THE CANINE LADDER OF AGGRESSION

How a dog reacts to stress or threat

INCREASING UP THE LADDER

11 AGGRESSION	biting
10 REACTIVITY	snapping
9 ASSERTIVENESS	growling
8 MOVING INTO ASSERTIVENESS	stiffening up, stare
7 LEARNT HELPLESSNESS	lying down, leg up
6 FROZEN MOVING INTO LEARNT HELPLESSNESS	standing crouched, tail tucked under
5 AVERSION MOVING INTO LEARNT HELPLESSNESS	creeping, ears back
4 OBVIOUS AVERSION	walking away
3 LESS SUBTLE AVERSION	turning body away, sitting, pawing
2 SUBTLE AVERSION	turning head away
1 DISPLACEMENT BEHAVIOURS	yawning, blinking, lip licking, scratching, sniffing, shake off

The early steps matter most.
Recognising subtle stress signals helps prevent escalation.

