

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

FEARFUL WITH GUESTS**Does this sound familiar?**

"His name is Buddha and he is just the most fantastic Tibetan Mastiff on the planet. I never used to think twice about him with children, adults or other dogs since he's always been so friendly with everyone. Nothing's changed around the home but we have been seeing some sudden changes in his behavior. My brother is currently visiting for a few days. Jim is a real dog person and just can't seem to win Buddha over. Whenever Jim gets up from the couch or the kitchen table, Munch will bark or growl. When Jim tries to reassure him, Buddha's reaction gets worse. My brother says that my dog is vicious. That's not true but Buddha just won't settle down. I don't want anything to happen to my brother but this is Buddha's home. Like all my family, he enjoys all the freedoms here. What the heck is going on? Can you help us out?"

**Step-by-Step**

I can well understand the tension that is being created over this. Why shouldn't Buddha just accept your brother?! Don't you wish it was as easy as insisting that your dog just do what you want him to do? Unfortunately it isn't that easy. It takes training. Let's take your scenario apart and explore it step by step.

**Thaddeus Munch
Here's a tip!**

"The greatest kindness that you can show a TM is by sharing your time. We are a work in progress. We need socializing and training."

Those "Sudden" Changes

Historically speaking, the Tibetan Mastiff has always been known as a protective guardian with healthy doses of aloofness and suspicion thrown in for good measure. That makes sense, doesn't it? What good is a guard on sentry duty if someone can easily sweet-talk his way past? There can be no surprise therefore that, along with breed type, breed standards around the world continue to ask breeders to promote those basic primitive character traits. It is true that the degree of these traits may be dependent on breed lines and specific breedings but it definitely can be very exclusive to the temperament of the individual dog and his life experiences. While you feel that you are "suddenly" noticing changes in your dog's behavior, it is probably not so sudden. TMs are born with these attributes and often show them subtly throughout puppyhood. It may only be now that you are noticing since Buddha is expressing them so blatantly.

How much socialization?

It is very common for an immature adolescent Tibetan Mastiff to act differently when introduced to something outside of his experience or his comfort zone. If you have not been socializing your dog on-property, it may be that he is not familiar with people entering the home or your yard. It may be that he is apprehensive of strangers or friends because they are now on "his" property. If you have been regularly introducing people to your dog on-property, it is best to remember that just because you are comfortable with a relative or friend, it does not necessarily mean that your dog will be feeling the love. Whatever the reason or source, it is important that you assess your dog and the situation thoroughly.

The Bully claims prime real estate

Since you have simply presented a guest into the pack, it is not unusual for a Tibetan Mastiff to set up with a kind of policing mentality because of his need to control. Observe where your guardian is settling to keep an eye on your guest. Is he lying right in the middle of the room? Across the threshold of a doorway? At the bottom of a stairway? In the middle of a high traffic hallway? Your dog is doing his best imitation of a traffic cop and he will abuse that freedom if you allow him. It is always best to remove him from those key locations.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

FEARFUL WITH GUESTS

The bullying escalates

If you not picked up on your Tibetan Mastiff's early cues, it is not surprising that he may bark, growl or jump up to be a physical intimidator should your guest attempt to move from his chair or leave the room. Strictly speaking, by failing to recognize your dog's first bullying stage he will move to the second step by exaggerating his terrorization techniques.

Why is he doing this?

It is unfortunate that some owners misread these types of situations and are secretly or publicly proud of the 'tough' dog act. They definitely don't like to hear that such menacing performances are the tell-tale warning signs that their dog is uneasy and **fearfully** uncomfortable with what is going on. Yes, I wrote fearfully. Think about it. Truly confident dogs don't over-react and put on displays of overt aggression in such benign situations.

It is in everyone's best interest, therefore, to recognize that you are in the middle of a balancing act. While you are understandably concerned that the beloved family pet feels "at home" in his home, **you have a greater responsibility to ensure your guest's safety.** Remove your dog from the situation so no one gets hurt. Once you have assumed the care and control of your dog you will be able to keep his protective nature stabilized at a manageable level and help him overcome his fearfulness.



Thaddeus Munch
Here's a tip!

"As a working breed I take my job very seriously but, because I'm young and inexperienced, you can't always trust me to know what to do. I need guidance."

"He'll get over it, won't he?"

Many people erroneously believe that if given enough time an agitated or fearfully dominant TM will just "get over it". Rest assured that a TM takes his guardian assignment seriously so you're not doing him any favors by leaving him on high alert in an unrelenting stressful situation. Again, failure to recognize and respond to your dog may, ultimately, mean that his behavior escalates from warning growls to biting. If you don't pay attention to the pebble hitting the window, I can guarantee that you will stand up and take notice when the boulder crashes through. A TM may also resort to biting if he feels confronted and pressured. Many people think that they persuade a dog to do anything especially if they consider themselves dog savvy. Just a reminder that it's a little easier to be dog savvy around friendly and trusting breeds. Since that is typically not part of this breed's make-up it's best to assume that your TM won't just "get over it" if someone gets down on his level, stares him in the eye and tries to forcefully over-power his sense of uncertainty with endless coaxing. While trying to reassure, all of those actions may seem more threatening to an anxious dog. It is far wiser to conspire to create a situation to gently influence an independent and stubborn TM into thinking that a long-lasting friendship with your guest is all his idea.

An Owner's Responsibility: Recognize why your dog should be the one to leave the room

I know that your Tibetan Mastiff is a beloved pet and because that adoration is often unconditional it can typically cloud the scenario. Many owners want their dog to maintain free reign and rule of the house specifically because the dog is the family pet. The guest becomes the problem and not the dog. But I'm going to reiterate that if you've missed the first opportunity to move your dog from his policing zones it is now imperative that you **gently** remove him from the situation. It is useless to think that putting your dog away is a punishment. Removing him is not a negative admission that he is ferocious or uncontrollable. Dogs get fearful but that doesn't mean that they are inherently aggressive. Removing your dog from the presence

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

FEARFUL WITH GUESTS

of your guest simply means that you are sending a pack signal that he can take a break from his guardian mode. You will soothe him and ask him to return to a more controlled scenario after he has had a time-out.

Loving your dog is one thing but believing that your dog is a child that can be reasoned with or that he should always have the run of the house, no matter what, may have severe consequences. Naively trusting that he will magically get over his dis-ease without your guidance and training is unrealistic. In many cases it 's simply that your dog has never been exposed to such circumstances. He needs training and behavioral adjustments to help boost his confidence level.

Encouraging Behavioural Failures



Thaddeus Munch: Something to think about!

“TMs everywhere look to our caregivers to think “Safety First!” when we are uneasy. Not just for our protection but for others too. Sometimes dogs don’t always react the way you want or expect us to.”

An owner is setting his Tibetan Mastiff up to fail if:

- ✘ he does not acknowledge that Tibetan Mastiffs have a natural guardian instinct that he will have to learn to assess and work with.
- ✘ he does not learn to recognize basic dog body language.
- ✘ he does not faithfully socialize his Tibetan Mastiff. **Socializing needs to be a lifetime endeavor.**
- ✘ he does not concede to the fact that dogs do not think as people do.
- ✘ he does not acknowledge that dogs go through fear stages.
- ✘ he assumes that because he welcomes a guest, his dog will accept the guest also.
- ✘ he does not recognize and remove his dog from a potentially aggressive situation.
- ✘ he encourages and promotes any aggressive behavior in his dog.
- ✘ he promotes a misplaced love or “kindness” by not putting any expectations on his dog.
- ✘ he allows strangers or guests to harass his dog into “liking” them instead of allowing the dog the ability
- ✘ he discourages visitors because of the potential hassle and doesn't seize the opportunity to socialize and train his dog.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS***FEARFUL WITH GUESTS*****Alternative Strategies That Encourage
a Win-Win Situation****Important Consideration:**

Do realize that your guest came to spend time with you and not your dog so respect the feelings of your visitor during this process. Because TMs can be intimidating, not all will want to be the ones to help "fix" these training situations. If your guest is willing to take the time, however, consider the following:

- ✓ **Have expectations of your dog.**
- ✓ Don't hurry the process when introducing your dog on-leash to your guest.
- ✓ Have planned supervised on-leash visits of 10 or 20 minutes throughout the day. Gauge your dog's comfort level by observing his body language. Does he seem relaxed or tense? Put your dog on-leash and bring him over to a chair. Ask your guest to be seated on a chair or couch located across the room. You may find success by ignoring your Tibetan Mastiff and concentrating on an enjoyable conversation over coffee. Calm yourself and maintain a composed and peaceful atmosphere. Getting up, sudden movements, loud voices or wild hand gestures can trigger your dog's protective nature. Continue to observe and monitor your dog's body language as the together time progresses. Does he seem more relaxed or tense?
- ✓ Very high currency treats such as hot dog pieces are absolutely to be considered as bribes. If possible, have extra-special treats available that are only reserved as gifts from your visitor to your dog. Positively rewarding your dog for his good behavior helps to imprint what it is that you expect from him.
- ✓ After a positive 10-20-minute session, bring your dog to his own private safely contained space.
- ✓ Try the same technique outside where there is more room if you can. Sometimes Tibetan Mastiffs act more territorial in close quarters.
- ✓ Take some time during the day to go for a calm on-leash walk with your dog and your visitor. Fun walks mean focusing on outside distractions and exerting energy elsewhere. Being off-property may mean that he does not feel so territorially challenged and, at the same time, he becomes aware that you have given permission for a visitor to share in his space.
- ✓ Ensure that your dog is safely contained within a crate, kenneled, or safely put away in his own room while your visitor has the freedom to move around your home. Don't forget this advice is also important overnight when your guest may require a midnight walk to the restroom.
- ✓ Do feed your dog his main meal in a private area so that his food and water bowls are not in a guest's path. Territorial behavioral will typically extend to food aggression should your dog feel unsure or challenged. The same is true for bones, chewies and any toys.