



## Ask the trainer

### How to walk your dog when you can't walk your dog

Most people take for granted walking their dog. How hard can it be? Snap on a leash and walk out the door. But if you have a reactive or fearful dog, you'll know it's not that easy. With triggers lurking around every corner — like other dogs, people or whatever else your dog reacts to — your dog can get easily scared or agitated and not calm back down until you get home. Not only is this not a nice walk for you, it's also not enjoyable for your dog.



Photo credit: macniak via canva.com

Seeking out the assistance of a qualified behavioural consultant is critical to help you navigate this problem. Preventing overwhelm is a major part of helping your dog learn to cope in the face of triggers. And exposure alone can sometimes result in increased behavioural problems, rather than your dog “getting used to it.”

This article doesn't tackle the how-to of training a reactive or fearful dog, but instead focuses on how to walk your dog when it feels like an impossible task. The strategies below are general suggestions and may not be appropriate for all dogs nor possible in all living situations. In addition, due to differences in vehicle and pedestrian traffic, the time of day could make a difference as to how accessible these locations are for a reactive or fearful dog. Think about your dog's needs and discuss the best options with your trainer.

#### Cemetery

##### Pros

- Excellent visibility.
- Lots of escape routes to avoid oncoming triggers.
- Visual blocks to prevent your dog from seeing triggers.
- Other dogs tend to be on leash in cemeteries out of respect for the grave sites.

## **Cons**

- Some cemeteries are popular dog walking sites especially if they are within city limits.
- Your dog will be largely confined to the path.
- Potential wildlife in heavily treed or more rural cemeteries.

## **Industrial area or business park**

### **Pros**

- Excellent visibility.
- Lots of escape routes and room to move in many directions.
- Plowed parking lots for winter walks.
- Wide lawns/fields may allow for the use of a long line for more freedom of movement.

### **Cons**

- Wildlife may be present in more naturalized areas.
- Trucks or other large machinery.
- Potential for scary, unfamiliar noises.

## **Big box store parking lot — far end or behind the building**

### **Pros**

- Excellent visibility.
- Lots of escape routes.
- People exiting their cars will likely travel a predictable path to the store entrance.
- Potential for training with relatively predictable triggers at a distance.
- Plowed parking lots for winter walks.

### **Cons**

- Potentially unpredictable vehicle traffic.
- People leaving the store may not be predictable in where they're going.
- Time of day and day of week will create variability in activity in this location.
- Limited opportunities for sniffing and exploration on concrete.

## **Horse barn indoor arena rental**

### **Pros**

- Secure location allows your dog to run off leash.
- Protected from the elements.
- No snow/ice during winter use.
- Lots of interesting smells.
- Excellent footing for running hard.

## Cons

- Horse poop may be accessible to eat.
- You may have to walk through the barn/past horses to access the arena.
- There may be loose farm dogs/cats on site.
- Gates/fencing may not be secure. Verify security before letting your dog off leash.

## Long straight trail (e.g. rail trail)

### Pros

- Excellent visibility straight ahead and behind.
- Ideal location to use a long line.

### Cons

- Bikes/snowmobiles are common.
- Escape routes may be limited.
- Other dogs may be off leash.

## Open fields in non-urban areas

### Pros

- Excellent visibility.
- Ideal location to use a long line.

### Cons

- You may not know if the field is used as an informal off-leash dog park.
- High risk of off-leash dogs especially if the field is in or near an urban area.

## Country road

### Pros

- Excellent visibility.
- Low likelihood of seeing triggers if you select the location carefully.

### Cons

- Local dogs may leave their properties. Pick a section of road without houses to reduce the risk.
- Vehicle traffic.
- Parking on snow-covered roads can be difficult.



Photo credit: Martin Dalsgaard from Pixabay.

## **Private park rentals and sniffspots\***

\*Sniffspot is an app where you can rent private park space/yards.

### **Pros**

- Potentially fully fenced for off-leash play.
- Predictable and private location.
- Private trails for long-line use.
- Some rentals include equipment like tunnels.

### **Cons**

- Cost per use.
- Careful screening of new locations is required.

## **Neighbourhood streets**

For some dogs, walking on neighbourhood streets isn't completely out of the question, but might need to be approached carefully. It's important to pay close attention to the considerations below.

### **Time of day and weather**

Typical after work and before/after school times are the worst times to walk on street. If you're a night owl or early riser, walk your dog during extreme off hours. Nice weather brings out more people and dogs, so walking in unpleasant weather is preferable to limit triggers.

### **No busy streets**

You always need an escape route when walking in the neighbourhood. Avoid busy streets that prevent you from being able to cross quickly and avoid approaching triggers.

### **Boulevards, wide streets and parked cars**

These three elements provide distance from triggers and allow you to tuck your dog out of sight when passing a dog on the other side is inevitable. Narrow streets without space to maneuver is more difficult, especially if there are no cars to limit the visibility of triggers across the street.

### **Be alert, spot hazards and cross the street early**

Stay alert to your surroundings and keep track of potential hazards like blind corners and opening doors. When a trigger is approaching, cross the street early to avoid provoking a reaction from your dog.

### **Escape routes**

As you walk, take note of potential escape routes. This could involve going up a driveway, tucking behind a car or large community mailbox, taking note of side streets or alleyways and keeping track of what's behind you. Remember you can always turn around and back-track when there's a trigger ahead. Most people don't think of this in the moment and it's a helpful tactic to practise routinely.

### **Bring a friend**

A second person means an extra set of eyes to watch for triggers, check blind corners, run interference with your too-friendly neighbour and even carry a leash to catch a loose dog.

### **Go somewhere else**

If your neighbour leaves their dog loose or you live somewhere with tiny streets and endless triggers, consider driving to a neighbourhood that can provide a more relaxed walk. It's not a bad idea to scout out a new walking spot in advance and bring a second person for a handful of walks until the location becomes familiar.

### **Bringing it all together**

Just like in humans, constant stress wears down a dog and eats away at their resilience. While training with triggers is important, it's equally important to give yourself and your dog restorative and enjoyable walks. These walks can help you both decompress and benefit more fully from the training you do with triggers present.



**Written by**

**Emily A. Fisher, CDBC, CPDT-KA, CCUI**

Emily Fisher is a Certified Dog Behaviour Consultant through the International Association of Animal Behaviour Consultants (IAABC), and a Certified Professional Dog Trainer through the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT).



## Dogs looking for homes

Without a doubt, a dog is a real friend. Our dogs come in all shapes and sizes and they all have one thing in common — they all need loving forever homes.

Open your heart and home to a rescue dog. You'll be glad you did.

[Learn more about our adoption process](#)

### Meet June's featured dog – Coco



Coco is a 5-year-old spayed American Foxhound searching for her perfect adventure buddy. At 35 pounds, she's athletic, playful, affectionate and always ready to follow her nose wherever life takes her, especially if that path includes squirrels. Due to changing family circumstances, this sweet girl is now spending long days alone and is hoping to find a home with more time for fun, companionship and love.

True to her hound roots, Coco approaches life with enthusiasm and curiosity. She loves walks, car rides, outdoor adventures and being with her people. She has been working hard on her leash manners and adjusting to busy city life. Buses, scooters, bicycles and other fast-moving "suspicious objects" can still cause her to startle and bark, but she continues to improve with patience, consistency and positive reinforcement.



At home, Coco is a quiet girl, though she does take her self-appointed neighbourhood watch duties seriously and will announce visitors at the door. Once she knows everyone is friendly, she settles quickly and is happy to say hello.

Coco would thrive with an active family who enjoys the outdoors and will continue her positive reinforcement training journey. She has lived with children aged 7 and 17, tolerates handling well even when nervous at the vet, and is cooperative for grooming and brushing. She enjoys many other dogs and may do well with a playful canine companion if the match is right.

She is housetrained, though recent routine changes have caused a few stress-related accidents. Coco is not destructive when left alone for short periods but may whine or pace while adjusting to a new environment. She cannot be left in a crate as this highly stresses her. With time, patience and reassurance, she is expected to settle in beautifully. A securely fenced yard would be this sniffing enthusiast's dream come true.

She's looking for a family who will embrace her goofy hound charm, continue building her confidence and love her exactly as she is: floppy ears, curious nose, dramatic squirrel opinions and all.

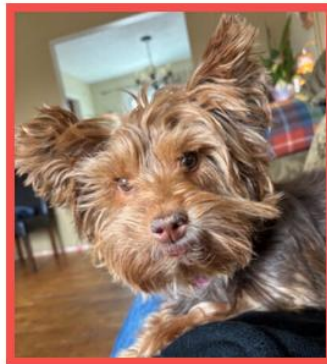
**If you're looking for an affectionate, intelligent, funny and deeply loyal dog, Coco may be the perfect match for you!**

## [Complete our adoption application](#)

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**Snowball**  
Pomeranian  
Small, Adult, Male



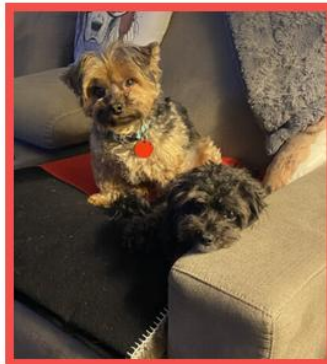
**Aria**  
Yorkshire Terrier  
Small, Adult, Female



**Cody**  
Jack Russell Terrier mix  
Medium, Senior, Male



**Milo**  
Pekingese mix  
Small, Adult, Male



**Millie and Leo**  
Terrier mix  
Small, Adult, Female



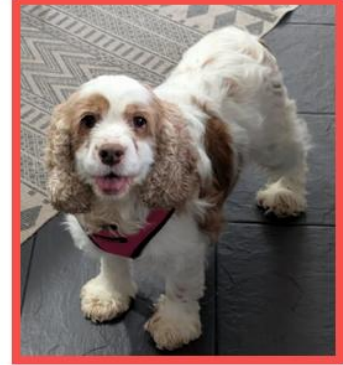
**Violet**  
Shih Tzu  
Small, Adult, Female



**April**  
Shih Tzu  
Small, Senior, Female



**Bella**  
Terrier/Shih Tzu mix  
Small, Senior, Female



**Misty**  
Cocker Spaniel  
Medium, Adult, Female



**Loki**  
Terrier mix  
Small, Adult, Male



**Piper**  
Labrador Retriever/Greyhound mix  
Large, Adult, Female



**Ricky**  
Corgi/Hound mix  
Medium, Senior, Male



**Emma**  
Retriever/Great Pyrenees mix  
Medium, Adult, Female

## Father's Day



### To Our Foster Dads this Father's Day

You didn't ask for paws at your side,  
Yet you opened your home with strength and pride.  
With steady hands and a patient heart,  
You gave lost souls a brand new start.

Through quiet moments, trust grew strong,  
You showed them where they belong.  
A gentle voice, a guiding hand,  
A safe place they could understand.

And though they leave to find their home,  
They carry your love wherever they roam.  
Each life you've helped, each heart you've saved,  
Was shaped by the kindness you freely gave.

Happy Father's Day to the dads who care —  
Your love makes a difference everywhere.

## Happy Pride month



# Step Up for the Pups



**Step Up for the Pups  
was a huge success!**

**Thanks so much to our  
walkers and sponsors.**

**You've given hundreds of  
dogs a second chance at love  
and life.**

**Now take some time to enjoy  
some R&R.**

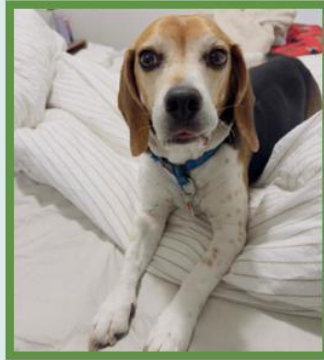
**Wags and wiggles to all!**



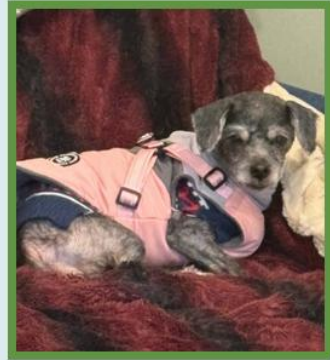
## Happy tails (recent adoptions)



**Cadbury**



**Charlie**



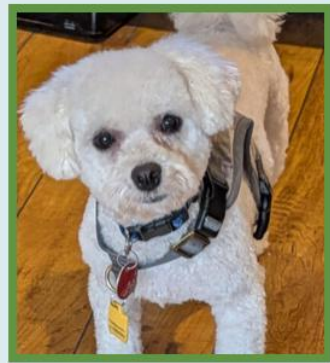
**Ginny**



**Harvey**



**Janey**



**Oliver**



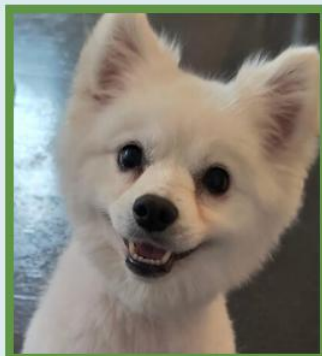
**Patty**



**Sadie**



**Scout**



**Snow**



**Tutti**

## Adoption update



Dear Speaking of Dogs Rescue,

My husband Kevin and I adopted Cyrus from Speaking of Dogs Rescue when he was approximately one year old, in the early winter of 2013. Our Cyrus O'dawg (hubby is Irish) was a challenge from the beginning. Although he was still very much a puppy, he was reactive on leash, guarded his food/treats and wouldn't let Kevin near me. We worked with him every day and with one-on-one trainers. Consistency and patience won the day. Cyrus has been living his best life. He learned to tolerate our kitties and brought a great sense of fun to our household. Cyrus has also been an extremely rewarding dog. Learning how to manage his issues and reduce his fears brought out the best in him, and in Kevin and me as puppy parents.



Cyrus has taught us so much and over the years, and his funny, quirky energy has brought us more joy than we could have ever imagined. He loves to swim and run the trails (with great recall), but his favourite thing in the world is snow. He loves to go snow swimming — diving headfirst into a snowbank and coming out the other side grinning from ear to ear. He has been a dream on cottage vacations and is looking forward to his next one in July. This gorgeous, highly intelligent, quirky dog is one of a kind and we are so lucky to have him.

Now 14 years old, he still has a lot of pep in his step, still loves to go on long walks and still learns new things in five minutes flat. Cyrus is loved beyond words. A huge thank you to Speaking of Dogs for choosing us to be his parents!

Sincerely,  
Cindy and Kevin Gleeson

**amazon wish lists**

Want to help our dogs?

Consider making a donation from our Amazon wish list of priority dog supplies.

[Click here to view list](#)

## Helping dogs in Indigenous communities

We acknowledge that the land on which we live and work is the traditional territory of many Nations and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. We honour the enduring relationships that Indigenous Peoples have with this land and recognize their ongoing roles as stewards and knowledge holders.

### Our ongoing commitment

Speaking of Dogs Rescue (SODR) is committed to building respectful, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities. We support community-led initiatives that reflect local knowledge, priorities and culturally grounded approaches to animal and community wellness, including “One Health” models that recognize the connection between people, animals and the environment.

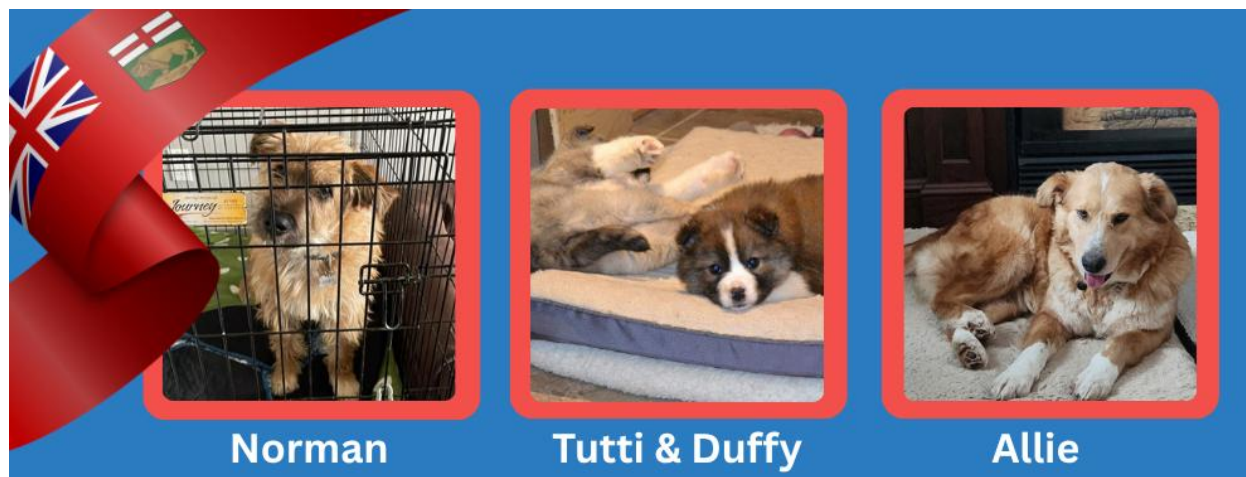
SODR works in partnership with organizations serving Indigenous communities in Northern Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba.

We aim to support community efforts by:

- Providing financial support to community-driven programs that promote animal wellness, education and safer, healthier environments for both people and animals.
- Assisting with access to veterinary care for animals when needed by arranging foster care and adoption through approved homes in Ontario, in collaboration with partner organizations.

Recently we’ve assisted four dogs from northern Manitoba.

- **Allie:** Sadly, she came to us when her family could no longer care for her. She’s now been adopted into a wonderful home.
- **Duffy and Tutti:** These 2 husky pups had a rough start to life. They were found searching for food at a garbage dump. Our rescue took care of their vetting and found them loving homes.
- **Norman:** This sweet boy was cared for by K9 Advocacy Manitoba. Speaking of Dogs assisted the rescue with veterinary costs for Norman through our Leg-Up program.



Norman

Tutti & Duffy

Allie

## In memoriam



**Barney**

Adopted March 2013  
Loved by Courtney Steele



**Toby**

Adopted December 2017  
Loved by Bill Whitbread

### About Speaking of Dogs

Speaking of Dogs Rescue Program is a Canadian registered charity established in the Greater Toronto area with foster homes across Ontario. Launched in 2001, we are a foster-based, all breed rescue with a focus on senior dogs. We are run solely by volunteers with a mission to help homeless dogs in need by providing shelter or sanctuary, necessary medical care, adoption and education.

### Newsletter team

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