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Possession Aggression

Aggression because your dog has a bone or food or toy in his possession is a dominance behavior. In your dog's mind, he is correcting the owner for going near HIS food or object. This is the correct reaction by an Alpha dog to a subordinate. By growling, your dog is asserting his position in the pack. I break down this training into segments and recommend that you move slowly from each step. It may take you more than the time allotted here to move from each step. I use food as my example but you can train the same way and follow the steps the same way for bones or toys:

1. BEGIN OBEDIENCE TRAINING IMMEDIATELY. Do only obedience for a week, feed your dog alone in a certain spot and do not allow him access to toys or bones.
2. Week 2: Do an obedience session with your dog, keep the prong and leash on and feed your dog out of your hands after training is complete. Do not put the food on the ground. Feed him in the same spot in your kitchen every meal. If your dog doesn't want to eat from your hands, he doesn't eat.
3. After you have done this for about one month, repeat step 2 but feed the dog from his bowl on the ground, in the same spot in the kitchen. Stand next to him, at the end of the six foot leash, the leash is attached to the training collar. Ignore him, no eye contact, no talking or touching. If he growls, give him a leash correction like you never have before and go back to Step 2 for a month.
4. After about a month of Step 3, while you are still six feet away from your dog at the end of your leash. Call your dog to you as soon as he finishes his food in his bowl. Reward him for coming to you with a treat. As your dog willingly comes to you when commanded, call him when his food bowl is almost empty and reward him for coming to you. Correct if he doesn't come to you on command. After he receives his reward for responding to the come command, allow him to go back to his bowl to finish eating.
5. After about a month of Step 4, inch your way closer to the dog while he is on the six foot leash and prong collar. First, five feet from your dog, then four, etc.
6. After about a month of Step 6, keep the collar and leash on and put his bowl on the ground. Keep ½ of the food still in your hand (your dog should know it's in your hand), immediately once you place your dogs food bowl on the ground, throw the food that you have in your hand into his bowl.

For toy or bone possession, follow all of the steps above except for Step 2. Do not hold the bone or toy in your hand, but instead go to Step 3. He may not want to chew the bone or play with his toy while on leash. If he doesn't tell him to Heel and the both of you walk away from the toy or bone. Put your dog outside or in his crate and pick up the toy or bone while your dog is out of sight. Once your dog is chewing his bone or playing on leash, similar to Step 4, command him to 'drop it' and call him to you. Once he comes to you, reward him with a treat and either allow him to go back to the toy or put him out of sight and put the toy or bone away. Never ask him to release the toy or bone with you leaning over the top of him; command him to release it and walk over to you on your command, this way you have established your Alpha position but are in a safe position to correct should your dog growl or snap. It is also less threatening to your dog if you are six feet from him.

Once you have established yourself as Alpha, this problem should fall by the wayside. Do not try and touch or talk to your dog while he is eating or chewing his bone. You might be adding more stress than you need to be to the situation. Just because your dog no longer growls at you doesn't mean he won't growl at someone else in the house. You have established leadership, and everyone in the house must do the same.

Be careful, pick your battles but win the war. If this is your dog's only bad habit, decide if you want to fight. If not, keep everyone safe, feed him in the basement or a secluded room, alone, and shut the door. And keep toys or bones out of your home that will instigate a battle.