

FEARFUL / SHY PUPPY

While in our care, this sweet, smart and affectionate pup has shown some fear and a lack of confidence in unfamiliar environments. It will be important to respect and implement the recommended two-week decompression time (see attached handout) to help with acclimation to their new home. Afterwards, as a young dog who needs a confidence boost, they will really benefit from a conscious effort to incorporate gradual, positive exposure to new experiences and environments. All new experiences and new meetings will need to be managed, especially with children. Below are some tips for helping him continue to build confidence in a home environment.

- **Always allow your dog to explore** new people, places, and things at their own pace. **Never force them to interact** if they become fearful.
- **Go slow** and pay attention to your dog's body language. If at any point they become stiff with tucked tail, slow movements, and other signs of fear pause and decide if this is a training moment or management moment for your dog.
- **Training moments** are when your dog is happily taking food and appears fairly relaxed around new people, places, and things. These are the moments to work on changing your dog's responses to things that may scare them or make them uncomfortable by pairing the presence of that "thing" with high value food like chicken. For example if trash cans scare your dog and whenever they see a trash can you give them food eventually they will be happy and excited when they see trash cans because they predict food.
- **Management moments** are when your dog is not taking food and appears fearful and stressed. These are moments to manage the dog by getting them out of the situation in a safe and prompt way.

TRAINING TOOLS FOR CONFIDENCE BUILDING:

Open Bar/Closed Bar: This game is a helpful tool to help a fearful dog feel more comfortable around anything they find scary. It helps change the association with novel or uncomfortable stimuli from negative to positive. This helps build coping mechanisms for fearful dogs and can eventually help them be less anxious about the world in general. Use really yummy treats (bits of cheese, hot dogs, deli meat) and pair it with things your pup may find scary – stroller, car, strangers, kids, other dogs, cats and even the garbage truck! Remember the THING comes first, then food, then once THING goes away the food comes to a screeching halt. Start playing this game inside your home first and then you can take it with you on the go as you slowly expand your fearful pup's world. The following video also shows a lovely session explaining this game and showing how it's played: <https://youtu.be/42B3q5EjBmc?si=66OWI6YML2BKt72F>