

# Surely knowing the cue is enough to solving problem behaviour?



17 Dec 2017 7:43 PM | Peter Hargreaves

All behavior takes place given setting events and within a framework of motivating operations. Behavior never happens in a vacuum, it interacts and is affected by each of the environmental components. The antecedent package, what comes before the behavior, is considered to contain the cue, setting events and motivating operations.

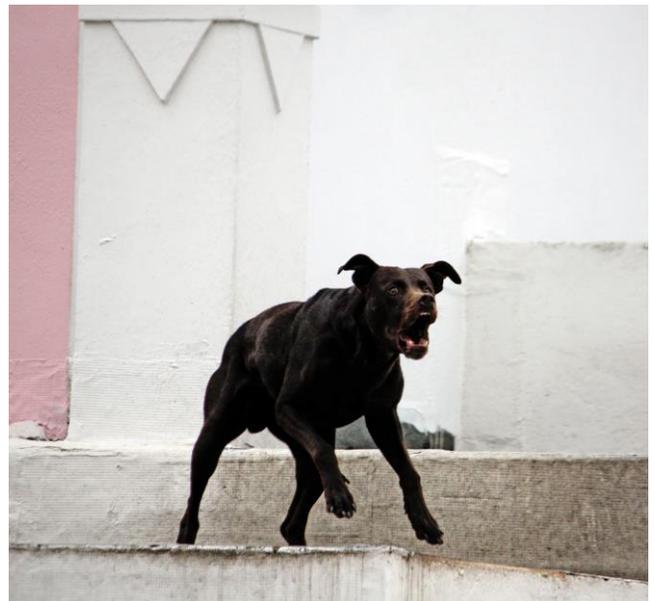
## Setting events

James O'Heare says that setting events provide a context and influence target behaviors (2007 p 320). So we can manipulate the environment to make the behavior easier and to also prevent problematic behaviors by changing the setting events. . Change the environment and the behavior will change. Think also of other context stimuli that may set the occasion for the behavior such as the location, the presence of a certain person or the time of day. In many situations if this context stimuli is removed or changed then the behavior is less or more likely to occur. So understanding the setting events can be a critical part of the behavior puzzle. We always need to know and understanding what is eliciting a problematic behavior if we are to attempt to change the behavior in a positive manner!

## Motivating Operations

Motivating Operations affect and influence the value of the reinforcer and therefore increase or decrease the likelihood of the discriminative stimulus to evoke the behavior (O'Heare 2007). Motivating Operations are "environmental events, operations, or stimulus conditions that affect an organism's behavior by altering:

- (a)** the reinforcing or punishing effectiveness of other environmental events and
- (b)** the frequency of occurrence of that part of the organism's repertoire relevant to those events as consequences (Michael 2003).



Medication, injury, satiation, deprivation and fear can all affect the value of a reinforcer. As dog trainers we can manipulate motivating operations by training a dog when they are hungry or holding special toys just for training sessions. We can directly impact the value of the reinforcer or punisher to help our behavior change program.



## Why are Conditioned Emotional Responses Considered Motivating Operations?

Remember behavior is behavior and emotions are emotions. These are very different. Emotional responses contribute to an animals motivation and the visible behaviors we see and can measure. Emotional responses motivate whether an animal will attempt to escape, avoid, appease, approach or run from something because of their conditioning or reinforcement history. If the emotional response is fear that is going to motivate a considerably different behavior than if the pet is happy!

Remember emotional responses motivate a measurable behavior.

- 1.** If a dog is afraid of people then their fear will motivate operant escape behaviors. The dog will want to escape or avoid the person.
- 2.** The escape behavior is then negatively reinforced, escaping removes the dog from the problematic stimulus and brings about relief from the fear.
- 3.** So in similar situations in the future the dog is more likely to escape as this behavior has been reinforced.

Change the emotion of fear and the escape behavior is no longer valid or necessary. Because emotional responses motivate behavior in this way they are considered to “serve as motivating operations” (O’Heare 2007 p 229). They directly impact the value of the reinforcing contingency.