

Decompression Phase

When adopting or fostering a rescued dog from the pound/shelter, it's a happy time for you and a relief to the dog. For one, you've taken them away from that loud, scary place. As the new owners or foster of the dog, you're also excited because you're bringing in a new member of the family into your home. This new situation is exciting for everyone with new interactions and adventures to come.

BUT WAIT! Before you go showing off your new pet to your family, friends, and resident pets, please give the new dog time to relax for awhile. The last thing you should do at this point is rush them into a whole new dramatic situation and making them interact that could get them into trouble if they're not ready for it.

Think of it like this way as humans; you've been looking desperately for a job to support your family; you've been looking for over three months, your savings is dwindling fast, and you're worried; VERY worried. You're getting up everyday looking at the paper/internet, going to interviews, and finally you get a job.

First day on the job, you're excited but nervous, and just want to feel your way around. Then, some co-worker's trying to make you look bad; trying to push your buttons. You want to do the right thing but if no one gives you time to know your job and no one's controlling the guy harassing you, things could happen and (you're back at the pound) you're fired; or, worse, in jail, depending on the reaction. This is just my interpretation as we don't know the feeling of being in doggie jail just because we're a dog, but I bet I'm close. When volunteering at a pound you see this stress all the time.



Decompress for at least 3-5 days.

Dogs that have been at the pound for an especially long period of time need to decompress and get themselves back into a calm state of mind; unlike the worrying and stressing when they were at the pound.

I had a foster dog once that seemed to be normal at the pound but wouldn't make much eye contact. When I got her home, her eyes seem to be darting everywhere but at me. It was odd; I thought she was "special", or just weird.

I knew she was still kennel-stressed from being at the pound. It took a couple weeks for her to get over that and get back to herself and finally making eye contact. Basically, I created a routine taking her for walks in the morning and playing ball afterwards, then I'd put her in the crate to rest for a couple hours. I'd give her something to do, such as a filled kong or some type of dog-friendly chew toy to get her mind working. When she returned to being herself, I introduced basic training such as "Look", "Sit", "Down", and "Come"; all the while I kept her separate from my own dogs. Whenever I felt ready, I slowly introduced her to my own dogs by taking them out on walks together outside the home.

It's always best to introduce the dogs away from the home (such as on a walk or at a park) to get acquainted.

The next step, after they seem to get along on the walk, is to let them socialize in the backyard. When that's successful, then you can let both the new/foster dog into the home along with the resident dog(s) together....but only if YOU feel comfortable with it. If you're the least bit hesitant about it, DON'T DO IT. Dogs

can sense when you're uncomfortable, and one or the other may feel they have to protect you or other family members. If, at any moment, that something does happen, go back to the previous step until there's no worry or hesitation.

Decompression time varies with each and every dog. Some need more time than others, but it's safe to recommend at least one week is best for the new dog. Always treat the dog with respect and give them guidance, exercise (dogs walks, playing), and bond with them. If after the decompression phase, the dog starts to show behavioral problems, start to address it with training to get him/her to listen to you and gain that respect. If you need to consult with a dog trainer, that's what you should do; or ask your family/friends if they've had situations like this, and what they did; or look online for articles/video that may have the answers you need. One of the top reasons dogs end up at the pound are because their owners didn't train them, or rarely interacted with them.

NUMBER ONE RULE: keep your new dog/foster in a crate during decompression time, and always when you're not home. After decompression, and everyone's acquainted and comfortable, it's up to you, as the owner, to take responsibility to determine if your pet can stay free in the home, or if they should be crated. Perish the thought you should come home and find a disastrous situation because you left your animals unattended to make their own decisions. Not to say it can't work, but you have to be certain it can; if not, crate them.