



# DON'T PUNISH A GROWL



A dog that growls is actually showing good communication skills. Growling is a very important form of dog communication. It's an alarm signal, an early warning signal that must **never be punished** but also **never be ignored**.



Growling is how dogs communicate that they're finding a situation threatening and uncomfortable and that they need help from you to increase the distance from whatever is causing the discomfort.

## WHY PUNISHMENT DOESN'T WORK

- Punishing a growl removes the dog's ability to communicate.
- A dog who can't communicate may become a reactive dog.
- Punishing a growl can create a dog that bites without any warning.
- If a growl doesn't work to make the "bad thing" go away, next time the dog may bite without any prior warning.
- Punishment will not address the trigger that caused the growl.
- Punishment doesn't change the level of the dog's discomfort, creates more stress and the dog will still feel threatened.

## WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

- Recognize and take note of what makes your dog feel threatened.
- Look for any other early warning signals that may precede a growl.
- Create distance between your dog and the trigger while you work on addressing the cause.
- Teach your dog to do something else instead, using positive reinforcement, reward based, force free methods.
- Helping your dog to overcome what he finds threatening will take time, patience, and may need the help of a behaviourist, but your dog can be helped to be more comfortable in a situation they find threatening.

**"DOGS DON'T BITE WHEN A GROWL WILL DO." (4PAWS UNIVERSITY)**

***"Punishment also fails to tell the animal what it should be performing instead. Without an alternative appropriate behaviour the animal may have no option but to perform the undesired behavior." –  
The American Veterinary Society of Veterinary Animal Behavior***