

PROJECT *HomeLife*



CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

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WHAT IS A PUPPY MILL DOG?

First, let's talk about what a puppy mill dog actually is. The Humane Society of the United States defines a puppy mill as a dog breeding operation that puts profit above the health of the dogs. A puppy mill does not have to have hundreds of dogs. Most of the dogs we get from puppy mills don't come from huge breeding facilities. We do get some retired breeder dogs coming from responsible breeders as well and other dogs that might be considered farm dogs that have probably been bred a few times but mostly just roamed around on the farm. Another term you may see is "backyard breeder." These are generally people who have a few dogs that they breed from time to time. They may be pets they breed or they may be farm dogs or dogs living in kennels. However, they all exhibit some degree of what we consider puppy mill behaviors.

We have also been getting a larger number of "leftovers" or puppies that were "too old to sell." Once a puppy is about 10-12 weeks old, they are no longer the cute cuddly balls of fur and they become harder to sell. By about 14-16 weeks, the breeders are often ready to cut their losses and surrender them. These dogs have likely missed out on the very important experiences they should have received during their critical periods of socialization. So they, too, will probably exhibit some degree of the puppy mill behaviors.



When people see these dogs cowering from human touch, they ask if they have been abused. That's possible, but it's more likely they have just had a lack of human interaction. And the little interaction they received may or may not have been harsh but probably was not loving and caring. Anyone who knows about canine mental and emotional development knows that as puppies, dogs need to experience a lot of good, new things when they are young to become well-adjusted adults. Many of these dogs were born in a kennel, hutch, or barn and lived their whole lives that way.

Imagine living your entire life in your bedroom and the only things you saw daily were the same items in your room and out the window. Someone came and fed you twice a day and maybe cleaned up after you. But that's it. Now suddenly you are plopped down into the middle of Grand Central Station. You'd likely cower from people and activity, too!

Dogs that grow up in kennels or barns have never seen a television, a vacuum cleaner, or heard the noise of a dishwasher. Seeing people just sitting and having an animated conversation may even be new to them. They will tend to be fearful of quick movements, loud noises, walking through doorways, walking on different flooring surfaces, different looking people, and so many things that we take for granted in our modern world. Even the "farm dogs" haven't experienced life in a modern home environment.

Some dogs come to us terrified of people, some come to us wanting to interact but are afraid to approach, and some will come acting as a normal dog. But even if they do seem well-socialized when they arrive, we usually find some part of our modern world that gives them pause.



SIGNS OF FEAR

Recognizing the signs of fear in your dog can help you know how to respond by getting them out of the fearful situation or end whatever activity is too overwhelming. It will help you know what their stress thresholds are and understand how much of a certain activity your dog can handle. It's important to understand your dog is not being "stubborn" if they, for example, refuse to walk on leash or come to you for petting. They aren't being stubborn; instead they are scared. It will also help you see when these signs of fear decrease, then you know your dog is becoming more comfortable and making progress!

Frozen in place

Cowering

Avoiding eye contact

Lip licking

Hyper-vigilance

Whites of eyes showing

Closed mouth

Tail tucked

Lowered ears

Pacing

Spinning/Circling

Trembling

Frantic running

Drooling

Urinating/Defecating



MENTOR DOGS

Because dogs are naturally social animals, the best teacher for a shy dog is another dog. We do require most of the puppy mill dogs that come through our program to go to a home with a mentor dog. We have found that, hands down, the most effective way to help these dogs adjust and adapt is a mentor dog. As the term implies, the mentor dog serves as a teacher, tutor, or trail guide through life for the less confident dog. Dogs do not require training to be a good mentor dog.

For dogs that never had the benefit of growing up in a typical human household, having a mentor dog to guide them through daily life can be invaluable. Dogs know how to talk and listen to other dogs so much better than people. Having another dog around provides two key elements in the fearful dog's adjustment to a new home.



First, they provide comfort and a sense of familiarity that helps the fearful dog better negotiate the new and often overwhelming aspects of their new environment.

Second, by observing the mentor dog accept and seek out attention from humans, casually respond to household sights and sounds, and stay relaxed in new circumstances, the fearful dog learns to do the same.

The best mentor dogs are interactive and friendly with people and other dogs but not too pushy.

They are active enough to have the energy to interact. They are

reliable and comfortable in new and changing situations. They are good at communicating and listening to other dogs' body language. They understand and respect if they are being too pushy with a fearful dog.

Even if your dog does not fit the profile of the perfect mentor dog, as long as they get along with other dogs and aren't anxious or fearful, they should be able to show your fearful dog the ropes of living in your house.



THE SAFE SPOT

What is a safe spot? This is an area that your dog will choose as their place to retreat when things get stressful. It is a place where they find safety and comfort. You can create a safe spot in your home that includes an opened-door crate covered with a blanket or a spot with a dog bed and some toys. More than likely, your dog will choose their own safe spot. In the beginning, if your dog is afraid of venturing out of the safe spot, you may need to place their water and food bowls in this area. It is important for your dog to have a space like this to go to when they need time to decompress. Remember, most mill dogs have lived in very small spaces. They are not accustomed to having freedom to move around in homes from room to

room. It will take some time for your dog to feel comfortable to venture out of their safe spot and move around the house, but with patience and gentle encouragement, they will progress. After a few months, if your dog has not yet ventured from their safe spot at all, you may want to help them explore. Gradually introduce new rooms or areas by walking them on leash around the home or encourage them with tasty treats or their mentor dog.



GIVING YOUR DOG SPACE

Many people feel that for shy/fearful/skittish dogs, “all they need is love.” They do need love, but in the beginning, they may need a lot of space. They are in a new home, a new environment with a new family, and it takes time for them to adapt and learn to trust their new adopters. Be patient with them. Do not force human contact, they will accept it on their own as they are ready. Do not corner or hover over them as it is threatening. Remember that dogs have a fight or flight instinct when feeling trapped. You want your new companion to have good experiences with humans – something many of them have not had in the past. So go slow and understand that progress will happen gradually. Remember not to invite a lot of family and friends over for the first few weeks and to give your dog quiet time in their safe zone where they can retreat and relax and have some down time.

When first interacting with your new dog, keep things quiet and gentle. Do not have a lot of noises such as television, music, computer games, etc. happening at the same time. Remember the phrase “low & slow.” Sit on the floor if possible to make yourself less threatening. Sitting in a chair is okay, too. All new activities and situations should be introduced slowly.



KEEPING YOUR DOG SAFE – PREVENTING ESCAPE

Over the years, we have had a few of our adopted dogs go to live in their new homes and, due to being nervous, have bolted through doors whether that be from a car door or a door in the house that leads to an unfenced area. A nervous dog can bolt out the slimmest door opening before you even realize it! Some dogs went missing for hours, days, or weeks, and a couple never made it back home because they were hit by vehicles and killed. This is extremely sad but bluntly true and not meant to scare you – instead, we want to prepare adopters so you can keep your dog safe and not have to endure the trauma others have gone through.

We require physically fenced yards for most of these types of dogs. So what should you do when you want to use a door that leads to an unfenced area? You may be leaving for work, opening the door for a guest or delivery person, or simply going out to get the mail.

Most front doors are used for this purpose. You could purchase an x-pen or wide gate and surround your front door with it so that when you leave, you enter the x-pen and close it behind you – then leave through your door. You could purchase a baby gate and gate the dog in a room away from the door – as long as your dog can't/won't jump the gate or knock it over! If your dog likes a crate, you could crate the dog before exiting. You could also choose to make those particular doors off limits. We have had adopters post brightly colored signs on those doors warning guests to be cautious when arriving and to enter swiftly instead of holding the door open for a lengthy period of time. If your dog is comfortable with the leash, clip a leash to them before opening the door for a guest. Remember that skittish dogs are very quick and will bolt out before you even realize that it happened. Having your home prepared before bringing your dog home will help manage this situation.

The same goes for car doors. At DVGRR, we have harnesses and seat belt attachments that we can provide to you. These harnesses and seat belts are not crash tested; instead they are used to prevent your dog from bolting out the car door when opened and even from squeezing out of a window cracked for air – yes, it has happened quite a few times! We advise to put your air conditioning on instead of rolling down the windows. These dogs have typically not ridden in cars so many take the opportunity to escape if available.





CAR SAFETY

Most mill dogs and breeder dogs have not had the experience of riding in a car. We have heard unpleasant stories of skittish dogs escaping from cars and running away, getting hurt, or worse. We highly suggest having a secure method to keep your dog safe when traveling. As mentioned, we recommend using a harness with a seatbelt attachment. (Remember that you should never attach a seatbelt to a dog's collar. If you were to get into an accident or slam on your brakes, they could be injured if tethered around their neck.) This way, when you open the car door to retrieve your dog, the dog is secure and cannot bolt out the door. When reaching your destination, turn and check that your dog is still secure and make sure the dog has not chewed through the leash or harness. Ideally, if there is more than one person in the car, have someone hold the leash before opening the car door.

Getting in and out of the car can be very scary for your dog at first. Because of your dog's inexperience, do not expect them to immediately trust jumping into a car. You will most likely have to assist your dog into the car by lifting the dog. If they are afraid of approaching the car, you will first need to work on desensitizing them gradually to being near the car. For more help, research online articles on desensitization and counterconditioning by one of our recommended experts at the end of "Continuing the Journey."



DAILY ROUTINE

Maintaining a daily routine is so important in the beginning when your dog is first learning to live with you. Take them outside, feed them, play with them, give treats, go for walks at approximately the same time and in the same order every single day to the best of your ability. Do this so that your dog will begin to know what to expect every day. When your dog knows what to expect, their fear will lessen day by day.

READING BOOKS AND TALKING TO YOUR DOG

Reading books to dogs may sound silly, but we have noticed it helps some of them relax. In Project Home Life, we choose to read children's books, and our favorite topic is dogs, of course!

Talk with a voice that is natural – a soft and steady voice while reading and practice intermittently giving the dog eye contact between pages. Shy dogs respond better to soft, happier tones versus loud, deep authoritative tones. If the dog is comfortable being petted, feel free to do so while reading. If the dog enjoys treats, try putting a few in your hand and randomly give the dog a treat during the course of the book. This activity helps with bonding by getting the dog familiar with your voice in a low-pressure situation.



NOISES AROUND THE HOUSE

Since puppy mill breeder dogs have rarely lived in a home, they are unfamiliar with many of the everyday noises that occur there. Doorbells, vacuum cleaners, clattering dishes – it's all new to them and can be very scary.

If the dog is startled by a sudden noise, we recommend not bringing undue attention to the noise. Act as if it's no big deal and redirect them to something positive, such as a toy, treat, or something else they may enjoy. If they see another dog in the home acting nonchalant during the noises, that will help greatly as well.

We find that getting accustomed to noises around the house simply takes time.

For help with noises such as thunderstorms and fireworks, please refer to our website under the Education tab and look for the article "Thunderphobia in Dogs".





HIGH-VALUE TREATS!

Kibble is good for a meal, but for training, we need something tasty and irresistible that will allow your dog to choose to come back over and over for more. Here are some of the food choices we use as high-value treats in PHL: hot dogs, chicken, meatballs, steak, peanut butter, cheese, and squeeze cheese. Many of these items can be cut into small pieces and even warmed up to tempt your dog's sense of smell.

Remember, a large quantity of little bits of high-value food is more rewarding than one big bite. Therefore, break up the hot dogs or meatballs into small pieces.

TREAT RETREAT

When we were kids, we all learned not to take candy from strangers, yet that is exactly what we are trying to get human-fearful dogs to do when we try to coax them to us with a treat. One less scary method to teach dogs to come to us is called "Treat Retreat." The dog gets two rewards: to move away from a potentially threatening person (in their mind) and the treat. It might seem counterintuitive, but to teach a dog that we are not a threat to them, we toss the treat away from us. Before you start, you need to be sure the dog will eat in your presence; it won't work if they won't eat.

Here's how to do it: Sit on the floor or in a chair with a bag of yummy treats. The fearful dog will show you the distance at which they are comfortable being near you. Let's say it's eight feet away; gently toss a treat to land a couple more feet behind the dog. Try not to do a big overhand toss that might



This dog is being coaxed to approach with a treat. You can see how conflicted she is, stretching as far as she can so she can get it but not wanting to get close to the scary person.



scare them. They will get the treat and get to move farther away from you, the perceived scary person. You'll find dogs will tend to look at you after they eat the treat, so now is the time to toss the next one. Slowly they'll start to think, "Hey, maybe they aren't so bad after all. They aren't trying to trick me into something." After each toss, the dog may even start moving closer and closer to you. This is the goal. If they don't approach closer in one session, that's okay; you can try again another time. Once they know the Treat Retreat game, it can be useful to introduce the dog to new people. The people may be new, but the game is the same.

For a video example of Treat Retreat, please visit our website at <https://www.dvgr.org/about/golden-gateway/project-home-life/>.

FOLLOW ME

These dogs are not like "normal" dogs that will automatically come to you when you call their name. In fact, many are scared of coming toward people! For this reason, we teach them to "follow" us. This is a good activity to learn so you can teach them to follow you in through doorways and other areas. First, keep it casual in your house or out in your fenced yard and simply pat your leg, say "follow me," and walk away from the dog. If they don't catch on and need more motivation, drop high-value treats behind you as you walk away. Having their mentor dog(s) follow you around is also a great motivator! Remember, your own body language can have a big impact on how a dog responds to you. Walking away from a dog and getting them to follow you may be more comfortable for a scared dog instead of you trying to approach them.



HAND TARGETING AKA “TOUCH”

Teaching the activity “touch” (or target) is very useful when rehabilitating shy dogs. Many shy or fearful dogs are, at first, afraid of human hands. Were they roughly handled? Were their collars grabbed every time a hand approached? Are they sensitive to being touched? Our goal is to change their perception of human hands from negative to positive.

Situations to use “touch”:

- When greeting new people (Saying, “Hi!”)
- When teaching “Come” (Recall)
- When experiencing a new object
- To redirect your dog’s attention

Teaching basic “touch”:

- Put a small treat in between your fingers or rub your hand with a food that smells delicious to your dog.
- Hold your hand with your palm facing out and say, “Touch!” If the dog seems afraid of your open palm, try either the back of your hand or a closed fist.
- Wait for your dog to put their nose to your hand looking for the treat. Say, “Yes!” and reward with a treat from your opposite hand (not the hand the dog is touching). Even if they touch your hand by accident, it still counts! At first, if they won’t actually make contact, reward getting close, then slowly work up to closer and closer.
- Once your dog is reliably touching their nose to your hand about 80 percent of the time, you can start moving your hand higher or lower as well as using the opposite hand. Then have different people try the activity.
- You can then have the dog target objects with their nose such as a brush, the dog bowl, or other objects that they may need reassurance to not be a threat.



For a video example hand targeting, please visit <https://www.dvgr.org/about/golden-gateway/project-home-life/>.



PETTING & BRUSHING

Some dogs are very fearful to being touched while others can't get enough petting and affection. For those that are fearful, you may choose to work on other activities first that do not involve touching the dog such as Treat Retreat, Follow Me, and hand targeting until the dog is choosing to approach you.

Petting and brushing help build the bond between you and your dog and help to acclimate them to your touch. It's hard to imagine a dog not wanting to be stroked and petted, but for some, it is an experience they must learn to enjoy.



For petting, start by sitting next to the dog, not face-to-face, which can be intimidating. Make sure the dog is not cornered or does not feel cornered; ensure the dog always has an escape path. If your dog is lying next to a wall and you approach to pet them, make sure your dog has a visible space to escape. If not, they may experience a feeling of being trapped. We want these activities to be positive experiences. The dog may not use the escape route, but at least they will know there is a way out if they become too uncomfortable. This is another reason to sit alongside your dog rather than face-to-face.

Pet under the dog's neck, behind the ears, or stroke lightly across the dog's back to begin. Avoid touching the dog's tail or paws, which are sensitive body parts and may elicit a negative reaction. Also avoid tapping or patting heavily on top of their head. Never put your face in the dog's face.

For brushing, start by using a soft bristle brush or a "glove" brush. Brush with gentle strokes across the dog's back or on the chest area if they're sitting. If your dog seems to easily tolerate the glove or soft bristle brush, you may advance to a pin brush or rake brush.

Once your dog starts to enjoy brushing, you should begin to brush and pet other areas as well. Eventually, you should start working on gently touching their paws, but please only begin this once they're comfortable being petted in most other areas. One way to assess if the dog enjoys being brushed is to stop. If they look at you for more or move closer, they are probably enjoying it. If they freeze or move away, they are probably not enjoying it.

With this activity and all activities suggested, keep your sessions short. For example, pet and brush your dog for about five minutes. Then walk away and give them time out of the "pressure zone."

On the same note, when choosing a groomer for your dog, make sure the groomer understands shy dog behavior and will be gentle and help the dog the best they can. Even better, if the groomer will allow you to stay during the grooming session, this may be comforting to your dog.





TEACHING EYE CONTACT

Shy dogs are often afraid to make eye contact because they may perceive it as a challenge or a threat. Staring down or constant eye contact with a scared dog can cause more fear. Teaching them to “watch me” will help build confidence and change what they perceive as a threat to trusting their person. It is useful in stressful situations when asking them to look at you. It will help calm your dog down and give them a chance to refocus on you.

Capture your dog’s attention with a tasty treat. Holding it between your fingers, raise the treat between your eyebrows while the dog is looking at it until your eyes meet. Say, “Watch me” and reward with a treat. Even a quick glance should be rewarded at first. Then work up to longer periods of more direct eye contact. When they do make eye contact, try not to have a hard stare; blink a little.

Once your dog is doing this reliably, you can raise your index finger (without a treat) between your eyes. Continue saying, “Watch me,” and rewarding with a treat. Eventually your dog will catch on to the words “watch me,” and you will be able to simply say the words without the hand gesture.

Learning this activity will help if you need to quickly capture your dog’s attention, whether to alert to an emergency or simply to get their attention.

WATCHING TELEVISION

Pictures moving on a television screen can be very frightening to a dog that is not accustomed to them. Your dog may be fearful of coming into the room while the television is on or bark at the television in fear. To help them gain comfort with the TV, begin introducing it with no volume, playing a picture only. Choose a channel and mute the volume. If the dog responds well to the moving pictures, very slowly turn up the volume to a soft level.

Repetition is often a good way for your dog to become more comfortable with unfamiliar things around the house. In this case, simply leave the TV on and act as if everything is fine and dandy. Once your dog realizes the moving pictures are not going to hurt them, they’ll become accustomed to them. This may take days or weeks, so be patient. You can help to make watching TV a positive experience by combining it with an activity your dog enjoys, such as eating a few favorite treats, being brushed or petted, or playing with a favorite toy.

CHOICE AND CONTROL

*“The power to control one’s own outcomes is essential to behavioral health.”
~ Dr. Susan Friedman.*

Dogs coming from puppy mills have never had any control over their environments. Many domestic dogs don’t have a huge amount of control either. We make most of their choices for them like what food and what time they eat and when they get to go outside. However, most pet dogs can choose things, like if they want to lie on the carpet in the family room or the tile in the hallway. They can choose if they want to chew on their bone or their squeaker toy. They have learned that if their owner asks them to sit and they do it, they will get a reward. Many probably have learned if they go to the cookie cabinet and give a sad, puppy-dog-eye look, they will get a cookie.

Puppy mill dogs have never had any control over their environment or any choice in where they sleep or what toy they play with, if they have even had anything to play with at all. Learning that they can control and manipulate their environment to get good things can go a long way toward building confidence. This is also the first step in training them. We use rewards to train them, and they need to learn that they can do something to get something good.

Food puzzles and food-dispensing toys are a great way to teach these dogs that they can control their environment to get good things. They learn if they spin the toy, they get food. There are dozens of food puzzles and food-dispensing toys on the market. For a skittish dog, some of the toys may be scary as they have moving parts and may make a little noise when they move. You can start with a simple piece of cardboard partially covering their food bowl. They have to move it to get to the food. Or put some treats into a toilet paper or paper towel roll. Gradually increase the difficulty.





PLAYING WITH TOYS

Sadly, many puppy mill breeder dogs or unsocialized dogs have never seen a dog toy before and literally have to “learn” how to play. Some dogs, once they get into a home, do not understand that chewing on shoes, wood trim, carpet, or dangerous things like wiring is inappropriate. They need encouragement and guidance to play with toys that are made for dogs. This can be difficult for a dog that has never before been free to play.

Obviously, there are many types of toys you can buy for your dog, including hard sterilized bones, tennis balls, stuffed toys, squeaker toys, etc. You’ll need to experiment to see what appeals most to your dog and what lasts the longest... or rather, is not chewed up or destuffed!

Some of the most successful toys we’ve used in PHL fall into the category of “interactive toys.” These are especially helpful with breeder dogs because they encourage the dog to exercise their brain as well as interact with humans. We recommend interactive toys that dispense food and treats. Be sure they are sturdy and do not have small pieces they can swallow. Interactive food puzzle toys should always be supervised when in use. You can look online for food puzzle toys such as the Kong® Wobbler. We also have some of these toys available in our store, Pap’s Place, at DVGRR or through our website. You can also create your own food puzzle games. Put treats in a muffin tin and cover the treats with a tennis ball. Put high-value treats under plastic cups for them to knock over. Be creative!



BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Increasing confidence will help your dog approach new situations with ease and become less fearful of things that are out of the normal routine. This is a key element to help your dog progress successfully.

Walking on different surfaces is a good place to begin confidence building. Many mill dogs or kennel dogs have only walked on one surface – many have never felt grass beneath their paws or a soft comfy dog bed. At DVGRR, we expose the dogs to yards with stone, grass, and mulch. In our outdoor yards, we have stairs (made by Boy Scouts) to teach the dogs to walk up and down steps as well as to get comfortable with the texture of walking on decking material that many homes have. In the summer time, we have doggie pools for them to explore if they choose.

Indoors, we teach dogs to walk over bath mats, dog beds, etc., and we also use balance discs used in fitness classes for them to put their paws on. You could even try interlocking foam flooring squares or yoga mats. We have platforms and exercise steppers to teach them “paws up.” We do this by first placing treats on the platform or dog bed. Gradually, we use the treat to guide them over the bed or up onto the platform and reward. Be creative: Anything you can envision your dog to put their paws on or “target/touch” is great for building confidence. Eventually, your dog may be brave enough to try their paws on agility equipment!

BASIC OBEDIENCE

Before starting to “train” your fearful dog, you need to have gained some level of trust. (Really, every time we interact with our dogs, we are teaching them something.) Teaching them basic cues can really increase their confidence. But – and we cannot stress this enough – all training must be reward based with no coercion, punishments, or corrections. Failure to perform should be ignored and doing the task rewarded. For guidance on how to teach these skills, we have included a list of useful books at the end of “Continuing the Journey.” In addition to teaching your fearful dog obedience, teaching simple tricks can also build their confidence. We’ve also included a useful site on teaching tricks at the end in the Recommended Reading & Resources section.



COMMON CHALLENGES



Here are some of the typical challenges our adopters have experienced with newly adopted puppy mill and breeder dogs, along with suggested recommendations for addressing each one.

The Dog Will Not Eat

If your dog doesn't eat for the first two to three days after you've brought them home, do not become too alarmed (as long as they are in good physical health). It is common for fearful dogs not to eat during this transitional period. Give them time to de-stress and do not overwhelm them

with too much activity. At the same time, you can try the following tips to help make the transition easier as well as making it more comfortable for the dog to eat.

1. Put their food bowl in a quiet, private area such as a spare bedroom or their safe spot. You may need to keep other dogs separated, so they do not steal your new dog's food. However, some fearful dogs feel more comfortable eating in the presence of other dogs, so perhaps try feeding your new dog in a crate or behind a baby gate where they are still able to see their furry companions. Just be cautious as some dogs have a tendency to guard food from other dogs.
2. On that note, allow your dog to eat with no humans around. Many shy dogs will not eat while people are watching.
3. Change the type of bowl you are using. Some dogs do not like metal bowls – it could be that the shiny reflection scares them or their dog tags hit the bowl and make a scary sound. Try a plastic bowl or a flat plate.
4. Add wet food or some other irresistible food such as chicken or ground beef.
5. Some people suggest putting the food down for only 15 to 20 minutes. If the dog hasn't eaten, try again for the same amount of time midday and dinner time. This will create a routine and help them know when it's time to eat. Others suggest leaving the food out all day and overnight since some dogs will eat when it's dark and quiet.



The Dog Will Not Walk Outside to the Yard

While it's normal when first adapting to a new home for a breeder dog to find and stay primarily in an indoor "safe spot," they will need to go outside at least for potty breaks. If your dog resists going outside, try the following:

1. First, try to have the dog follow your other dog outside. Many times, the adopted dog will take a cue from the mentor dog and simply follow what they do.

2. Try putting a leash on the dog, then walking toward the door.

Some dogs are more willing to follow you once you put a leash on them. However, some are not. (Please refer to the "Walking on Leash" section that follows for additional tips.)

3. Face the direction of the door while encouraging the dog to walk there (i.e., lead the dog with your body). If you face the dog instead, it may confuse them as to where you want them to go. You could also prop the door open, stand outside (but do not block the doorway), and call your dog – to a fenced area, of course!

4. Reward the dog with high-value treats for each step they take toward the door.

5. If your dog is food motivated, toss treats in the direction of the door. Start by tossing them on the floor close to your dog, then toss incrementally closer to the doorway. Work until you can toss the treats outside and the dog will eat them there.

6. Once you are successful at getting the dog outside, make sure you stay outside with them. Periodically praise with gentle words and treats. Your goal is to make being outside a very positive experience. (But be aware that some dogs do not like to be watched when they pee and poop, but more on houstraining later.)

7. If your dog resists being outdoors for very long, work on increasing their comfort level slowly but steadily. For example, you can start by going outside, rewarding them with treats, then going back inside after two minutes (or whatever length of time you determine your dog can comfortably handle to start.) Each day, increase the length of time outside by a few minutes, as long as the duration is not crossing the threshold of stress for your dog.

Overall, be patient with your dog for the first few months but establish a routine for going out and do not vary it for that period of time.



The Dog Will Not Come Inside from the Yard

Unlike the previous scenario, some fearful dogs prefer to spend a majority of their time outside. Being indoors can feel confining and even frightening to a dog that has lived outside their entire life.

1. Most importantly, work on making the indoors comfortable for the dog.

The more a dog feels at ease in an indoor

environment, the more they will want to be there.

2. Praise and reward the dog every time you are successful in getting them to come inside. Help them see that the act of coming inside predicts good things.

3. Keep the dog on a long leash (at least 10 feet or more) while outside, so you can easily leash walk them inside. The long leash gives them the freedom to wander around the yard and have privacy for doing their business, which many dogs prefer. When it is time to go in, you can pick up the leash and gently "reel them in" to go back inside. This prevents situations in which the dog finds a corner of the yard or some inaccessible spot and refuses to budge.



Walking In and Out through Doorways

Fear of passing through a doorway is an extremely common characteristic of puppy mill breeder dogs and other fearful dogs. Some dogs fear what is on the other side of a doorway and are afraid to venture through. Or, they may be nervous about walking through a narrow space of any kind. There are some games we play to get the dog accustomed to this.

Hula Hoop:

Place the hula hoop flat on the ground in front of you. Ask the dog to come to you and see if they will stand in the hoop. You can also use treats or a toy to encourage

them into the hoop. After the dog has easily accomplished this and does not show fear of the hoop, slowly lift up the hoop so that it is vertical. Encourage the dog to walk through it by using treats or tossing a toy through.



Using Chairs:

Some extremely fearful dogs will need to begin with much more space replicating the “doorway”:

1. Set up two chairs about ten feet apart. If your dog walks okay on leash, put them on leash and walk in between the two chairs with them next to you. Praise and reward when you reach the other side! If they succeed...

2. Move the chairs slightly closer together. Walk through again and remember to praise and reward. If the dog shows resistance, go back to the ten-foot spacing and stick with that until they get more comfortable.

3. If the dog does not walk well on the leash, you'll need to start with a different strategy. Try guiding them through by tossing high-value treats and walking through with them. Or, toss a favorite toy to the other side and encourage them to get it. You could also have someone they like and trust sit at the other side of the chairs, so they could run to that person. The dog may “cheat” and run around the outside of the chairs. Be patient and start over until they get it right.

4. Gradually move the chairs closer and closer together until they are about three feet apart (the approximate size of a doorway). Once your dog is successful at that, try our hula hoop game (above)!

5. When your dog is comfortable and reliably walking through a three-foot space, vary the game by moving the chairs to different locations in the room. Eventually, you can put them by the entrance of the doorway. Prop the door open and walk back and forth through the chairs (and thus through the doorway) with your dog until they are comfortable going into the room.

6. You may find it helpful to put something with which your dog is familiar in the room where you want them to go, such as their dog bed, favorite toy, or another family member. You can also try placing a trail of treats into the room or toss them near and through the doorway.

7. As a final step, remove the chairs and continue the walking through activity as long as needed until your dog is no longer afraid of doorways.



You can, of course, do without the chairs and start immediately with the doorway – rewarding with any step toward the opening.

Remember to go slowly and realize this process could take days or weeks. Patience is key!

Walking on Leash and Wearing a Harness

Walking on leash can sometimes be difficult to learn. Most of these dogs have never been on a leash before coming to DVGRR; they lived in cages, kennels, barns, or have been left to roam on a farm. Not only are they unaccustomed to wearing something around their neck, they may feel uncomfortable being held only six feet away from a human, especially if they're very under-socialized.

We recommend a Martingale-style collar with a Pet Safe 3-in-1 Harness (or other similar harness), since many dogs can slip out of regular collars if they back up in fear. One leash should be clipped to both the front ring on the harness and the ring on the collar. Many dogs prefer being led by a harness around their body as opposed to being leashed by the sensitive neck area. You can also use the double leash method – one leash on the harness and one leash on the collar or use a slip lead. Just keep in mind that you will need to manage two leashes using that method.



Before going out for a walk, you must get them used to wearing a harness. Many puppy mill breeder dogs have trouble learning to walk on leash. Sometimes they pull while zig-zagging out of control, and other times they may flatten out like a pancake and refuse to budge. It is very easy for a dog like this to slip out of an everyday buckle or snap collar. This is why we recommend properly fitted harnesses and martingale collars.



In addition, when a shy dog gets spooked by a noise or object on a walk or even wants to chase a squirrel, they may have a quick knee-jerk reaction to flee. For this reason, we recommend keeping the leash handle wrapped around your wrist, then held tightly in your hand for safety.

It's important to help the dog gain comfort and confidence wearing the harness. Once you know how to properly use it, hold it out for the dog to sniff. Then slowly place the harness over their head and again, slowly attach the strap around the belly. You may try rewarding them with treats while simultaneously putting the harness over their head. Most dogs easily tolerate wearing a harness although a very few might not want to walk when one is first put on. This is why you should allow them to get used to it before you start trying to get them to walk on leash. Unlike the Easy Walk Harness, which we use to walk some of the dogs at DVGRR, the 3-in-1 can be left on the dog longer term. When properly fitted, you shouldn't have to worry about them getting an elbow or leg stuck in it if they roll around with it on.

1. When clipping on a leash, lower yourself by squatting or sitting next to your dog, if possible. Sometimes bending over the dog is scary to them, and they may learn to associate the leash with negative emotions.
2. Gently move your dog's collar around so the clip is in the front instead of behind their head. This way, they can see what you are doing.
3. Clip the leash on as slowly and as quietly as possible. Avoid startling your dog in any way. If they are also wearing a harness, be sure to clip the leash to the front ring of the harness and the ring on the collar.
4. Try your best not to pull or force the dog on leash and resist dragging them to get them to go where you want. Sometimes the more tension you create, the more the dog will resist. If the dog refuses to budge, try the "pull and release" method. Softly pull the leash for two seconds, then release the tension. Repeat this and see if it works for your dog. Use gentle words of praise.
5. Once your dog starts to walk, trot briskly to keep them moving. Continue praising gently and enthusiastically.
6. If they refuse to move in one direction, try walking in the opposite direction.



7. Look at the environment from your dog's point of view and try to figure out if there is an unfamiliar obstacle or noise in the direction the dog does not want to go. If so, remove it if possible and try again or choose an alternate path.

8. Experiment with using a shorter or longer leash, depending on the behavior of your dog. Some dogs may feel safer close to you; others will need more space.

Walking Around the Neighborhood

You've made it outside and have practiced walking around the familiar backyard, but you've barely made it to the end of the driveway. Now what? Arm yourself with high-value treats and the adventure begins!

1. Remember that walking with another dog will often give your adopted dog confidence to venture outside of their comfort zone. Your mentor dog is usually the best choice, but a friend's dog is also an option. Preferably, a family member or friend will walk the other dog, so you don't have to handle both.

2. Don't allow other people to invade the dog's space by trying to pet or talk to them. Avoid stopping to chat with anyone else on the walk. Your goal is to get the dog accustomed to a walking routine first before introducing anything else. Explain to people that your dog is in training and needs their space. It is very important to be your dog's advocate in this respect. Protect them and keep them safe, especially during the first few months, so it strengthens the bond between the two of you. There are special collars and harnesses made by companies with large printed words such as "DOG IN TRAINING," "DO NOT PET," or "SHY DOG" that you can find online to purchase.

3. Start with very limited, short walks in low-traffic/low-noise areas and use those high-value treats generously as you walk. You want your dog to start associating the high-value treats with outdoor excursions. Your dog may feel more comfortable walking along a barrier such as a fence line or wall instead of a wide-open space that can be scary. Walking your dog with another dog that is a good leash walker or even sandwiched between two dogs is a great way to teach your dog how to walk on leash and build their confidence.

4. When your dog is ready, gradually add a little more distance to your walk, perhaps an additional block. When you feel they're ready for an area with a little more noise or traffic, feed them treats as you are approaching that area before they can hear the noise. Then walk normally and stay calm and confident. Walk straight ahead with your eye on the goal and keep moving forward. If possible, limit this to one block, then head back to a quieter area. Eventually you can add a second block and then a third as the dog gets accustomed to the noise.



5. As with other activities, go slowly. There is no need to rush the process! It may be weeks before you can attempt that longer distance or busier area. That's okay. All dogs progress at their own pace!

6. What happens if you get out on a walk and the dog suddenly refuses to budge? Try walking in the opposite direction. Don't be afraid to give the dog a slight pull to get them started again. Crouching down will sometimes get the dog comfortable to come closer to you – so walking the length of the leash and crouching down until the dog is walking again. Definitely take a cell phone along and have someone you can call for help. If the dog absolutely will not move, call someone to bring a car to load the dog into or even a kid's wagon or beach wagon. The main thing is to not venture too far from home if you think this may be a possibility to happen with your dog.





Meeting New People

You will no doubt find that even when your dog has started to show increased comfort and trust with you and other immediate family members, the presence of an unfamiliar person may cause anxiety and fear. Here are some tips to use for dogs that are very fearful of people when introducing your dog to them. Having them play Treat Retreat is a good way to introduce them. (See the Treat Retreat section earlier in “Continuing the Journey.”)

Meeting People Outdoors



1. To begin, avoid having the new person approach your dog, look at your dog, try to pet your dog, give your dog treats, or otherwise engage your dog in any way. This may be hard for people who are dog lovers and want to make friends! You’ve heard it from strangers before, “All dogs love me!” You will need to be your dog’s advocate and insist that the process go super slowly, following the steps below.

2. With your dog on leash, walk them past the new person from a good distance away (approximately 20 feet) several times, decreasing the distance a bit each time **only** if the dog shows no negative reaction.

3. Each time your dog looks at the new person, reward them with a high-value treat.

4. Continue decreasing the distance between the dog and the new person, rewarding for calm behavior, until your dog can remain comfortable when in close range with the person. Please note – This may likely not all happen during the first session; it will take several sessions to reach this point.

5. Only allow the dog to approach the new person if they are comfortable and willing. Continue to feed high-value treats as your dog approaches.



6. It will be helpful to have the new person sit down on a bench or even kneel on the ground, so the person is at the dog's level – this is less intimidating than standing.

7. When your dog finally approaches the new person, the person should simply allow your dog to sniff them and proceed as the dog chooses. The person should not attempt to reach out and pet your dog during the first approach. Sometimes reaching out to pet will cause the fearful dog to back up and not want to approach again. After your dog approaches several times, then the new person can start petting their chest with a low hand (they should not reach over your dog's head).

8. Keep sessions short and always end on a positive note! This is the process that should be followed each time a new person is introduced toward whom your dog shows fear. Eventually, the dog's behavior will change from an emotional response (fear) to a positive response (at ease).

Meeting People Indoors

Sometimes, your dog may bark at strangers entering your home out of a response to their fear of unfamiliar people, so it is important to teach your dog immediately that new people aren't so bad. Try the following process when you are expecting guests.

1. While your guests are still in the driveway or path to your home (not at the front door), bring your dog outside on a leash. Have your dog sniff the guests and everyone walks into the house together.
2. If your dog is not yet comfortable with a leash, have the guest simply come in and sit down and not acknowledge the dog until the dog is ready. Remember (as we mentioned before) to keep your dog secured when guests enter your home, so they will not bolt out the door to an unfenced area (i.e., behind a baby gate or in a crate)!
3. Have the people ignore your dog, so the dog can sniff them. You and your guests may acknowledge your dog with a "good dog!" You can reward them with a high-value treat. Having your guest sit down will be much more comfortable for your dog since standing people can appear intimidating and scary! If your dog does not settle down or is still at a high level of fear and anxiety or if your guests are not able to keep from trying to pet your dog, it may be best to gate the dog in a quiet room or crate until your guests leave.
4. If your dog settles down, you can quietly ignore them and reward periodically with high-value treats. If your dog is responding well, you could even try to have your guest feed a high-value treat.
5. Your dog's mentor dog will be a great teacher in situations like this. Shy dogs are much more confident to approach people when they see other trusted dogs doing so in a relaxed manner.
6. Another way you can let your dog get to know strangers is to have the person quietly and slowly move from the chair they are sitting in to the other end of the room. Then allow the dog to get a good sniff of the chair the person just vacated.





Using Stairs

Start by sitting on the bottom step (yet leaving a gap, so there is a pathway to the top) and have some tasty treats. Call the dog to you and reward with a treat. Back yourself up one step, call the dog to you and see if they will put a paw on the first step. Reward with a treat anytime they touch the step with their paw.

Continue to back yourself up (or down), step-by-step, and repeat the process. If sitting on the steps does not work, try turning your whole body around and walking up or down step-by-step while rewarding with treats.

Sometimes, dogs will be more likely to follow a person when the dog is attached to a leash. Try leash walking the dog up and down the stairs.

Also, other dogs are great teachers, so if you have another dog that will run up and down the stairs, use that dog to teach your shy dog. Once your dog learns to maneuver the stairs, they will act like they've been doing it all their life!





TIPS FOR HOUSETRAINING

Puppy mill survivors can sometimes be a challenge to housebreak. Understandably, they are confused about where to “go.” They have been forced to defecate in their living areas and have had no other choice. Now, there is a choice where to go potty – but we must patiently teach them where that is. Unfortunately, there is no magic cure. However, by maintaining a routine and sticking to it, you should get results. Keep in mind that some dogs take longer to learn than others.

1. . Feeding your dog at the same time every day will help create a regular “potty” schedule.
2. Keep your dog on a scheduled potty routine consistently at the same time every day as much as possible. Your dog will then know when they can expect to go outside and do their business. Another part of the routine should be going out the same door and taking them to the same area each time, so the dog learns where to go when they need to go out.
3. Take your dog out often, even if it means 2:00 a.m. potty breaks for a week. Take your dog out immediately after they’ve eaten and every two to three hours after that for the rest of the day. Take them out after periods of indoor play as well, just as you would a puppy. If you are not home all day, do this as often as possible.



4. If you have other dogs, they can help! If the shy dog sees them going potty outside, they are likely to imitate them. It also helps if they can smell where they have pottied.

5. If you have a fenced yard, allow your dog to roam freely to do their business instead of on a leash. Even though you want them to have space and privacy to go, it is important that you go outside in the yard with them instead of letting them out and closing the door. Being outside with your dog is important for a few reasons. First, you can direct them to the smelly pee area and instruct them nicely to “Go potty!” and pointing in that general direction. If you are inside, they will likely sit at the door whining or scratching until you let them back in. If you are outside, you can confirm that they pottied. You may need to wait them out until they go; be patient! If you do not have a fenced yard, try using a long leash (over 10 feet) to give your dog some space and privacy. You may need to pretend you are ignoring them and not watch what they are doing because some dogs do not like to be watched while they potty.

6. When your dog does finally potty outside, reward them immediately! This means taking high-value treats outside with you and rewarding as soon as they’ve gone. If you wait to reward until you go back in the house, they may be confused thinking they are rewarded for returning to the house.



7. Clean up any indoor accidents with an enzymatic cleaner. Take note that dogs may be more likely to have accidents on soft flooring such as carpets or rugs. Babygating them in non-carpeted areas or away from carpeted rooms will help make clean up easier!

8. Crate training is also an option, but first you will have to teach your dog to become comfortable with the crate.

CRATE TRAINING

Some dogs are fearful of crates, but there are also many that prefer the smaller space of a crate. Make the crate a cozy place to live by putting a blanket and some toys inside. You may even choose to put a blanket over the top of the crate to create a private den if your dog prefers that. Make sure the size of the crate is appropriate for your dog. You do not want it so small that the dog is cramped. You also do not want it too large that they have room to potty and lie away from it. There are many ways to acclimate your dog to a crate, especially if they are food motivated. Feeding meals in the crate or giving them a peanut butter-filled Kong are good starters. You may have to start by feeding the meal right outside of the crate and then move it inside the crate for the next feeding. Gradually with each feeding (or when your dog is ready), move the bowl farther and farther into the crate until your dog is going into the crate. Leave the crate door open for a few more feedings and then eventually you can close the door.



If your dog is not fond of the crate, but you want to prevent potty accidents on your living room carpet, try to baby gate in a smaller room or area with no rugs. This way you can keep your dog in a designated area and still give them the space they need.



FINAL THOUGHTS

We strive to help each dog based on their individual learning level. Just like humans, each dog is different and some respond more quickly than others to these training techniques. We have dogs that took several months or even over a year to accomplish a task that may take another dog only a few days to learn. You may need to be creative to come up with safe management ideas of your own that work for your dog. They may also respond differently to one person in your household than another, particularly men vs. women. In some cases, you may need to realize some of these very fearful dogs do best at home and will never do well playing at a dog park or socializing with groups of people at the local parade or town events. Sometimes, the best thing for them is the safety of their home with their family.

For all dogs, be patient and do not overwhelm them with too many experiences at one time. This is called “trigger stacking.” Trigger stacking is defined as *“Stress accumulation due to exposure of multiple triggers, either simultaneously or close enough in time that the dog’s reactivity has not returned to normal.”*

With love and patience, your dog will continue to grow at their own pace. Many adopters of shy, fearful, and puppy mill dogs will tell you that the bond you develop will be one of the strongest unions you will experience. Helping them to progress from a scared creature to a happy dog is what rescue is all about. Thank you for taking the journey with them.



RECOMMENDED READING & RESOURCES

Positive Training:

The Power of Positive Dog Training
Pat Miller

Bringing Light to Shadow
Pam Dennison

Bones Would Rain from the Sky
Suzanne Clothier

Train Your Dog Positively
Victoria Stilwell

The Secret Language of Dogs
Victoria Stilwell

Shy & Fearful Dogs:

A Guide to Living With & Training a Fearful Dog - Debbie Jacobs

Rescue Your Dog from Fear
Peggy O. Swager

The Cautious Canine
Patricia McConnell

Help for Your Fearful Dog
Nicole Wilde

Puppy Mill Dogs, SPEAK!
Chris Shaughness & Chris Slawecki

Reactive Dogs:

Scaredy Dog
Ali Brown

Click to Calm
Emma Parsons

Resource Guarding:

Mine!
Jean Donaldson

Separation Anxiety:

Treating Separation Anxiety in Dogs
Malena DeMartini-Price

House Training:

Way to Go!
Patricia McConnell

Hard to Housetrain
Peggy O. Swager

Here is a list of internationally recognized positive dog trainers that are great resources:

Debbie Jacobs

Sophia Yin/ Cattledog Publishing

Pat Miller

Rise Van Fleet

Ali Brown

Nicole Wilde

Patricia McConnell

Ian Dunbar

Chirag Patel

Jean Donaldson

Victoria Stilwell

Peggy O. Swager

Zak George

Nicole Skeehan

Other Helpful Sites

Kyra Sundance:

www.domorewithyourdog.com

Humane Society of the United States
ASPCA





PROJECT *HomeLife*

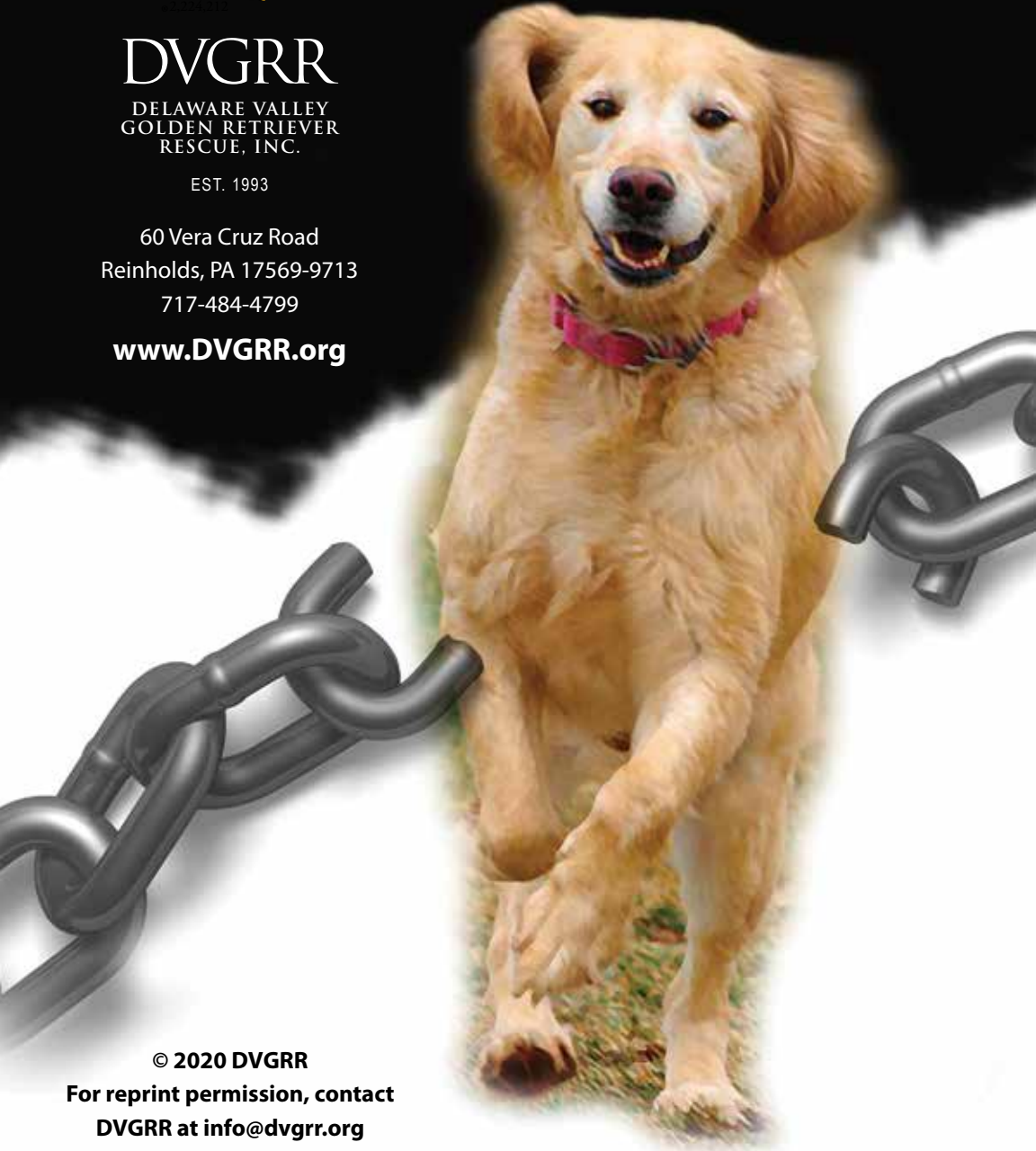
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