



Trigger Stacking

Why molehills may look like mountains to your pet's eyes



Boiling point

Is your pet exhibiting behaviours that are out of proportion to the situation? Are they exploding, or fearful of minor things that aren't a big deal? This isn't uncommon. The key to changing this behaviour is understanding the thought processes which get them here.





Seeing things

Humans consider things 'stressful' when we can't predict, escape, or recognise them. We have 20+ years to familiarise ourselves with postmen, bikes, thunder, & understand they won't hurt us. Pets have much less relative experience of the world, so may perceive 'normal' things to be more of a threat than we do.





Building up

You've probably had one of 'those' days. You wake up late, miss the bus, and a pigeon decides to poo on your head. You feel overwhelmed, even though individually those things wouldn't be a big deal. Your pet can get overwhelmed by a buildup of subtler things they find worrying, leading to stress behaviours.



Very hungry & needs to use the loo

New person cat doesn't know

Litter box blocked



Bed area blocked

Scared by other cat 10mins ago

Pets Explained



Point of no return

When you, or your pet, reach a certain threshold of stress or excitement, you will be unable to control your behaviour, acting out of character. This 'threshold' is different for everyone, depending on how stressful each trigger is to you. Your pet may show aggression, fear, sexual behaviour, or overexcitability.





In the zone

Once your pet has been pushed over this boundary, stress hormones are running high and their body cannot calm. Never punish or train here, in 'fight or flight' its very hard to learn. Instead, remove the triggers you can, and give them time to cool off to a relaxed place. Depending on context, this can take as long as three days, such as for dogs in shelters.



Avoiding trouble

To ensure this isn't repeated in the future, you have two strategies. Firstly, avoiding the buildup of small problems will greatly help you achieve calm. Be alert to your pet's situation and avoid stressful events. These may be obvious, such as walking past loud traffic, or invisible, like desperation for the toilet.





Instant reaction

If you're finding your pet reacts very strongly to one particular trigger or event, and they reach their threshold immediately upon seeing it, they require a desensitisation plan. This specialised type of training teaches them to be less distressed by one trigger, over time and in stages. You will need to design and implement this plan with a behaviourist.





Help is at hand

Reactivity can be a massive stressor for both owner and pet, cats and dogs. A structured desensitisation plan is your best bet. Get in touch today for find out whether your pet could benefit.

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