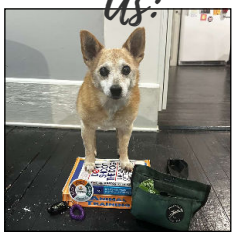
Behavior Change Starts With Us:

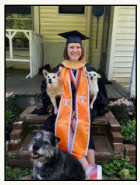
Addressing Judgement in Non-R+ Spaces



Valerie Bogie, MSSW, Veterinary Social Worker

Valerie Bogie inc





INSIGHT
ANIMAL BEHAVIOR SERVICES



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It's Not Just About the Prong Collar.

Our beliefs and choices can be connected to:

- Personal experiences & learning history
- Professional identity and expertise
- Values, morals, and ethics
- Culture and community
- Belonging and relationships



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What Are We Protecting?

When someone challenges our beliefs, are we protecting…

- Animal welfare?
- Our professional credibility?
- Our values?
- Our sense of belonging?
- Our identity?

Sometimes more than one thing can be true.



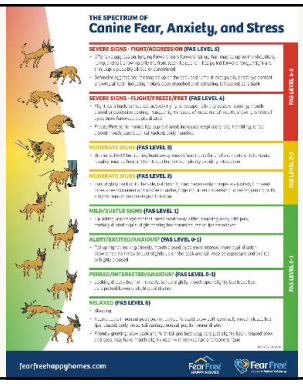
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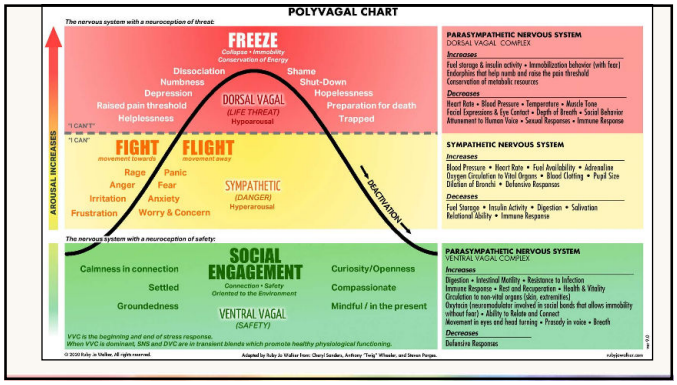
Factors That Impact Behavior

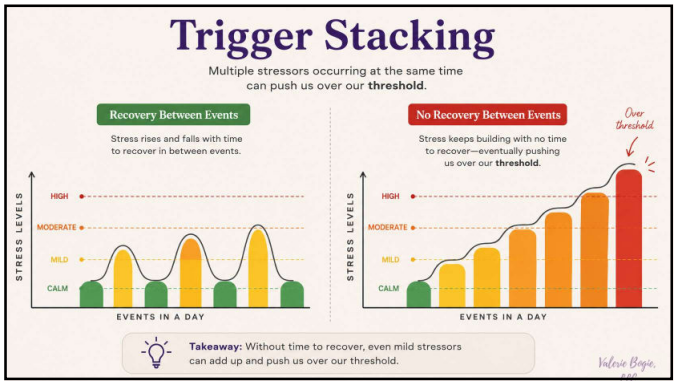
- Genetics/ Biology
- Maternal/ Prenatal Factors
- Early Life Experiences
- Learning History
- Stress & Trigger Stacking
- Physical Health & Pain
- Environment & Context

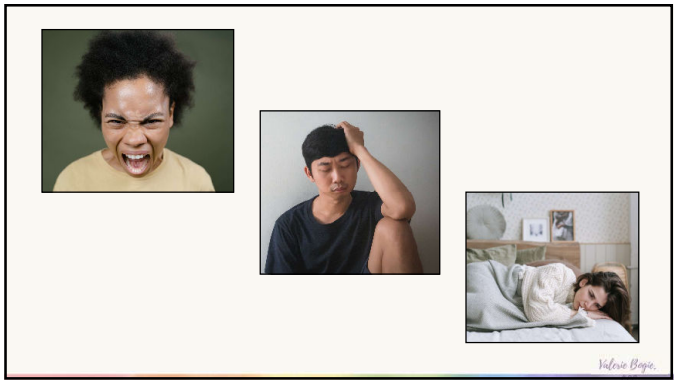


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POLYVAGAL CHART
The nervous system with a neuroception of threat:
FREEZE
Collapse • Immobility
Conservation of Energy
Dissociation
Numbness
Depression
Raised pain threshold
Helplessness
Shame
Shut-Down
Hopelessness
Preparation for death
Trapped
DORSAL VAGAL
(LIFE THREAT)
Hypoarousal
"I CAN'T"
"I CAN"
FIGHT
movement towards
Rage
Anger
Irritation
Frustration
FLIGHT
movement away
Panic
Fear
Anxiety
Worry & Concern
SYMPATHETIC
(DANGER)
Hyperarousal
AROUSAL INCREASES
REGULATION
The nervous system with a neuroception of safety:
SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
Connection • Safety
Oriented to the Environment
Calmness in connection
Settled
Groundedness
Curiosity/Openness
Compassionate
Mindful / in the present
VENTRAL VAGAL
(SAFETY)
VVC is the beginning and end of stress response.
When VVC is dominant, SNS and DVC are in transient blends which promote healthy physiological functioning.
PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM
DORSAL VAGAL COMPLEX
Increases
Fuel storage & insulin activity • Immobilization behavior (with fear)
Endorphins that help numb and raise the pain threshold
Conservation of metabolic resources
Decreases
Heart Rate • Blood Pressure • Temperature • Muscle Tone
Facial Expressions & Eye Contact • Depth of Breath • Social Behavior
Attunement to Human Voice • Sexual Responses • Immune Response
SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM
Increases
Blood Pressure • Heart Rate • Fuel Availability • Adrenaline
Oxygen Circulation to Vital Organs • Blood Clotting • Pupil Size
Dilation of Bronchi • Defensive Responses
Deceases
Fuel Storage • Insulin Activity • Digestion • Salivation
Relational Ability • Immune Response
PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM
VENTRAL VAGAL COMPLEX
Increases
Digestion • Intestinal Motility • Resistance to Infection
Immune Response • Rest and Recuperation • Health & Vitality
Circulation to non-vital organs (skin, extremities)
Oxytocin (neuromodulator involved in social bonds that allows immobility without fear) • Ability to Relate and Connect
Movement in eyes and head turning • Prosody in voice • Breath
Decreases
Defensive Responses
Adapted by Ruby Jo Walker from: Cheryl Sanders, Anthony "Twig" Wheeler, and Steven Porges.


Trigger Stacking
Multiple stressors occurring at the same time can push us over our threshold.
Recovery Between Events
Stress rises and falls with time to recover in between events.
No Recovery Between Events
Stress keeps building with no time to recover—eventually pushing us over our threshold.
Over threshold
STRESS LEVELS
HIGH
MODERATE
MILD
CALM
EVENTS IN A DAY
Takeaway: Without time to recover, even mild stressors can add up and push us over our threshold.
Valerie Bogie, PhD


Valerie Bogie, PhD



Co-Regulation

Valerie Bogie



Co-Regulation

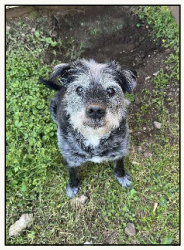
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Unconditional Positive Regard

- Separate person from behavior
- Active listening
- Curiosity instead of judgement



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Dog-centered Approach

- Dignity & respect
- Active participation in care
- Unique individuals



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~~Perso~~ Dog-centered Approach

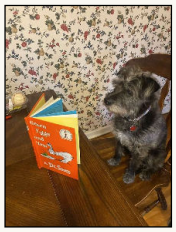
- Dignity & respect
- Active participation in care
- Unique individuals



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Positive Reinforcement

- Focus on assets instead of deficits
- Small approximations towards end goal
- Highlight what is going well
- Recognize capacity for growth



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Strengths-based Approach

- Focus on assets instead of deficits
- Small approximations towards end goal
- Highlight what is going well
- Recognize capacity for growth



Valerie Bogie,

Strengths-based Approach

- Holistic picture of individual's life
- Collaboration
- Cost-benefit analysis



Valerie Bogie,



In the Heat of the Moment

- Seek to understand the person's experiences before offering recommendations
- Listen to understand, not respond
- Listening does not equal agreeing



Scenario : The client with a prong collar

"My trainer told me to use this. It's the only thing that works."

Your response:

- "I can't work with you unless you stop using that collar right now."
- "Science has proven that prong collars are harmful to dogs."

Scenario : The client with a prong collar

"My trainer told me to use this. It's the only thing that works."

Try:

- **"It sounds like you've been working really hard to find something that helps. What changes have you noticed since you started using it?"**
- **"How do you feel when you are walking your dog with the prong collar?"**

Scenario: Different members of the care team

A veterinarian recommends something the trainer disagrees with, or a trainer recommends something the veterinary team questions.

Your response:

- **They don't know what they are doing!**
- **Maybe I should have the client find a better fit.**

Scenario: Different members of the care team

A veterinarian recommends something the trainer disagrees with, or a trainer recommends something the veterinary team questions.

Try:

- **"I'd love to better understand your reasoning behind that recommendation. Can you tell me what you're seeing and what you're hoping to accomplish?"**
- **"We're both trying to help this patient. Can we talk through some options that address both of our concerns?"**

Scenario: Social Media

A. You encounter someone else's content
A trainer you don't know is discussing dominance theory and how owners need to be the alpha over a dog.

Questions to consider:
- Do you have the full context?
- Are they seeking discussion?
- What would your comment accomplish?
- Would a private conversation be more productive?

Valerie Bogie, CPDT

Scenario: Social Media

A. You encounter someone else's content
A trainer you don't know is discussion dominance theory and how we need to be the alpha over a dog.

Possible responses:
- Scroll past, share educational content on your own page, or respectfully engage when there's a meaningful opportunity.

Valerie Bogie, CPDT

Scenario: Social Media

B. Someone challenges you on your own page
You post a video about positive reinforcement training. Someone comments: "Positive reinforcement doesn't work for aggressive dogs. You're putting people at risk."

Questions to consider:
- Is this a genuine question, a disagreement, misinformation, or harassment?
- Who else is reading?
- What are your moderation boundaries?

Valerie Bogie, CPDT

Scenario: Social Media

B. Someone challenges you on your own page
You post a video about positive reinforcement training. Someone comments: "Positive reinforcement doesn't work for aggressive dogs. You're putting people at risk."

Possible responses

- **Hide the comment**
- **Make a public comment**
- **Message them privately about a respectful discussion**

Not Every Conversation Needs to Be a Battle.

Before engaging, check in with yourself:

- **Am I regulated enough to listen?**
- **Am I curious, or am I trying to win?**
- **Is this person willing to have a conversation?**
- **Is there an immediate safety or welfare concern?**
- **Do I have the capacity for this right now?**

Utilize Your Agency

Engage



Pause



Set a boundary





Tomorrow!

Clinical Animal Behavior Conference

Build your communication skills!
9:20am- 10:35am Workshop- Less Fixing, More Listening: Using Emotional CPR to Build Trust, Empathy and Collaboration

Build your support system!
10:50am- 11:40am You Don't Have to Wear All the Hats: Grief, Collaboration and the Evolution of Behavioral Care

Resources & Support

Caregiver burden • Human-animal bond • Grief & loss • Professional and community support

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INSIGHT