

SEPTEMBER 2020

Saccarappa Yapper



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The next meeting will be:

Wed, September 23, 2020

At 7:00 PM at:

1-877-596-8938

Code: 518 867 8329

Refreshments:

Pumpkin Pie

Apple Fritters

MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST BOARD MEETING

The monthly board meeting of SOC was held on August 12, 2020 by conference call. The meeting was called to order by president Sandy Cloutier at 6:02. Seven board members were present on the call.

No errors or omissions were noticed in the Secretary's report.

The Treasurer reported payment to Happy Tails.

The Corresponding Secretary had not heard from The AKC, so she called them. AKC is backed up, and hasn't reviewed our Bylaw change yet. The survey monkey is ok for voting, and has been successful so far. Sandy said on the last vote, she had 27/32 responses.

We will vote on the Bylaw change at our August 26 meeting.

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Unfinished business

The upcoming trial is scheduled for November 1, and so far has 25 entries in obedience and 22 in Rally. A lot of people are looking to compete in Masters. The deadline is in October. We briefly discussed the trial and some confusion regarding how it came about. Barbara Belicose is trial chairperson and she may be reaching out for help at the trial. There are no requirements to participate in any capacity.

New business

The board needed to pick a Nominating Committee. We need one board member, two members, and two alternates. Suggested were, Sandy Cloutier or Elissa as board members, and Nicki T, Chris Berg, Lauren, Sharon, and Barbara B. Sandy will call them.

Drema found a free four drawer file cabinet to replace the two drawer we are using now. We will check into this.

The next board meeting will be on September 9, at 6 PM, and we will try a zoom meeting.

The next club member meeting will be on August 26.

Meeting adjourned at 6:32.

Respectfully submitted, Drema Shaw, Recording Secretary



Congratulations to Brenda
and
Seasea!



At her first scent work trial
she earned:
1 container leg
2 Buried legs **and**
2 Exterior legs!

MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST MEMBER MEETING

The August meeting of the Saccarappa Obedience Club was held on August 26, 2020. The meeting, by conference call, was called to order at 7:04 PM, by Vice-president Deb Mazjanis. The roll was called, and twenty members and one guest, Jennifer Borque, were present on the call.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Secretary's report as written.

The Treasurer reported that we have another month in the minus column. We had no other bills.

The Corresponding Secretary said that she has received information from AKC. Our electronic vote for the change in the By-laws will require a percentage of members voting, a copy of the notice to the club, and a clean copy of the change to be sent to AKC. Maybe Sandy will handle the electronic vote again.

Committee Reports.

Training- Brenda says that Bob will be starting a new Intro to Scent on 9/14. We will also be starting Obedience and Rally practice runs. We will be critiquing each other. Brenda would like a count of attendance for Happy Tails. We may have up to 50 people in the building. Our Advanced Scent Work class at 4:30 is still ongoing and full.

Sharon S. is still not getting mail through google groups.

Trial update by Barbara Belicose. Obedience is full, with 25 entries, and a waiting list. Rally has 7 open slots. We discussed the CDC requirements for folks coming from Massachusetts, and Barbara will be in touch with them with the appropriate guidelines. She will send a certified letter as proof of informing them, in case there are issues. We will not allow any exceptions to the Maine state rules. We will have a limited number of people in the building, and no spectators will be allowed.

The Scent trial is scheduled for October 17, and entries open on September 9. We will need stewards, timers, and gate keepers. Deb is chief steward for the trial.

Lois said our new ribbons have arrived. We will use ribbons for our upcoming trials, but no trophies except three cash prizes: High in Trial, High Combined, and High Combined in Rally.

There was no Unfinished business.

(Continued on next page)

New Business

The Nominating Committee will be as follows: MaryJo as chair, Barbara Belicose, and Lauren. Nicki and Sharon are alternates.

There is a Training Committee meeting next week and they are looking for new class ideas. Due to the pandemic, we are not offering many pet classes right now. Some people in Star Puppy wanted to continue, but had no place to go.

Competition classes. We need enough interest to determine if we could afford a new teacher for Monday nights. Maybe we need to see what we want and who is interested. The training committee will discuss all the options.

Congratulations to Lois and Sonny for 48 years of marriage!

Sandy is in the hospital.

We had some brags. Please try to send them to Jerry to put into the Yapper.

Our next meeting is on September 23, at 7 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53. Thank you to Deb for keeping us in the right direction!

Respectfully submitted,
Drema Shaw, Recording Secretary.

Congratulations to Leo and Martha! Leo earned a Total Dog in Virtual Competition, by competing in both agility and conformation. His fourth place finish in the Sight hound group won him the chair and toy from Eukanuba.



MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING

The September board meeting of Saccarappa Obedience Club was held on 9/9/2020 and called to order at 6:02 PM by Vice President Deb Mazjanis. Five members were present, with the others joining as time passed.

The secretary's report had not been read yet.

The treasurer, Mary Tripp, asked if we should continue the CD's with Biddeford Savings Bank. The motion was made and seconded that we should stay there. We may decide to move the CDs in six months when we have a new Treasurer.

The Corresponding Secretary said there is nothing new until we vote on the by-law change. We will vote by survey monkey with a two day limit for a reply. It will be sent out when ready, and the results will be announced at the next meeting.

The nominating committee is ongoing. Their selection of recommendations for the new board will go into the Yapper, with a vote in November. We know we need a new president and a new treasurer. We requested that they let present board members know if they will not be returning to the board.

Monday night competitive obedience classes are just run-thrus for now. MJ will be starting a Beginner 101 class on October 12. The training committee has been meeting, and Brenda is looking for a teacher for Obedience. If anyone knows anyone who could teach competitive obedience, please let the training committee know. Merrillynn may be doing a Saturday workshop.

Our November trial is nearly full. Sandy says Covid tests in Massachusetts have a fast turn around time so it may be easier than we thought for competitors from there.

The next Board meeting will be on 10/14 at 6 PM, probably on Zoom, as we all agreed that it was fun to see faces again!

Meeting adjourned at 6:42.
Respectfully submitted,

Drema Shaw
Recording Secretary.

Meet Tempe, Drema and Jim's new standard poodle. She is bright and full of energy!



CONCEPT TRAINING - PART 3

Reshaping Brains through Games

By Nicki Taylor

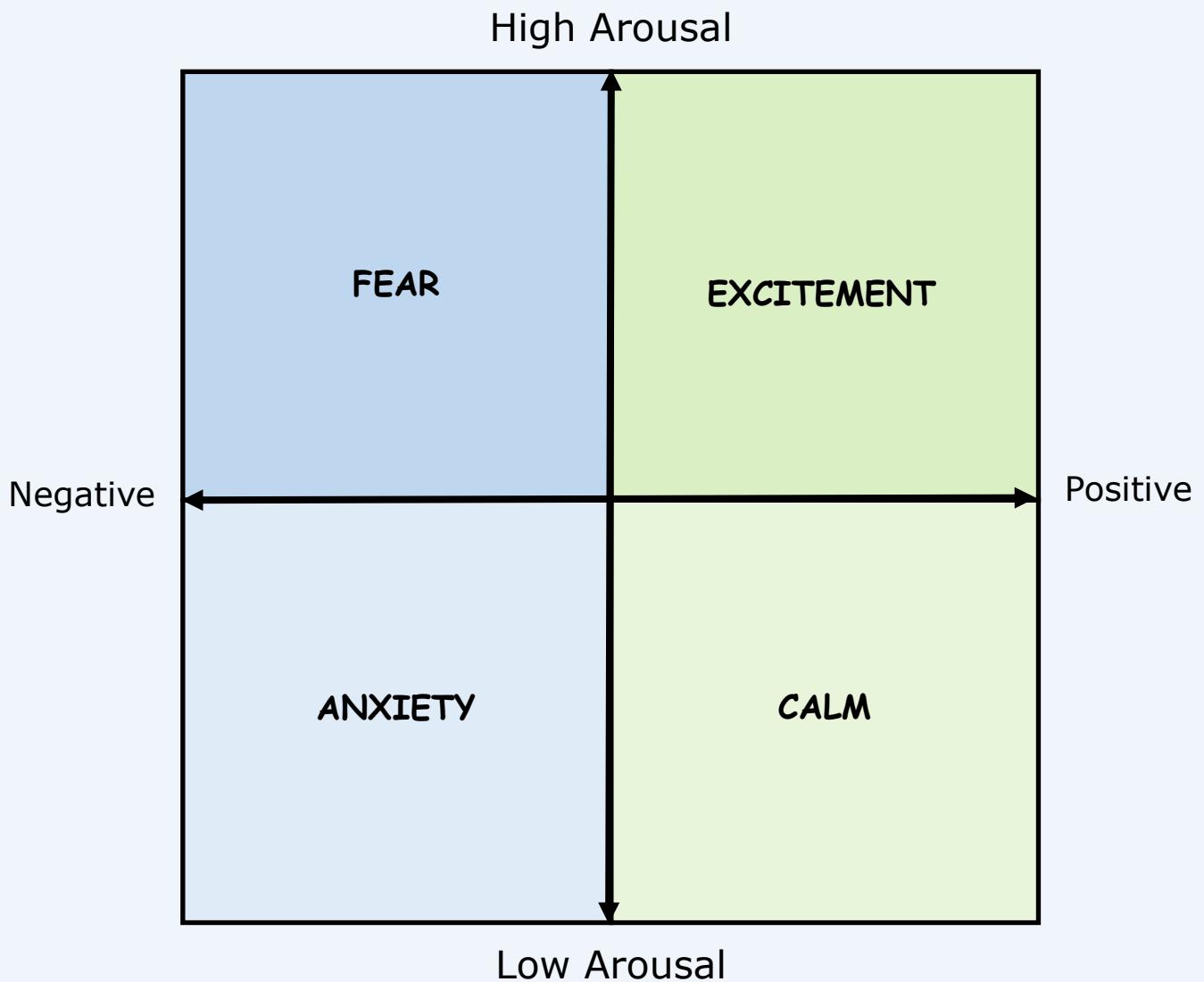
Let's talk problem behaviors in dogs. You have surely seen or experienced some. Demand barking? Jumping on guests? Lunging at other dogs? Destructiveness? Playing keep-away? The thing is, these are simply dog behaviors—behaviors which are triggered by the dog's reaction to its environment and chosen due to the current shape of its brain. They may be problems for us, but they are normal behaviors for dogs. Dr Tom Mitchell, the veterinary behaviorist of absolute Dogs, simplifies the science behind dogs' brains and their behaviors by using descriptions of Building Blocks, Tunnels and Behavior Boxes.

Building Blocks - Each dog has a personality and brain uniquely formed by building blocks of characteristics and skills, encompassing various concepts such as Optimism and Confidence, Pessimism, Flexibility, Focus, Impulse Control, Perseverance (Grit), Fear and Calmness to mention a few. This provides the dog with certain strengths - and weaknesses - when it comes to dealing with its environment. That which is one dog's weakness may be another dog's strength, depending on what is asked of the dog. In other words, the beagle whose owner complains of how stubborn it is, may be the gritty, persistent hound desired by another owner hunting rabbits. Furthermore, what was once a necessary and beneficial characteristic back when dogs were living in the wild and avoiding larger predators, actually now may be a detriment in the modern world. Take Pessimism for example. Pessimism causes a dog to be fearful or worried about changes in its environment and novel things. In the wild, this cautiousness could save the dog's life, but in our modern world, fearing an unknown dog approaching, or a stranger at the door may lead to excessive barking and lunging which develops into a problem for the owner and a stressful life for the dog.

Tunnels - The idea of tunnels comes into play as the way of accessing the various building blocks of the brain - the neurons sending signals back and forth. Repetition and reinforcement through training and game playing make certain tunnels easier to locate, more appealing and more user-friendly, thus increasing the likelihood of some concepts, skills and behaviors to be used more often than others. (Jean Donaldson envisioned worn pathways through a field to describe this same idea.) Dogs become what they do. If it's a behavior we want, this works in our favor. When it's an unwanted behavior, best to step in pretty quickly to stop the rehearsal.

Behavior Boxes - When your dog and its brain encounter a situation, your dog experiences an emotion. It could be excitement such as when an owner picks up a leash for a walk. Maybe it's calmness, such as when a dog enters a room and finds its owner sitting in a chair reading. These are positive emotions ranging on a scale from high arousal to low. On the negative side of the scale, your dog might experience fear, another high-arousal emotion, upon being startled by a backfiring car. And on the low end of the negative side of the arousal scheme, you might find a dog suffering anxiety due to family visiting, disrupting its schedule.

Each emotion noted above comes with a box filled with a variety of behaviors associated with that emotion. For example, the Fear Box may contain behaviors such as Barking, Fleeing, Trembling, Lunging, Zoomies, Crying, Biting, Hiding Under the Bed....The Excitement Box would contain behaviors like Barking, Trembling, Zoomies, Crying, Biting....And the Anxiety Box could contain Barking, Trembling, Lunging, Zoomies, Crying, Hiding Under the Bed....When the dog's brain experiences the emotion, it has to make a choice about how to react. It reaches into the corresponding behavior box and randomly pulls out one of the behaviors. And as you may have noticed, there are many of the same behaviors in each box, making it difficult sometimes for owners to understand what their dog is experiencing. Moreover, this is not a static situation. The dog may bounce back and forth between emotions such as Fear and Excitement. (see the table on the next page)



Your dog's state of mind upon encountering the world drives its behavior. Enhancing Calmness promotes better behaviors. Dogs learn better in a calm state of mind.

Shaping the brain to turn struggles into strengths - Most of us have probably read or heard about a dog that may have had a traumatizing experience and was not the same afterwards. Perhaps a young dog was left at a kennel for a few days, and developed separation anxiety. Or maybe a dog got attacked by another dog when out for a walk, and now has started charging at all other dogs who come near. I think we can agree that the traumatizing event somehow changed each dog's brain. If we can agree to that, then why can we not, in turn, agree that a brain may be changed back for the better? Certainly, a devastating trauma may get deep seated into the primitive parts of the brain and be hard to redirect, but most changes are simply in response to life's daily experiences. And this means by controlling what our dogs experience and practice, we can shape their brains to more suitably engage with us and the environment. We can add building blocks to areas of Impulse Control and Focus, for example. We can block off the tunnel to Fear and instead enlarge and brighten the tunnels to Confidence and Calmness. This is accomplished by repeatedly playing certain appropriate games. Games that are fun for you and your dog, and can be played in your living room or your back yard, where it is safe from scary and stressful situations that might cause further rehearsal of the behavior you are trying to avoid - working for the situation, not in the situation. (Or as Dr. Amy Cook refers to it, working on an issue out of context.)

We didn't talk much about the Calmness Box when we discussed Behavior Boxes above. If we take a look inside the Calmness box, we will find behaviors such as snoozing, enjoying a chew, observing, resting, playing quietly on their own, cuddling...calm, low-arousal behaviors most owners treasure, easy-going behaviors rarely seen as problems. It is suggested you should spend a good deal of your time enhancing the Calmness area of your dog's brain to improve your dog's ability to function in the world while living in a positive and low-arousal state. This is a good place for them to be, as here, it is unlikely for them to choose unwanted or problem behaviors in the first place!

I can imagine some of you are thinking, but I don't want my dog to be calm all the time. I have a sports dog and need the energy and high arousal to train and perform. Well, here's the thing, you can add that in as needed. Many trainers already know the benefits of moving a dog into a state of arousal suited to the job at hand - not too much, not too little - playing tug or hand touch games to get engagement and excitement before a performance. You can do the same thing here. The thing is, when not training or performing, your dog needs to rest comfortably and at ease. You want your dog to be unstressed, snoozing happily in its crate or in the car. The anxious, vigilant dog, on constant guard of things going on around it, worrying about strange dogs, or jumping at sudden sounds is not going to be able to give you the performance you desire. Nor is the dog that is wildly excited and overwhelmed by all the distractions.

You all know this on some level. You take dogs to show venues to work at desensitizing them to that environment. You take pups with you for the experience. However, there is so much more you can do, and maybe should do, away from the show environment where scary, unsettling things can happen. (And while you're at it, stop the well-intentioned urge to take puppies out to meet 100 new and strange humans and dogs. It is way too easy to do more harm than good, especially when you can get the same results by staying home where it's safer - playing games to build confidence and acceptance of novelty, instead of risking your pup being traumatized while out and about on your quest to find that odd guy with a beard who is 7' tall, wears large boots, a floppy hat, a backpack and carries a tool box.) One scary event will set your dog back ten favorable ones, so be mindful of your dog's environment and experiences. In fact, many stressful situations for dogs could be eliminated entirely, if only they understood how to handle novelty in the first place - more efficient use of your time, less chance of upsetting your dog and all the while, building a nice, happy relationship with your dog while playing fun games.

So, whether you are plagued by problem dog behaviors, or think your dog should know better, don't blame the dog. It's responding to its situation with normal dog behavior, based on how its brain is currently shaped. To paraphrase Susan Garrett, 'Your dog is doing the best it can with the education you've given it, in the situation you've placed it.' Instead of blaming your dog, take your dog out of the situation, stop the rehearsal, step back to review what preceded your dog's unwanted behavior and decide what changes are needed to redirect or replace it. And with your dog still out of the situation, begin playing games such as those found in absolute Dogs which build concepts such as Confidence and Focus. They will enhance tunnels and increase desired building blocks making it more likely for your dog to choose better behaviors no matter what the situation.

Hope you enjoyed Part 3. Stay tuned for Part 4 next month, when we dive deeper into the problems of stress and filled buckets.

