

Dogs and Fear of Men

Handling Your Dog's Phobia of Men

<http://dogs.about.com/od/dogbehaviorproblems/a/dogs-and-fear-of-men.htm>

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Molly is a German Shepherd mix. If you are a woman or child, you would never guess that Molly had any [behavior problems](#). She's a calm [adult dog](#) who loves nothing better than to snuggle or lie quietly at your feet while chewing a bone.

If a man enters the room, however, Molly becomes a different dog. She stands stiffly with her ears flattened and her tail tucked between her legs. She'll pace restlessly around the room, keeping a distance between herself and the man.

As soon as the man turns his back to Molly, she will make her move, lunging to give him a serious bite. Her fear turns this mild-mannered girl into an aggressive dog.

While Molly's case is severe, it is a good example of what can happen if a dog's fear of men goes unchecked.

Causes of a Fear of Men in Dogs

When people discover that a dog is afraid of men, they very often attribute it to a bad experience.

While being abused by a man may cause a lifelong fear of all men, this is not the most likely culprit.

Usually a fear of men in dogs can be traced to not being exposed to a wide variety of men in early puppyhood. Even a dog who has lived with a man can be fearful of men who are different than the one they are familiar with. Men are usually taller than women or children, have deeper voices, and may have different features, such as facial hair. When you look at things from the dog's perspective, it's easy to see how a lack of [socialization](#) with men early on in life can lead to a lifelong fear of men.

Overcoming a Dog's Mild Fear of Men

A dog with a mild fear of men is usually easy to win over. There are a few things you can do to ease the anxiety of your fearful dog.

Don't force your dog beyond his comfort zone. If there are men in your household or men who frequently visit, don't force your dog to accept their attention. This can lead to strengthening your dog's fear at best, and a bite for you or the man preventing him from escaping his fear at worst.

Allow your dog to approach men on his own. It may be hard for the male dog lovers in the household, but the best thing they can do is ignore the fearful dog. Trying to make friends with the dog may have the opposite effect than what is hoped for, simply intensifying the dog's fear. Allow your dog to decide how close he wants to get to the man.

Use treats to encourage your dog. Men should keep some [treats](#) handy while they are around the dog. Any time the fearful dog gets even a little closer than usual, they can very gently toss some treats in the dog's direction. It may take awhile before the dog accepts the treats, but eventually you may train your dog that good things happen whenever he approaches a man. With some time and patience, the fearful dog will be ready to accept the companionship of the men in the household.

Managing Severe Cases of Fear

In cases such as Molly's where the fear of men is severe, it may take more than time and some treats to win the dog over. In this case, there are a few things you can do to manage your dog's fear.

Work on desensitizing the dog to men. Desensitization is the process of using treats and praise to gradually let the dog know that it is safe to approach men. In severe cases, you won't want to start with the dog and a man in the same room. Instead, try and keep your dog a safe distance from the man, and give her treats and praise. Over time, you may be able to slowly close the distance between the dog and men without the dog succumbing to his fear. Your dog may never feel completely comfortable with men, but he may be able to be in the same room without showing [aggression](#).

Use a dog trainer or behaviorist. In severe cases like Molly's, it is beneficial to have the help of an experienced [dog trainer](#) or behaviorist. A professional will be able to gauge your dog's comfort level to the proximity of men, and can help you move ahead safely in the process of desensitization.

Work on obedience training. The more well-trained your dog, the more likely you'll be able to get him to focus on you in stressful situations. Make daily [obedience training](#) part of your routine with your [fearful dog](#).

Use safety precautions around men. If a fearful dog is successful in chasing a man away by biting him, he is more likely to bite again. Rather than escalate your dog's fear-based aggression, your best bet is to take precautions to [prevent a bite](#). Keep the dog in a different room or in his [crate](#) when men are visiting. If you meet men on walks, a muzzle might be a good idea.