



WHEN WALKS FEEL HARD

3 Reasons Why Your Romanian Rescue Dog Might Still Be Reacting on Walks (and what could help)

from Meesh Masters of The DOG's Point of View
Specialising in working with Romanian & Overseas Rescue Dogs
www.thedogspointofview



The Dog's Point of View

Holistic Canine Trainer & Behaviour Consultant.
Teaching Dogs & People with Empathy & Compassion

"Your dog is a thinking, feeling, emotional being... just like you but different."

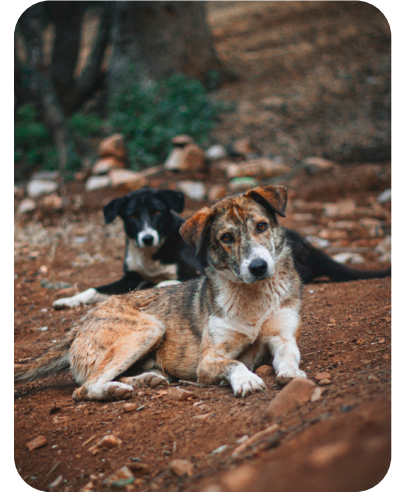


LIVING WITH A DOG WHO HAS 'BIG FEELINGS' CAN BRING MANY CHALLENGES

Living with a reactive dog can be exhausting, emotional, and lonely at times. I've been there myself, and I've supported hundreds of adopters with Romanian & Overseas rescue dogs through it too.

In a recent poll in my Facebook group, the most common aspects members said they struggled with were things like:

- Navigating multiple triggers - People, dogs, cyclists, traffic, joggers
- The unsociable walk times
- Off lead Dogs approaching
- Difficulty reading situations
- Inconsistent or 'selective' reactivity
- The 'Rommie Plant' - refusing to move
- **Feeling constantly stressed & embarrassed, and like it will never get better**



I SEE YOU

In a world overflowing with advice... you may have found yourself feeling overwhelmed

Trust me - you're not the only one.

There's no shortage of tips, tricks, and quick fixes out there - but not all of it speaks to the kind of dog you share your life with.

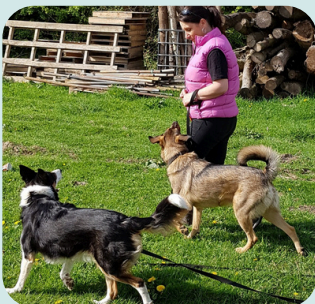
When you're living with a naturally evolved, deeply instinctive, and environmentally sensitive dog from overseas - the usual approaches can fall short, or even make things harder.

This guide is designed to help you work *with* your dog's unique background and honour their true nature - the slower, steadier path that gives them time and space

Sadly, this isn't a quick-fix guide

Because there isn't one - despite what you may have been told

But it is a starting point.



HI! MY NAME IS MEESH MASTERS

I'm a canine behaviour consultant & trainer who specialises in working with Romanian and overseas rescue dogs adopted into homes in the UK.

I've spent the last ten years working exclusively with these incredible, but sometimes complex, naturally evolved dogs and supporting the people who love them.



PROGRESS BARRIER #1

You're always trying to distract your dog when they (or you) see a trigger

Many trainers suggest "scatter feeds" or "pattern games" when a trigger appears.

While this *can* be helpful as **management tool** for food motivated dogs, it often fails with sensitive, instinct-driven natural world dogs, and can prevent progress.

For a few key reasons:



☛ You're working 'against' nature

Many overseas rescue dogs **need to watch** things in the environment - so trying to distract them with food doesn't work. Whether it's a fear or arousal - they will rarely choose food over stimuli.

☛ It doesn't prevent a reaction.

Trying to get your dog to 'do' something with a 'trigger' in view adds pressure - this can increase the likelihood of a reaction.

☛ Distraction is a management strategy - it rarely facilitates learning & growth

Distraction may get you through 'a moment' but if your dog is always distracted away from triggers - they never learn how to process them or feel calm around them.

☛ You Can Get 'Stuck' in Management

Without building the emotional scaffolding that supports your dog, it can be hard to move beyond distraction into real progress.



**But pattern games
are good right?**

Yes - Pattern Games can be great for creating predictability and structure, especially when your dog is feeling overwhelmed.

It's just important to remember - they're still externally imposed strategies.

They redirect your dogs attention away from the trigger or emotion, rather than helping them process and integrate the experience for themselves

In summary

Distraction isn't wrong - and it's absolutely okay to use it when you need to.

But if it's not working, or you're not seeing progress over time, it may be worth looking at a different approach.



What can you do instead...





SOLUTION

Prioritise Distance over Distraction (*at least to begin with*)

Avoid First ➡ Expose when Ready

There's a growing trend on social media encouraging people to 'stop avoiding' their dog's triggers - especially other dogs.

While exposure *is* part of progress, this kind of blanket advice can be risky.


If you or your dog don't have the skills to navigate situations **successfully** - those encounters won't be positive learning experiences.


Which is what they need to be for you to see progress.


What's more you run the risk of 'flooding' your dog which is likely to make matters worse.



Distance First:

 **Lowers Stress:** Creating distance first reduces stress for both of you while you build the important foundations you'll need to **successfully navigate** trigger exposure.

 **Learning Headspace:** Distance lowers arousal, provides a sense of safety, and opens the door to better, faster learning because your dog can 'think and learn' with some space

 **Training Opportunity:** By moving away first, you set yourself and your dog up for proactive 'learning opportunities' rather than 'reactive' management.



[Click Here to watch a video demo of how to teach a simple 'Distance Creating Behaviour'](#)




Watch, Absorb, Process, and Sort = Optimal Learning


With enough distance, your dog has the space to watch, absorb, and process what's happening around them.

These low-pressure exposures - where they can remain within their window of tolerance - are what support long term learning.

They may look passive - but they're anything but.

Quick Tips for Sticky Situations

 **If a trigger is passing too closely:** Try 'trough feeding' your dog (*a large handful of high value food right under their nose*) while using your body as a physical 'buffer' - Be mindful of redirection if your dog is highly aroused.

 **If an off-lead dog is charging towards you:** Try throwing a handful of food directly at the incoming dog's face to interrupt them - buying you a little time to use an exit strategy ('Let's go') to move away.

Avoidance isn't giving up. It's giving your dog space to learn



PROGRESS BARRIER #2

You're Being Inconsistent & Reactive Instead of Predictable & Proactive

Another common struggle I hear is *'My dog's reactivity is inconsistent, unpredictable and selective - I never know if they're going to react or not.'*

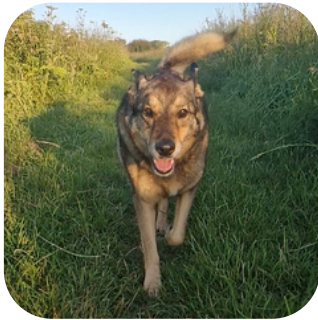
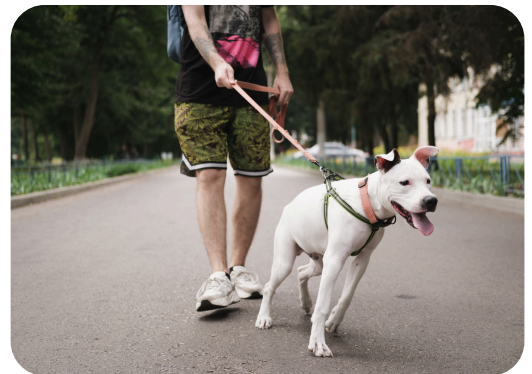
'My dog barks at some dogs but not others...'

or

'He only kicks off at certain vans or people...'

There are lots of possible reasons for this. I'll share a few of the most common ones here for you.

Just keep in mind - **your dog's why** may be different.



What often looks like 'selective reactivity' is really fluctuating capacity.

Your dog's ability to cope changes from day to day - influenced by things like sleep (or lack of it), health, pain, and environmental load.

While this is similar to 'trigger stacking' it's not quite the same.

👉 Trigger stacking = external load

👉 Capacity = internal state

They influence each other - which is why your dog might cope with something one day, but struggle with the same thing the next.

Some Dogs React to Specific Sensory Details

- A noise-sensitive dog might react only to high-pitched engines or vehicles with a certain sound or vibration.
- A visually sensitive dog may react more to dogs that resemble predatory shapes (like GSDs or Huskies) or fast-moving dogs with chaotic energy (like Spaniels).
- An olfactory-sensitive dog may react to how something, someone, or even a space smells - information we're completely unaware of.



Things we can't always interpret - Like:

The 'conversation' happening between your dog and another dog across the street - your dog may be reacting to something that has 'said' 😬

How a person **looks, sounds, smells, or moves** - all of these are forms of communication to our dogs, and we can't always know what interpretations they may be making.

What can you do instead...





SOLUTION

Proactive Behaviour Patterns, Not Reactive Responses



'Proactively' Create Predictable Behavioural Sequences

Establish a consistent pattern of:

'When we see a trigger - this is what we do'

Every single time - **regardless** of whether you think your dog will react or not.

These predictable behavioural sequences do a lot of heavy lifting for you and your dog:

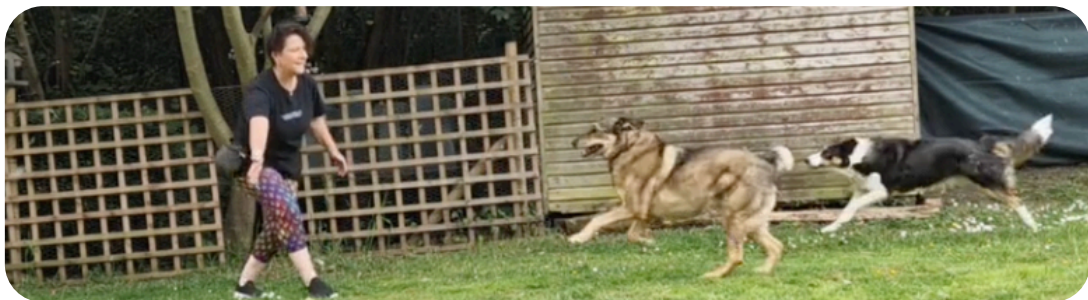
- Improved sense of safety on your daily walks
- Increased trust and connection between you and your dog
- Creates a predictable & reliable behaviour chain that is *triggered* by your dogs trigger
- Provides immediate breathing space that gives you and your dog options

Don't wait to see what *might* happen. The moment you spot a trigger, you do X, Y, and Z.

That **consistent & predictable response** is the magic - you can add back in behavioural flexibility later when you are both smashing it!

An example of a predictable behaviour sequence could be:

Every time you see a trigger give a visual 'hand touch' cue with a verbal 'Let's Go' in the safest direction. This helps interrupt escalation and get you both connected - plus it buys you a few valuable seconds to assess the situation & decide what to do next.



Wait! But what about those Pesky Triggers that Come out of Nowhere?

If a trigger has surprised you, is coming at you fast, or you're struggling to create any space - forget trying to do '*training*' or 'the right thing' and just focus on managing the situation and getting out of it as quickly and as best you can.

That being said, establishing a strong predictable pattern for these types of emergency situations can definitely help you do that more easily.

So when the shit hits the fan, instead of you panicking and your dog fixating - you both naturally flow into sequence of behaviours that you've practised many times before (*in the absence of triggers or with low level distractions*)



PROGRESS BARRIER #3

Missing Early Indicators of Interest or Escalation

Our dogs are communicating **all** the time. They *'speak'* through things like body positioning, movement, orientation, facial expression, physical tension, and micro-signals like blinking or eye shape.

All these 'communications' can tell you **how your dog is feeling at any given moment in time.**

But if you don't know what to look for, or miss them, you can't act proactively.

So you end up stuck in a 'reactive' cycle.

Note: Head/body orientation - ear positioning - body tension - closed mouth - eye shape & intensity



Why does all this matter?

When you're skilled at reading the early indicators of your dog's **internal state**, and the impact of all environmental stimuli - not just your dog's 'triggers', you can:

- 🐾 Proactively respond to your environment with calmness & confidence
- 🐾 Know when to push forward, when to hold space, and when to take a step back
- 🐾 Recognise when your dog is stuck and needs your support
- 🐾 Understand how and when your dog might need to rebalance

This 👉 is what **helps you** prevent reactions and **helps your dog** stay within their 'think and learn' zone, meaning you get to make progress instead of just 'managing' all the time.

This isn't a 'nice to have' skill. It's foundational.

And when that foundation is in place - everything else becomes easier and starts to move forward.



So many conversations & communications taking place in these pictures!

Would you be able to 'read' what each of these dogs are saying?



Being able to truly see and respond to your dogs physical cues and communications strengthens your relationship & connection in a way no 'training' ever can.

What can you do...





SOLUTION

Level Up Your Observation Skills (*which starts by slowing down*)

**This one's beautifully simple
It just requires a little presence and focus.**

Remember to spend small pockets of time simply observing your dog in different environments - at home, in the garden, and on walks.

You're not trying to *do* anything in these moments. Just **observe**. Watch your dog closely - learn their unique body language and how their nervous system responds to the world around them (*which includes you remember.*)

Pictures taken from the Body Language Workshops held in my Adopters Coaching Group



**Reading Canine body language & signals is a skill,
and just as with any skill, practise makes perfect
(or at the very least makes you better at it!)**

This will be so much easier to do if you slow things down!
Body language and nervous system responses happen instantly and in quick succession.

Start by observing your dog while **they** are simply observing the world - they're calm, not moving around too much and definitely not reacting to a trigger. See how much information they're quietly giving you.

You'll start to notice patterns and signals that feel almost as clear as if your dog were speaking out loud.

The more fluent you become in your dog's "language," the more trust, confidence, and progress you'll both be able to make - and the less stressful your walks will feel.



Start paying close attention to things like:

- What happens just before your dog alerts or barks at something?
- Do they pause? Slow their movement?
- Do their ears flick or scan more?
- Does their head lift? Tail shift?
- What about their breathing, eye shape, or body tension?

**Start observing where it's easier - at home or in the garden first,
then start practising out on walks.**



WRAPPING UP

If you've got this far, you're already doing a lot right. You're looking for a better way rather than just pushing through and hoping for the best.

Whatever stage you're at, I hope this guide has helped you feel a little clearer, a little less alone, and maybe even a little more hopeful that things can shift.

There's no perfect path here. No one-size-fits-all solution.

You're doing better than you think.



WHAT NEXT?

If you've found this guide helpful but you're still feeling like you'd benefit from somewhere to bring your questions, make sense of your dog's behaviour, and feel confident you're on the right track - you're not alone.

Living with a Romanian or overseas rescue dog who struggles on walks can feel overwhelming and confusing at times. It can be hard to know whether what you're doing is actually helping - and even harder to keep going when progress feels slow or invisible.

Which is exactly why I created my Adopters Coaching Group - a place where you don't have to figure it all out on your own.

Inside you'll find:

- A space that helps you to understand the true nature of your dog as an individual - what works for them and what doesn't
- In-depth resources, training guides, and support built specifically for Romanian and overseas dogs - not generic dog training advice
- Guidance from a team of qualified professionals so you know exactly what to focus on when - every step of the way
- A safe space where you can go at your own pace - no judgement, no pressure, just support for you and your dog, as much or as little as you need
- A community of overseas rescue adopters who 'get it' because they're living it too

It's not about quick fixes, it's a place for people like you - who want to truly understand and honour their dogs' needs, build trust, and create lasting progress.

👉 Click to [Learn more about the coaching group here](#) 👈

Not ready for the group just yet?

My Reactivity On Walks Workshop is a great starting point and has helped 100's of adopters just like you

👉 [Click to go to it here](#)