

“Two Weeks! Give ‘em a break!”

The Action: “I have a new dog!” “I found/adopted a dog!” “I introduced her to 15 people” “He was a bit leery but seems to like my other 3 dogs” “She went everywhere with me” All in the first few days of the new home!

The Reaction: Approximately two weeks later we get the call back to the rescue. “I think we will have to re-home the new dog.”

Okay folks, here it comes, the big secret to many foster success stories with a new dog in the home -- Doggy shut down! Giving the new dog time to adjust to you, your family, and other pets in the new environment.

Why The Two-Week Shut Down? The Two Week Shut Down is a time familiar to a dog’s mind -- it mimics the whelping box when first born, when the puppy’s eyes are not open and it relies totally on the mother’s ability to take care of it. By smelling, sensing, and 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 caregiver. 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-like mind; all is new. The voices speak a new language, cars might be new, leashes and handling might be new. Even petting and acceptance of a pet is stressful on a new dog. “Who are you? Where did you come from? Where am I going? What is expected of me?” The dog thinks! Just like a newborn baby, we wouldn’t rush out and pass the baby from person to person. We set up a stable and safe environment. Our new dogs are just like that. We also give the rescue dog a bit of time to heal, mentally, and physically, in a safe and comfortable zone.

How the Two Week Shutdown works: For the first two weeks (sometimes even longer depending on the dog), a dog takes in the new environment. By pushing a dog too fast and throwing too much at the dog, we look like we are not the leaders and the dog can feel it MUST defend itself. We coo, cuddle, drag the dog from home to home, from person to person, and the dog has NO idea who we are. A great way of thinking of this time is a line I stole from a friend - “This is the dating period NOT the honeymoon.”

You wouldn’t run up to a stranger and hug them and squeeze them! Imagine, if on the first date, this new person was all over you touching you and having their friends hug you and pat you on top of the head, and jostle your shoulders, then he whisked you off to another stranger’s home and they did the same thing. Would you think this person normal and SAFE? Would you feel invaded and defensive and begin to get a bit snarky yourself? Wouldn’t you think to push these people away? Yet we do this to our dogs, and then get upset or worried that they aren’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, hear and take in the new sounds and smells of your home.**

- **Crate the dog in a room by itself if possible.** (Believe me, dogs are sensory animals. They know more than you think without seeing it.)
- **Leash.** This also teaches the new safe zone when the dog is around you and the humans in the home. Leash the dog right to your belt or under a piece of furniture. This also stops the dog from reacting if you have to get him off of something like the couch. You are not reaching in and grabbing onto him, just tug gently on the leash, say "come" and there you go. No conflict!
- **No obedience training at all** -- just fun exercise. Maybe throw some toys for fun. Leash the dog if you don't have a fence outside. Use lunge lines if you have too big a yard. But **DO NOT** leave the yard at all. No car rides, no other dogs, (unless crated beside them), no pet stores, no **WALKS** even. Nothing but you, your home, and your yard. (Unless of course the dog needs to go to the veterinarian.) 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 is a must**, but only in your yard! All dogs need to burn off energy. Do fun toss the ball games in your yard or on a lunge line if no fence. Remember to just have fun. Let the dog run and explore. No walks yet! Walks are stressful, for there is so much coming at you. Being a new person to this dog, you have no clue how the dog is reacting to the walking environment. The dog may react to something and correcting it can create a **VERY STRESSFUL** moment to the dog, when it should be a fun and happy walk.
- **TEACH** the dog by doing the shut down, that **YOU** are the one to look to, that you are now here for the dog! He can trust in you and look to you as its new leader. Then on walks you will see the dog look to you when he sees something, to see what your reaction is, lessening his mind about having to defend or control the environment. He has **YOU**. The dog now can relax and enjoy the walk more.
- Once exercise/yard time is finished and you are back in the home, only keep the dog out of the crate for 20-40 minutes and **ALWAYS** on a leash. Then put the dog back in his/her crate. Let it absorb and think. 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 it not overload on the dog.
- **No new buddies!** Do not introduce the dog to other pets for these two weeks. They can be side by side in the crates if you cannot totally separate, (not nose to nose for they can feel defensive). The reason it is important not to introduce the new dog to other dog(s) in the home is because some dogs will bond instantly with the other dog(s) if we don't bond **FIRST** with the dog. This can lead to some other issues, as the dog will look to the other dog(s) for guidance and not **YOU**!
- **Ignore Bad behavior.** 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.
- **Praise good behavior gently.** For example, the 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 THAT, but praise the good!

Literally in two weeks you will see a change in the dog and begin to see its honest and true personality. Just like a house guest. They are well behaved and literally shut down themselves these first few weeks. Once the shut down time is over, they relax and the true personality begins to shine through!

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, dogs who were previously chained, rowdy dogs, all temperaments!

They will look to you for guidance. You will gain their trust and show them, calmly and fairly, what this new world is like. They will relax and feel safe. There is no need to force the point that we are its leader. Slow easy guidance, patience, showing them what we want them to do in a new home is the best way to help the new dog adjust. 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!**

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