more relaxed in their company.

# Volume

Play the iCalmDog/device at a volume that is comfortable for all ears. If you find the volume too loud or irritating, it's definitely too loud for your dog.

Please also note that as your battery power diminishes, so will the volume. You may need to adjust the volume accordingly. We suggest that you recharge your iCalmDog/device battery regularly.

## Aggression Track List

Featuring music by *Through a Dog's Ear*

Total running time approx. 1:40:00

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. Verbal Instructions: Victoria Stilwell | 07:07 |
| <b>Positive activity tracks</b>           |       |
| 2. Rachmaninoff                           | 09:38 |
| 3. Brahms                                 | 10:08 |
| 4. Skulta                                 | 10:44 |
| 5. Calming canine music                   | 59:20 |

For full track titles, see: [icalmpet.com/about/composition-titles/](http://icalmpet.com/about/composition-titles/)

## iCalmPet Download Music Library

DOGS	<b>Calm Your Canine</b> Relieves stress, quiets sound phobias and stops barking	<b>iCalmDog Reggae</b> Fun, effective calming & great addition to classical offerings	<b>A Calm Variety</b> Add variety to your canine's playlist for a longer calming effect
	<b>Calm Your Puppy</b> Calming music for young dogs (6 wks-18 mos.)	<b>Elderly Canine</b> Calming music designed for senior dogs	<b>Separation Anxiety</b> Helps relieve stress when alone <i>w/ intermittent music/silence</i>
	<b>Aggression</b> Training program to calm reactive and fearful dogs	<b>In the Car</b> Keeps dogs relaxed and people alert	<b>Human-Animal Bond</b> Calms dogs while stimulating the human brain
	<b>Thunderstorms</b> Trains dogs to remain calm with thunder	<b>Fireworks</b> Trains dogs to stay calm during fireworks	<b>City Sounds</b> Trains dogs to acclimate to urban sounds

PEOPLE	<b>Cat Calming</b> Reduces feline anxiety	<b>Stimulation</b> Lively music for sensory enrichment	<b>Noise Phobias</b> Reduces fear of noises
	<b>DeStress</b> Slows brainwaves, heart rate and breath	<b>Focus</b> Supports focus and concentration	<b>Sleep</b> Lulls mind and body to deep sleep

Visit [iCalmPet.com](http://iCalmPet.com) or Amazon for *iCalmPet's* complete Micro SD music library. We have audio programs for different stages of life, environments, and behaviors.