

Why Can't We All Just Get Along?

Understanding Conflict in Multi-Dog Households

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Reconciliation

Friendly reunion between former opponents not long after an aggressive confrontation (de Waal 2000)

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Understanding Conflict Resolution

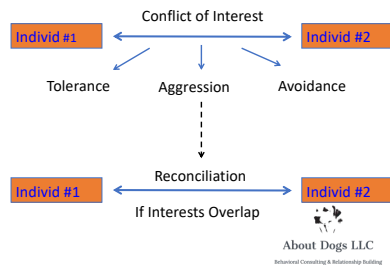
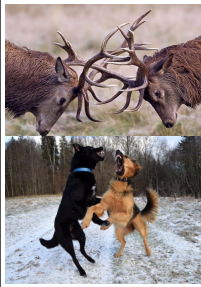


Elizabeth Kibbeli
TRANSLATED BY WAAL

Behavior: Creating a Relationship Building

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Conflict Management in Animals



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Characteristics and Function of Reconciliation

- Relationship Repair
- Valuable Relationship Hypothesis
- Uncertainty Reduction Hypothesis



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How to Measure Reconciliation

- RC occurs when former opponents affiliate sooner after a conflict than when affiliation is measured at baseline levels
- **3rd-party affiliation**
 - True conciliation:** 3rd party initiates affiliation with victim
 - Solicited consolation:** victim initiates affiliation with 3rd party
 - Appeasement:** 3rd party initiates affiliation with aggressor

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What Do We Know About RC in Dogs?

Study 1: Canine Reconciliation and Third-Party-Initiated Postconflict Affiliation: Do Peacemaking Social Mechanisms in Dogs Rival Those of Higher Primates? (Cools et al. 2008)

- Pet food company subjects
- 3 groups of dogs examined (Lab, Beagle, Cocker Spaniel, Pyrenean Sheph.)
- Observations took place in an open meadow
- Do dogs with valuable relationships reconcile more often?

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Findings from Study 1

- 1711 conflicts (1227 RC)
 - 606 between former opponents
 - 621 3rd party affiliations (True Consolation)
 - Valuable social partners had fewer conflicts in 2/3 groups, more likely to RC
- Support for Valuable Relationship Hypothesis

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What Do We Know About RC in Dogs?

Study 2: Reconciliation in Domestic Dogs (*Canis familiaris*): Evidence for the Uncertainty Reduction Hypothesis (Walters et al. 2020)

- 177 dogs at a public dog park (72 one-hour sessions)
- 28 conflicts (37 dogs); 14 were unambiguous (21 dogs)

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Findings from Study 2

- 11/14 conflicts were RC; No 3rd party affiliations
- No conflicts between highly familiar dogs
- RC between unfamiliar dogs in a socially ambiguous environment =

Uncertainty Reduction Hypothesis



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Conflict Management in Multi-Dog Households: The Applications

Characteristics of Valuable Relationships

- Tolerance (resources/approaches/space)
- Positive attraction vs. avoidance
- Repeated social interactions that are primarily positive



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Characteristics of Valuable Relationships

Aggression tends to be "ritualized"

- **Ritualized Aggression:** Aggressive displays, postures, designed to send a message, intimidate, maintain status. Limits injury.
- **Real Aggression:** Fighting with injuries. Intent to harm.



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Characteristics of Valuable Relationships

- Aggression likely to be RC after conflict
- Agonistic support against harassment (traditional benefits)
- Goal: Encourage VR between and among resident dogs



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Encouraging Valuable Relationships

- Characteristics of VR

Encouraging VR (Problem Prevention)

- Create win-win scenarios
- Spending time together in mutually enjoyed activities



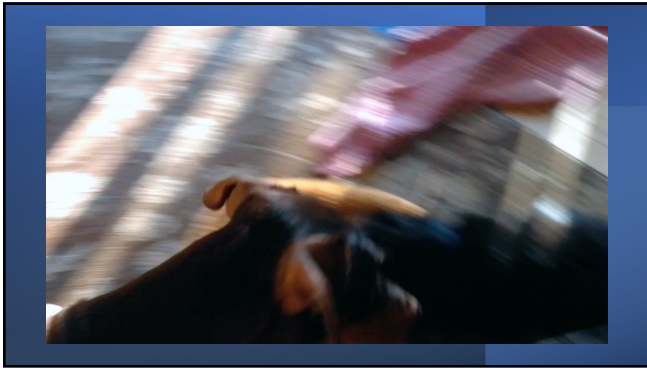
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Encouraging Valuable Relationships

- Let dogs work out low-level conflicts when safe → Reconciliation & Relationship Repair
- "Safe" = Ritualized



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Encouraging Valuable Relationships

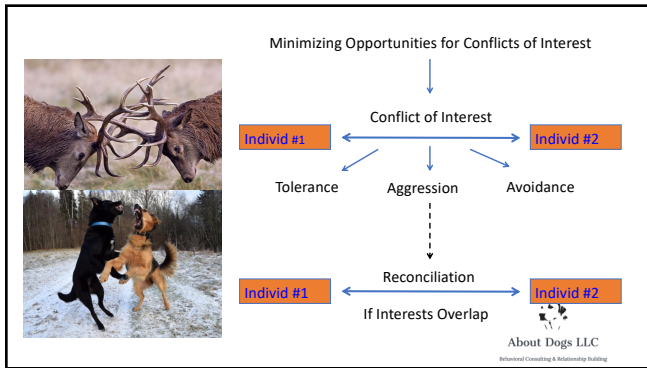
- Animals who play together may stay together (group play, create "fun rituals")
- Elements of "emotional contagion"
- New puppy



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Minimizing Opportunities for Conflicts of Interest

- Give opportunities for the dog to move away. Give choice to **avoid conflict**.
e.g., food bowl location, furniture arrangement


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Minimizing Opportunities for Conflicts

- Know what active **avoidance** may look like. Desi/Iris example
- Don't force contact when a dog is hesitant

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Minimizing Opportunities for Conflicts

- **Hot Zone:** Not letting dogs lick dirty plates in the dishwasher.

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Minimizing Opportunities for Conflicts

- Opening new bag of dog food, **keep dogs away**
- Avoid feeding from the table or your plate

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Minimizing Opportunities for Conflicts

Name said twice (in multiple-dog context)

- When addressing
- When treating
- When releasing
- During training



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Minimizing Opportunities for Conflicts

Benefits:

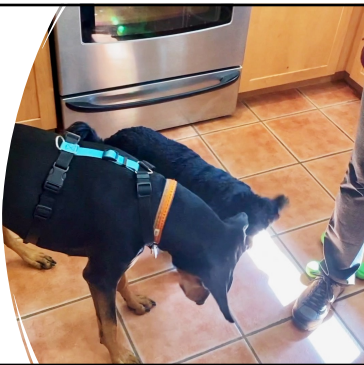
- Creates structure, predictability
- Dogs know something good is coming
- Creates calmness around treating
- Tool to calmly help move dogs around in space



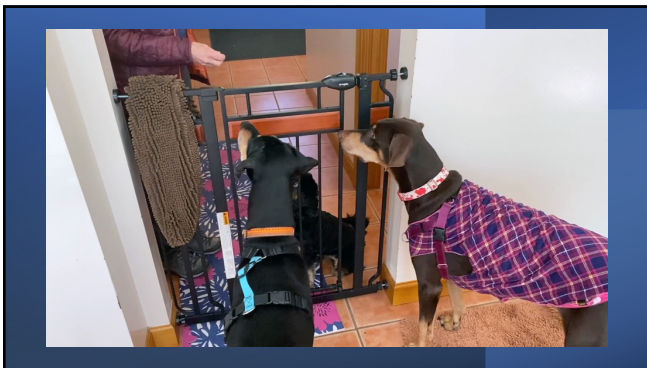
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Minimizing Opportunities for Conflicts

- >70% of dogs presenting with inter-dog aggression within households had resource guarding as a trigger (Feltus et al. 2020)
- Teach food falling on the floor is "No Big Deal"



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Minimizing Opportunities for Conflicts

Emotional Contagion

- Sharing another's emotional state (de Waal 2008)
- Considered a basic form of empathy (de Waal 2007, Preston & de Waal 2002)
- Dogs mirror the behavioral state of the owner (Huber et al. 2017)

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Minimizing Opportunities for Conflicts

- Physiological and hormonal synchronization between dog and owner (Quervel-Chaumette et al. 2016)
- Correlation in HR variability between dog and owner (Carballo et al. 2020)




! HAPPY TALK !



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Minimizing Opportunities for Conflicts

Teaching basic communication cues:

- Sit
- Quick name attention
- Down
- Wait
- Come
- Leave it
- Back up
- Mat work




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Minimizing Opportunities for Conflicts

Pick Compatible Housemates (Feltes et al. 2020, JAVMA)

- 70% of fights involved pairs with at least 1 female
- Same sex pairs most often represented (61.6%)



Careful consideration when adding a second dog to the household

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Summary: Conflict Management

- Cross species, comparative approach to understanding, preventing, and managing conflict
- Understanding and fostering valuable relationships



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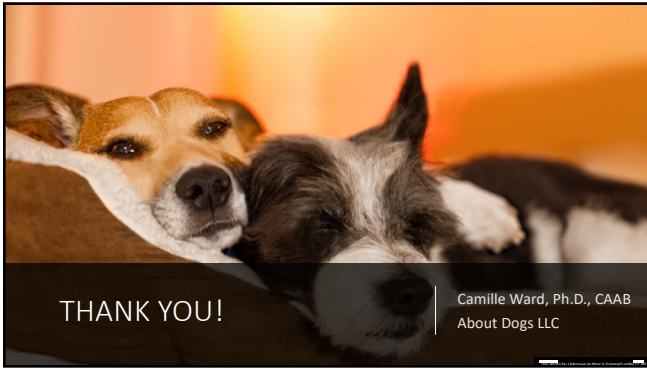
Summary

- Create win-win scenarios to foster cooperation and minimize competition.
- Look for ways to minimize conflicts of interest in each relationship.
- Don't forget about emotional contagion.



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THANK YOU!

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