

DECOMPRESSION

Even though your newly adopted dog may be coming to you from a foster home, you still need to be aware of the fact that the move to their forever home is a very stressful time. Happy for you.... scary for Fido.

What is Decompression?

Decompression is a calming period that a dog needs when they first arrive home. Your first instinct is to show off your new pup, take them everywhere and introduce them to everyone. Please, **do not** do this. These activities may make you feel good but are not what is best for a dog that is decompressing. It's **imperative** that the dog has time to get used to their new environment and family before meeting everyone else.

Have a daily routine or schedule 100% planned out prior to the dog coming home. Everything the dog encounters has the potential to be stressful, a routine helps provide stability. Have the dog's day mapped out. From bathroom breaks, to crate time, to walks, the entire day should be on a schedule. Mixing this dog in with your family prior to the end of decompression time might also throw off the process. Following these guides will help decrease the amount of bathroom accidents, fear aggression, destructive behaviors, or the return of the dog to the shelter.

The most important thing is to give the dog time and choices. Giving the dog room to make decisions will build trust. Even with things like petting the dog. If the dog is nervous, it is better to let them decide to come to you, rather than force your love onto them. The more choices they make, the faster they will trust you and adjust to their new home.

Crates are great tools to give the dog a safe space. Like a bedroom where they can go if they are feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or scared. Do not bother the dog in this space, they need to know it is a spot where they can go to feel comfortable.

It takes **at least 2-3 weeks** for your dog to get used to their new home. A nice calm and quiet beginning are essential. The rule of 3's is a good guide: 3 days to de-stress, 3 weeks to learn a routine, 3 months to feel at home.

The First 3 days – De-stress

These are the initial de-stress days. It is often overwhelming for the dog. These days require a lot of patience from you. The dog may sleep and hide or may be so excited and over stimulated that they are hyper and have a hard time following rules. The dog won't know your

expectations and will use trial and error to find out. (Am I allowed on the bed? What about the couch? Is this shoe my toy? What about this rope? Where do I go potty?)

We recommend giving them at **minimum** a full 2 **weeks** of quiet, routine, home life. Avoid situations that will raise their level of excitement. No dog parks, parties, family gatherings, sports games, pet store trips, etc. Some dogs need more time. Too much stimulation can lead to a dog acting out with aggression or fear.

3 Weeks – Learn a Routine

This is when the dog starts to really learn your routine. You will see more of their personality and less their emotional response (fear, confusion, and excitement). This is where you can pinpoint and address any behaviors you don't like with training. Call us to sign up for the training class offered at the Montgomery County Animal Resource Center (ARC), or for more challenging behaviors, we can direct you to trainers and additional resources.

3 Months – Feel at Home

Finally, most dogs start to feel at home! Now you can see if a trip to the pet store is something the dog will enjoy. Remember, these are guides and you should **always** pay attention to your dog's behavior to decide if the dog is ready for something, or if they are still too scared.

Allowing the dog time to decompress without having to deal with a whole new set of intense stimuli will set you all up for a successful future.

