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## Dog Piece

### DESENSITIZING DOGS TO SOUNDS

It's thunderstorm and fireworks season here in Colorado. So we've been receiving quite a few calls about dogs who are afraid of both these sounds. Dogs can develop noise phobias to most any loud, startling sound. We've seen dogs who were afraid of the WHOOSH from hot air balloons, construction noises, outside air conditioning compressors, and somewhat unique to Colorado, the explosive boom when the ski patrol is shooting down avalanches. Suzanne was also interviewed for a recent article in [American Baby](#) magazine and mentioned the importance of accustoming pets to baby sounds before baby comes home.

Counter conditioning and desensitization are the most common techniques to help your dog overcome these fears. Big words!! What do they mean? Desensitization means starting with a softer, quieter version of the noise - one that doesn't frighten your dog. When he hears it, you follow it immediately with something your dog loves - usually an irresistible tidbit - such as a tiny piece of meat or cheese.

Remember Pavlov's dogs? The bell he rang told the dogs food was coming. You want your dog to think noise means food. That's the counter conditioning part. The result is your dog has a different emotional reaction to the sound. Think about how your feelings might change if we gave you \$5 every time someone cut you off in traffic. You'd become more tolerant pretty quickly!

After enough repetitions, your dog should be looking for the treat when he hears the sound. Now it's time to increase the noise level a tiny bit and do the same thing all over again, until you have the sound at a volume your dog might typically experience.

The trick is being able to control the sound level. Specially made CD's of recorded sound can help. These seem to work best for distinct

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### Our Piece

#### DOES ONE BREED OF CAT GET ALONG BEST WITH DOGS?

Suzanne was recently asked this question. The short answer is not to our knowledge. Abyssinians and Siamese both have been described as more "dog-like" than other cat breeds but this doesn't mean they'll do better with dogs.

How well cats will tolerate friendly dogs is influenced by whether they were socialized to dogs as kittens, and vice versa. The sensitive period for cat socialization to people is between 2 and 7 weeks of age. Behaviorists don't know if these are also the best ages for primary socialization to other animals, but it's likely to be before 4 months of age.

Socialization means that a kitten needs to have pleasant experiences with dogs during kittenhood. From these fun encounters, she learns to see dogs as friends, rather than enemies. The same process happens for dogs.

If dogs and cats weren't socialized to each other early on, it will require substantially more effort to create safe, friendly relationships between the two.

sounds like gunshots, baby cries, fireworks and the like. Thunderstorm phobias often don't respond as well, because dogs are probably reacting to more than just thunder.

You can order the Baby Sounds CD directly from our website, [www.AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com](http://www.AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com). We also carry Fireworks, Thunderstorms, Guns, Kitchen and Vacuums, Dogs, Car Trip, Children, Flight, and Cars and Trucks. These are not on our current site, but will be on our new and expanded site, which launches September 1.

If you want to order these titles now, call us at 303-932-9095. We'd also be happy to schedule a telephone or in-person consultation with you to give you personal assistance with your dog's noise phobias.

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## Cat Piece

### PREVENTING CAT WARS

Are you one of the many people we see who acquired a second cat to keep your first cat company but things aren't working out? If your cats can't get along, it can create a tension-filled life not only for your cats but for you as well. Cats subjected to chronic stress who spend a lot of time hiding and trying to avoid other cats are not living a good quality of life.

Many of these problems can be prevented with proper introductions. Introductions must be micro-managed, with the cats not allowed to see or touch one another at first. Never just put them together and let them "work it out". Even if they ultimately learn to get along, this approach stresses both cats tremendously and creates a high risk that they'll never get along.

We've created a special paper, "*Helping Cats Co-Exist*", and only our newsletter subscribers can obtain it now, before our new website launches. [Click here](#) to download. (You'll need Acrobat Reader to open the file - download it free from [Adobe](#)). You'll find many more of these types of articles on our new website that launches September 1.

Other events can cause your cats to get cross with each other. One is redirected aggression. If one of your cats sees another cat outside the window and gets upset, he may redirect an aggressive attack onto his family buddy who happens to innocently walk across the room. Of course the bystander cat is totally flabbergasted by this shocking behavior and can either fight back or run away in terror. Unfortunately, one or both cats may not be able to forget this incident, and now threaten each other on sight.

Whenever cats are fighting, no matter what the reason, your first step is to separate them, supervise them or manage their environment so fights just simply can't happen. If the cats continue to fight, you'll have a much harder time helping them learn to get along. Next, try the introduction procedures in our Helping Cats Co-Exist paper.

If you still have problems, it's time to call for professional help. We're happy to schedule a consultation with you. Just email us at [info@AnimalBehaviorAssociates](mailto:info@AnimalBehaviorAssociates) or call our office at 303-932-9095 to

### SHARE YOUR BED WITH A CAT FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP!

Here's an interesting item we found at the Animal News Center. A survey by Cats Protection of 420 cat owners in England revealed 44% of them enjoyed a better night's sleep if their cat was on the bed than their partner! Significantly more women reported this effect than men. The advantages of cats over partners were more space on the bed, purring and no harassment or snoring! Do your own survey - see how your partner stacks up against your cat!

We are more likely to find our cat Buffett (Suzanne's a Parrothead, hence the name!) on the bed in cooler weather. We all agree that none of us - Buffett included - snore, but Buffett complains that we don't purr. Oh well, nobody's purrfect.

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### What's New at ABA

We are excited, optimistic, and somewhat relieved to have this first issue out to all of you. Not being computer wizards, it took us a while to learn how to produce a quality newsletter that not only looks good but has content that is interesting and useable to you, our readers.

Our thanks to [ConsultLogic, Inc](#) and Alexandria Brown, "[The E-zine Queen](#)". I highly recommend both of them if you are thinking of doing your own ezine.

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schedule an appointment.

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issue.

We sincerely hope you'll stay with us, because we believe we can help you understand your pets better and enjoy sharing life with them more. Hope you enjoy this first issue, please share it, and give us your feedback! Bring out the best in your pets, Suzanne and Dan

Suzanne Hetts, Ph.D. and Dan Estep, Ph.D.  
Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists

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### About Our Services

#### **FROM RESOLUTION TO PREVENTION**

Next year, 2004, marks ABA's 20th anniversary. In that time, we've seen a lot of pets with problems and a lot of people in crisis because of them. We will continue to help our clients resolve these issues, but we also want to do more to help people prevent problems.

It's so sad when we see problems that we are pretty sure could have been prevented if people had more good information, and the right thing had been done early on. We've developed a Behavior Wellness Program( you'll learn more about in future issues and from our new website that will give you a whole new perspective on your pets' behavior. We can't wait to share it with you. Stay tuned!

Animal Behavior  
Associates, Inc.  
4994 S. Independence Way  
Littleton, CO 80123

303-932-9095  
[AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com](http://AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com)