

An excerpt from

On Talking Terms With Dogs: Calming Signals

Chapter 2, Calming Signals: How to Identify and Use Them

By Turid Rugaas, Dogwise Publishing. 800-776-2665, www.dogwise.com

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Head turning

A signal can be a swift movement, with the dog either turning his head to the side and back, or holding his head to one side for some time. It can be just a tiny movement, or the whole head can be clearly and deliberately turned to the side for several seconds.

Your dog may use head turning to tell an approaching dog to calm down. Perhaps the other dog approached yours too quickly, or approached him directly head on instead of in a curve.

Your dog may turn his head if you stoop over him. Although he may stand still, he might also turn his head which tells you that he is feeling uncomfortable in this situation.



You can use head turning yourself when a dog starts to get worried or frightened if you have approached him impolitely. If a scared dog starts to bark or growl at you, stop moving towards him, turn your head to one side and this will help him feel better.

Softening the eyes

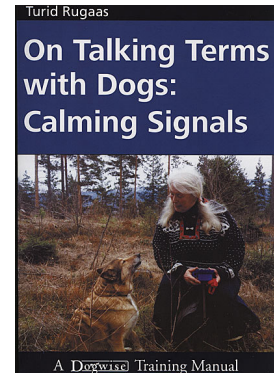
"Shortening the eye" by making the eyes look at another individual in a softer way, lowering the lids, and not staring in a threatening way, are signals. Your dog may use them when he looks at someone straight on but does not want to make himself seem threatening.



You can use a similar signal yourself if you wish to train the exercise "eye contact," making the contact softer and more friendly.

Turning away

Turning the side or back to someone is very calming. When dogs play together rather wildly, some of them will start turning their side or back to the others in between playing, to make things calm down a little. Your dog may use this signal when another dog growls or behaves threateningly towards him in some way, such as running up to him too quickly.



He may also use it if you speak in a very cross voice or go up to him when he feels that you are angry. When young dogs pester older ones, the older often turns back to make them calm down. When you jerk at the leash your dog may turn away from you, maybe pulling even more.



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You can use this signal yourself when a dog shows signs of nervousness or aggression towards you. If he jumps up at you, turn away, and more often than not he will stop.

If your dog is overwhelming you by jumping up and bothering you, turn your back on the dog and he will quiet down. If you are approaching a strange dog and suddenly you see that the dog is becoming nervous, turn your back to him. In a few seconds the dog will come to you.

Turid Rugaas lives in Norway and is also the author of *My Dog Pulls What Do I Do?* and the DVD counterpart to this book, *Calming Signals: What Your Dog Tells You*. She has studied canine social behavior for over 30 years and written and lectured on the subject throughout the world.