

Tyler,

When I first adopted Tyson, my Saint Bernard-mix, at 5 years old, I was shocked to find out that he was aggressive toward other dogs; since I was told by the rescue I adopted him from that he “seemed fine” with other dogs. For my first 3 weeks with him, I contemplated returning him many times. It was a very emotional time and I cried many nights. Because I volunteer at an animal shelter and foster dogs often, there was no way I could have a dog-aggressive dog. Finally, I made the decision that I could not keep him. I contacted the rescue with full intentions of bringing him back that day. However, I was given the contact information to his former owner and found out that prior to making his way to my home, my dog had already been through 3 other homes and 3 longer-term stints in different shelters. By the time he made it to me, he was completely confused and unstable. After finding out his history, I knew I didn’t have it in me to return him and I decided to make it work. Back then, my opinion of making it work meant that I could no longer foster, or have my family over with their dogs, or even just go on walks with my friends and their dogs...which I did so often before. My honest thought was that since Saint Bernard’s don’t have a long life span and my dog was already 5 years old, I would only have to live like this for about 3 more years. I called the rescue and let them know that I would not be returning him. At this point, I thought it was a fact that my dog could never be around other dogs. However, at 160 pounds (40 pounds heavier than I am), I needed to be able to walk him without him dragging me across the street in a fit of rage when he saw another dog. So, I began looking up trainers. Immediately, I saw K9 Connection and brought him to you for an evaluation. I started telling some trainer friends about my plans for my dog, but was surprised to have some of them beg me not to use K9 Connection. As a result, I was terrified to follow through after my initial evaluation. I ended up going to other trainers who all pretty much said the same thing, “if he were younger, we’d have a real chance at changing his behavior”. For the next year and a half, I read numerous articles on dog aggression and began to work slowly on introducing him to other dogs on walks and eventually started fostering dogs again. I was amazed at how wonderful my dog actually was with other dogs once he felt comfortable with them. However, he was still insanely reactive toward dogs he didn’t know, especially if they were walking toward him. He would bark, growl, and lunge...everything you could think of, to try to get at these dogs.

And, he was very difficult to hold back. I was confused as to why he was so wonderful with my foster dogs, but still a complete nightmare on walks. I knew it was just a matter of time before something terrible happened. So, again, I contacted K9 Connection and discussed other trainer's opinions that my dog's behavior could not be changed and also discussed my fears about e-collar training, since I had heard so many horror stories about that method of training. Without hesitation, you assured me that progress could be made with my dog, and just about any dog, regardless of age. You explained that my dog wasn't a mean dog, but a scared dog and that his reactions toward other dogs likely came from fear and anxiety. Then you took the time to thoroughly explain away the misconceptions I had about e-collar training. Finally, you put the collar on my arm and slowly began to increase the levels. I started to feel the tingle of the e-collar at level 16, out of 127 levels. There was no pain, just a tingle. And, shockingly that is the same level my dog reacted to. I was completely at ease because I knew my dog was not being hurt and I knew you fully understood what was going on with him. After our 3 private sessions, he began the aggression class with many other reactive dogs and he graduated in just 4 classes. We began the regular group classes and he continued to do very well. After our 3 months of group classes, I can now walk him past unfamiliar dogs without issue. If necessary, I can have him sit off to the side and wait for another dog to pass us before we continue on our walk. And now, we are even walking around Delaware Park with a pack of 10-15 other dogs, without a single reaction. I haven't even had to use the e-collar for the past 3 weeks. It is an amazing feeling to see him anxiety-free and enjoying our walks with other dogs, both familiar and new. I was always told that if I walked him with confidence, he would feed off of my confidence, but there is a HUGE difference between trying to act confident and actually being confident. Your program gave us that necessary confidence. You've not only changed my dog, but you've changed me as well. We are much more secure, relaxed and happy on our walks. I even look forward to coming across other dogs on our walks, because it gives me a chance to reward my dog for his appropriate behavior. I love my dog. I've learned a lot from him. And, I fully understand how important training can be for a dog's state of mind, in particular one that has been uprooted from his home and left abandoned in a shelter kennel. I am approaching my two year anniversary with Tyson and I now pray that he will exceed a Saint Bernard's life span. I look forward to

many more years ahead with him. My only regret is that I didn't join your program sooner. Thank you for everything!

Sandee & Tyson