



Yea! We Have A New Dog

Bringing home a new pet is a very special time. It can be filled with emotions of fear and stress for many dogs and owners. Here are some tips to help make this transition as smooth as possible for you and your new companion.

Take It Easy At First

Studies conducted by Michael Hennessy and Associates through Wright State University show the stress a dog experiences upon adoption is highest the first three days in a new environment. The study results showed dogs in a new living environment had cortisol (stress hormones) levels three times that of dogs with a permanent home. The fourth and fifth days cortisol levels began to return to normal.

As a result of these studies, it is recommended owners take their new companion home and let it get used to family members and its new home for three to five days before introducing their dog to other dogs, people and taking out in public.

Human Contact

Another interesting study conducted by T.F Pettijohn and associates shows human companionship has a greater effect on

reducing a dog's stress than the presence of another dog or cat. So hopefully during your pets first three days, it will be able to spend a lot of time with you and family members.

Play Reduces Stress and Is Great For Bonding

Exercise is a great way to help reduce stress. This is great time to start playing with your dog. Retrieving games are one of the most beneficial games to play with your dog. Your dog might not be able to play effectively in the beginning. This could be a cause of stress, lack of previous experience, and disinterest in the type of toy you are using or distractions in their new environment. Just keep at it. Have a good time playing regardless of the dog's interest, most dogs come around and become very playful.

Deep Relaxing Massage

Further studies by Hennessy and associate indicate that twenty minutes of firm, deep, slow massage help prevent the elevation of cortisol levels during this stressful time. This is why many shelters now have volunteers who not only exercise the dogs, but also spend quiet time touching the dog in this quiet, relaxing manner. This is easy to do while watching TV. Just make sure you don't accidentally switch over to mindless petting. Concentrate on making contact with the dog's muscles, moving your hand slowly and breathing calmly.

Teach Your Dog To Sit

In the book Handbook Of Applied Dog Behavior And Training, author Steven R

Lindsey cites one of the most common causes of stress for dogs is “poorly predicted and uncontrollable training events” (Lindsey vol. 1:112). For this reason many trainers and behaviorist recommend owners structure their interactions with the dog by teaching the dog to sit and then having the dog sit before they pet it, feed it, play with it, let it out the door, etc. The consistency on the owners part helps greatly with stress related issues and behavior problems in general.

To teach your dog to sit, hold a treat to the dogs nose and elevate the treat into the air enough so the dog tips it head up, but does not jump. When the dog sits, praise the dog and give it the treat. When it is easy to get the dog to sit, say “sit” before you put the treat to the dogs nose.

Appropriate Chewing

In addition to teaching your dog to sit, you also want to teach it what to chew on. Many dogs chew on things as a way of reducing stress. There are many great chew items on the market for dogs, just make sure what you give can not have chunks broken off. If your dog does remove chunks of the chew item, remove it immediately and upgrade to a stronger chew.

Owners Fears and Stress

Many owners also experience some degree of fear and stress over adopting a dog. This is a big decision, it is not uncommon to wonder, “Did I do the right thing.” “Did I pick the right dog.” “Is this dog going to destroy my house or be harmful in some

way.” These are normal emotions. They are the emotions of someone who wants the pet to work out but also understands things can go wrong. The solution to owner anxiety is to be proactive so the owner is in control,

The first steps to being proactive happen before you have a new dog. Ideally potential dog owners contact a dog trainer before acquiring a dog to find out what questions they should be asking to screen out dogs that will have problems they are unwilling to work with. Owners also want to find out how to prevent problems from occurring in the first place and get those systems set up before bringing home the dog. Prevention techniques will ensure the smoothest transition and the least amount of trouble.

Too late, you have already picked out your dog and have it home! That’s ok, you can still make changes to your household to ensure the dog learns appropriate behaviors and experiences the least amount of stress, contact a trainer now.

You will also want to speak with a dog trainer or behaviorist about training classes and plan to begin a class as soon as possible. Attending a structured training class gives you the support you need to ensure success; you will be in control instead of at the mercy of the unknown. You will be learning how to communicate to your dog and what your dog is trying to communicate to you.

Work Cited

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