

You and Your Rescue: Navigating the First Few Weeks of Adjusting



What most people instinctively say/do in the excitement of getting a new dog.....

- "I have a new dog!"
- "I found/adopted a dog!"
- "I introduced her to 15 people"
- "she was a bit leery but seems to like my other 3 dogs"
- "she went everywhere with me"

This all happens in the first few days of the new home.....although the excitement is understandable.....the outcome usually isn't good....

Too many dogs are not introduced correctly or given a feasible amount of time to adjust, therefore the result/reaction.....

Call backs to the rescue....

- "I think we will have to re-home the new dog"
- "the new dog barked and nipped at my kid"
- "we had a dog fight" "what do we do?"

The big secret for success with a new dog that came from a shelter, boarding or even a foster home? **Doggy shut down!** You must give the new dog time to adjust to you and your family and being in the new environment after finding, adoption, buying, etc.

Think of it this way: You're at home, minding your own business, napping on the couch. Somebody comes in, drags you out, puts you in a car, drives you hours, and drops you in the middle of a huge noisy city you've never been in before. You don't speak the language, don't know where you are. BUT – you see a little doorway that looks familiar. You go in and it's a small room, but it smells good and feels safe. And a nice stranger brings you some food and then leaves you alone to figure out what the heck is going on. Would you rather wander through the strange city and be terrified, or stay in the nice safe little room with the nice person bringing you food? After you calm down, you might get brave and stick your head out of the room for a minute or two. And there's the nice food person right outside! Okay, that feels safe! That is the purpose of the shutdown.

How does the ShutDown work?

The Two Week Shut Down is a time familiar to a dog's mind, as it mimics the whelping box when first born, as the puppy's eyes are not open and it relies totally on the mother's ability to take care of it. By smelling, sensing, listening the puppy starts his journey into the new scary world. New adult dogs come into our home the same way, "a journey into a new and scary world" By giving the dog a "time out" the dog can learn its new world, its new people, and begin to relax and blossom under the care of the new care giver. While we all want to run out with our new dog, show everyone our new pet, we forget that even an adult dog is now back to a puppy newborn like mind, all is new, the voices speak a new language, cars might be new, leashes and handling under nice people might be new. Even petting and acceptance of a pet is stressful on a new dog, "Who are you? Where did we come from? Where are we going? What is expected of me?"—the dog thinks! Step back and think again how you might feel if you were never going to go back to your "home", and that you were expected to live with new people who didn't understand your language. What if these new people took you to all sorts of different places expecting you to greet everyone happily and feel comfortable with an overload of attention all at one time? How might you feel after all of that, to have to go to your new "home" and interact with a bunch of strangers? It's very likely that you'd feel exhausted, overwhelmed, and ready to retreat but really have no place to go to. You might begin to act out and yell at people for coddling you and insisting that you do this and do that. It is natural to want to welcome your new dog, but it is just as natural for them to be frightened and unsure. Many new owners or fosters drop the dog into the middle of the new situation, and then get upset or angry that the pup isn't relaxed and accepting of EVERYTHING instantly!

Why do we expect a dog to accept a situation when we ourselves could not???

By shutting down the dog, it gives the dog TIME to see you, meet YOU, and hear and take in the new sounds and smells of your home. But most importantly, you are teaching him to trust you.

So let's start with what you'll need – before your new dog arrives, you need the following:

- Sturdy Wire crate - should be large enough for the dog to stand upright, and lie down on his side
- Crate pad
- Sheet or blanket to cover the crate
- Baby gates – to block off areas that the dog should not have access to yet
- A martingale collar – cloth in the front with a chain tightener in the back
- 2 leashes – one 6 foot leather or sturdy cloth, and 1 5 or 6 foot light cloth leash for indoors
- Penny can – take an empty soda can, put 20-30 pennies in, tape the opening closed • Training treats – small treats for rewarding behavior
- A sturdy Kong toy – and a jar of peanut butter or can of pureed pumpkin (not pie mix)

THE TWO WEEK SHUTDOWN: CRATING:

Set up the crate in a room, preferably away from the main traffic area. Drape a sheet over the back and ½ way around the sides so it's cozy. Put in bedding or a blanket. Your dog will spend a good amount of

time in here for the next couple of weeks, so you want it to be comfortable and safe. If you have other pets, block their entry to this area – they should not be able to wander up to the crate – that will come later. When you are home, the dog should be able to hear the regular noises of the house and become accustomed to them and to your voice (Believe me, dogs are sensory animals, they know more than you think without seeing it – smell is their primary sense). You will want the dog to learn that you are the bringer of all good things – food, potty breaks, toys, affection. You go in, open the crate, leash him up and take him out – he will learn where you want him to go to relieve himself, and that you will take him there. NOTE: The path to the door should be clear – NO OTHER PETS IN THE WAY! When you come back in, give the dog some out of crate time with you - 20-30 minutes at a time– talk to him, sing to him, play a little, give a treat. Let him relax and get used to you – and then back in the crate for a couple of hours. If you need to do that by leaving a treat in there or a toy, do it. Feed your dog all meals in the crate. All good things come to the dog in the crate. Let him out for water or after he eats, so he gets used to coming in and out. (If the dog goes to his crate on his own, he is telling you “I need a time out” allow him this time. By having the dog out for long periods of time we are forcing the dog to keep accepting all new things, by putting the dog away we are asking him to accept a few things, then go think and absorb, when we get him out later we introduce a few more things, so the three new things are three new things, not 3 x 3 x 3 – possible shut down from the dog.) In the Home - Let your dog drag a leash – get a light cotton one for the house. You can tie it to your belt or hold it. This teaches the new safe zone for the dog is around you and the humans in the home. It’s a lot easier to correct something if you can step on or grab the leash than it is to chase the dog through the house screaming “NO”. If he goes to jump on a piece of furniture, either step on the leash and say No, or give a tug and say OFF. Walks and Activities: Just fun exercise and maybe throw some toys for fun, leash the dog if you don’t have a fence outside or use lunge lines if you have too big a yard. If you have a yard, stay within it. If you don’t, short walks outside for potty, so they understand where to eliminate and also get a general idea of where they are. Playtime is separate. Remember, this is incredibly stressful for the dog and he will probably tire quickly from the brain stress. No car rides, no other dogs, no pet stores, nothing but you, your home, your yard. (Unless of course the dog needs to go to the veterinarian). Praise and Corrections: There’s a difference between training and correction. It’s too early for training (stay, down, come, etc). You can absolutely correct bad behavior however; just do it firmly – no yelling. Your dog should learn some basic vocabulary. Praise should be short and happy “Good dog!” Words like cookie, treat, dinner, etc so they can associate. Praise Good behavior – ex. Dog is sitting nicely next to you, touch or softly pet the dog “good boy/girl” let them know you appreciate GOOD behavior. This makes naughty behavior not so fun if you ignore or correct THAT but praise the good! Corrections should be specific – “for gods sake, Fido, what are you doing?” is not helpful- the dog hears “blah, blah, blah Fido” – if he even knows his name! If he jumps on the furniture, tug him off with the leash and say OFF. If he jumps on you, tug the leash downwards and say DOWN. Barking too much is QUIET. After he does what you want, praise him for doing it. You will have to do this a lot – be patient and consistent. It’s important that the dog learn your “language” – if something is happening, and you yell STOP – it only works if the dog recognizes your tone and certain words. Many new owners are frustrated when the dog is behaving badly or gets into a spat with the resident dog, and the new dog won’t obey you. You say STOP – and your dog knows what it means, but for the new dog – it’s still a foreign language. Don’t go crazy petting and handling the dog! Even petting and being “out” in the home puts pressure on a dog, as everything is so new. Allowing the dog time to absorb and the decision to come to YOU for pets and affection can do a lot in taking pressure off a new dog. Exercise – but in your yard! All dogs need to burn off energy. Do fun “toss the

ball” games in your yard or on a long line if no fence. Remember to just have fun, let the dog run and explore. If you don't have a yard, short walks, but not in heavy people or car traffic areas. No new buddies! Do not introduce the dogs for these two weeks, they can be side by side in the crates if you can not totally separate, (not nose to nose for they can feel defensive). Some dogs will bond instantly with the other dogs if we don't bond FIRST with the dog, and this can lead to some other issues, as the dog will look to the other dog(s) for guidance. If you encounter a dog on your outside elimination walks, tell the other person your dog is in training and cannot be introduced at this time. Be firm. Ignore crying and/or barking. If you run to the dog each time they bark, whine, or cry, you are teaching the dog that doing those things gets your attention. The dog must learn to be secure when you are not there. Use the leash to correct jumping, exploring counters, etc. Just make sure you know the difference between whining for attention and actual distress – i.e. needing to go out urgently, injury or illness.

The light at the end of the tunnel.....

Literally in **two weeks** you will see a change in the dog and begin to see its honest and true personality shine through! As they learn to look to you for direction and trust you, you can begin to give them more freedom and time out of the crate, and do introductions with your other pets. So, please, if nothing else for your new dog, give it the time to LEARN YOU as you are learning who they are! This method works on shy dogs, confident dogs, abuse cases, chained dogs that come in, rowdy dogs, all temperaments! It isn't just the big ole bully smiles, it's the expression, the way they start to LOOK at you for guidance. You gained their trust and showed them, calmly and fairly what this new world is like and they literally relax and feel safe. There is no need to force that we are the leaders – by using slow easy guidance, patience, showing them what we DO want them to do in a new home instead of correcting them when they do wrong, we instill that we are worthy to the dog to be its leader! So please for the sake of your new dog, slow down, waaaay downwn, give them a chance to show you who they can really be!