

What not to do in dog attack

AN INTERVIEW with two "dog trainers" published in an English daily, titled "You can stare down killer dogs", got me really worried. According to the trainers, "anytime you go face to face with a dog, it will view you as a threat. When you have eye contact with them, they will be weakened".

The advice is ridiculous. Having volunteered at The Mayhew Animal Home in London for two years (where we deal with bull breeds and other "dangerous breeds" on a daily basis), I believe such advice will cause a lot more people, particularly children, to be bitten by potentially aggressive dogs.

Anyone who has worked with dogs will tell you that you do NOT face an unknown dog (or even a known dog) that is showing aggression.

Giving a dog eye contact literally tells it that you are chal-

lenging him. And unless you are an experienced or professional dog handler, and you know for a fact that you can overpower or dominate the dog, challenging it will only result in you being bitten.

What you really want to show the dog is that you are not a threat to him.

Stand still, or maintain slow pace while backing out of the dog's territory if you are withdrawing. Do not turn away.

Never try to outrun a dog as this will provoke it to chase you and can end in an attack.

Start by slowly distancing yourself from the dog if it begins to approach you. Get something between yourself and it — for instance if you're on a bike, place the bike between you and the dog. Or stand behind a tree or bench. Once behind the object you can speak softly and gently to

calm the dog.

Do not use part of your body — e.g. an arm — to distance yourself from the dog as the dog may snap at you.

Keep a safe distance between yourself and dogs being walked on a lead, and always ask the owner's permission before approaching any dog.

Be aware of areas that dogs frequent and change your route to avoid dogs which are not on leads.

If attacked by a dog, call 999 (or ask somebody else to) as soon as it is possible to do so.

If you are attacked or knocked to the ground, protect your face, neck and head by curling up in a ball and putting your hands on the back of your neck.

Try to be still and do not wave your arms around. By struggling with the dog, you will only increase their preda-

tory instincts and at the same time you will cause even more injury to yourself as your flesh will tear. By curling into a ball and staying still you are submitting to the dog, i.e. offering peace and telling the dog that you are no threat to him.

The dog should leave you alone after he has had a good sniff, or if he has bitten you, chances are that he will release you once he realises that you are no longer a threat.

I sincerely hope that the general public will take time to research dog behaviour and learn from qualified experts on the steps that can be taken to prevent dog bites, instead of just swallowing what these two so-called trainers have advocated.

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