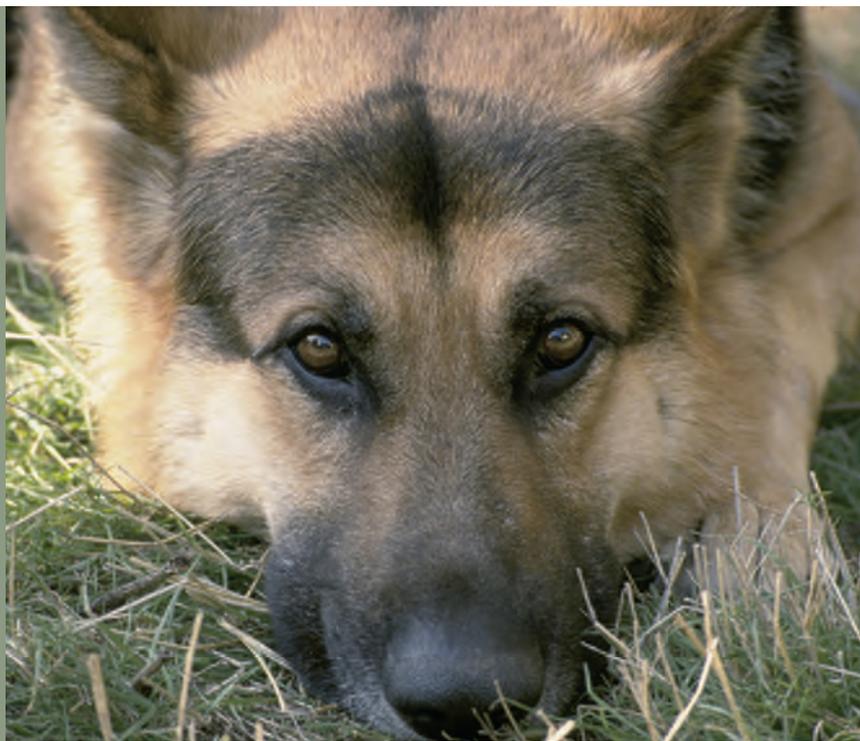


Patricia B. McConnell, Ph.D.



# The Cautious Canine

How to Help Dogs Conquer Their Fears

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SECOND EDITION

PMC

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# The CAUTIOUS CANINE

How to Help Dogs Conquer Their Fears

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by Patricia B. McConnell, Ph.D.

**D**oes Fido's barking at visitors make you a little nervous? Does Queenie run into the closet when you turn on the vacuum or cower when trucks pass by? Has your dog ever growled while you were out walking when someone tried to pet her? All of these behavioral problems are often symptoms of a dog who is afraid of someone or something. This booklet is for people who own and love a dog who has a behavioral problem that is motivated by fear. Some fearful dogs simply run and hide, but others can act out on their fears and cause harm. This program is designed to prevent that.

The method described here, *classical counter conditioning*, is a universally effective treatment for fear-based behavioral problems. This method can help many animals get over their fears, so you can use this booklet if your dog is afraid of the vet or a ceiling fan, if your cat is afraid of another cat, or even for yourself. (I used it myself to help get over a fear of public speaking!) To illustrate the method in detail, this booklet describes a treatment program for dogs who are afraid of unfamiliar people. If you want to use this program to treat some other fear, just substitute the relevant problem and go from there.

**Will this program help any dog?** This program won't help dogs if their behavior is not motivated, at least in part, by fear. There are many reasons why dogs don't act the way we want them to around strangers, so be sure to have an accurate diagnosis before you proceed. If your dog has nipped or bitten, it is essential that you first do short-term management by preventing any more occurrences, and that you begin a program with a certified applied animal behaviorist, experienced trainer or board-certified veterinary specialist in behavior. This program also won't help you if you don't have the time to work on

it. I want to be clear at the outset that following this program to the letter takes a commitment of time and energy — how much time and energy depends on the severity of the problem. The bad news is that it might take up to a year to truly re-condition your dog. The good news is that it's easy to do once you get the hang of it.

**What following this program can achieve:** This program can significantly change your dog's behavior if his misbehavior is motivated by fear. Following the steps in this booklet will help many dogs lose their fear of strangers and stop barking, cowering, hiding, growling, and in some cases, even snapping or biting. Imagine what it would be like to have a dog who happily wags his tail when the doorbell rings! Won't it be great when King tail wags benevolently at the painter, instead of growling at him from behind your legs while the painter calls his lawyer on a cell phone? Imagine confidently walking down the street and smiling when people ask "may I pet your dog" (or, more likely, when they don't ask at all!). No one can guarantee that all dogs will be successfully treated by any program, including this one, but the behavior of many dogs will improve if you follow the guidelines within this booklet. Just keep in mind that every dog is different and has a different potential for successful treatment.

**Will this program ruin my dog as a "guard dog?"** I sure hope so. Barking dogs can be a great deterrent to criminals, but a dog who is aggressive to visitors is like a loaded gun on your coffee table. It's true that your "guard dog" might bite a burglar and chase him away, but he's just as likely to bite your neighbor, your electrician, or the paramedics who come when you call 911. It's not fair to expect your dog to be able to distinguish between all the subtleties of human comings and goings, nor is it fair to have a dog living in fear of strangers all his life. I believe that if your dog has it in him to defend you in times of physical danger then he will, no matter how much he loves the UPS man.

**The Goal of the Program:** Right now your dog is anxious, for whatever reason, about greeting strangers. This program is designed to change his or her response to unfamiliar people from one of fear to one of relaxed happiness. Rather than thinking "Oh NO! Who's that?! What should I do?!", I want your dog to see an approaching person and think "Oh boy! Way cool! Here comes someone I've