

FEARFUL / SHY

During their time in the shelter, we have noticed this dog gets overwhelmed in busy environments with lots of new faces, smells and strange sounds. They are more relaxed in quiet environments with less unpredictable sights and sounds. They have shown some fear of meeting new people and do best when they have the choice to approach when ready. Any exposure to a new environment or new people will need to be supervised and they should always have the ability to move away if needed. Here are some tips for helping them continue to build confidence in a home environment:

- **Listen:** Encourage your dog to explore new people, places, and things at their own pace.
- **Watch:** Pay attention to your dog's body language. If at any point they become stiff with tucked tail, slow movements, and other signs of increasing stress/fear remove them from the stressful situation.
- **Empower:** Give your dog choices and reinforce bravery. If they choose to approach someone or something new/scary give them tasty bits of cheese or meat to help them associate new/scary with yummy rewards.
- **Social shyness:** where the dog is fearful of unfamiliar people. Dogs like this are sometimes described as "taking a while to warm up," "one-man dogs" or "protective." They are usually fine with a person once they get to know them. Examples are dogs who are afraid of men or children, or bark at people who walk or dress differently.
- **Context fears:** where the dog is afraid of certain kinds of situations. Examples are dogs who are vet-phobic, panic during car rides or are uncomfortable in new places.
- **Sound sensitivities:** where the dog is afraid of loud noises. They flatten and try to escape when a carbackfires, or pace and salivate during thunderstorms or fireworks.

WHY IS MY DOG LIKE THIS?

Fear is common in animals. Although it's possible that a fearful dog has suffered abuse or a bad experience, most fear results from a combination of a genetic predisposition and some lack of experience in the first weeks of life. A dog may have missed becoming socialized to new people by simply not being around them enough when they were a puppy.

WILL MY DOG GET BETTER?

Most fearful dogs can be helped to gradually improve. This is a slow process in most cases and requires patience. Shy dogs are not for everybody. They need people who have compassion and patience. The best thing is to expose them to what frightens him but at a milder intensity and combined with a positive association. A dog who is afraid of children might start to feel comfortable if they regularly sees children but at a distance where they don't feel worried. If you pat them and give them treats, they will start to see kids as good news: "Wow, great things happen to me when kids are around!" Dogs learn strongly from association.

HOW CAN I HELP MY DOG SETTLE INTO THEIR NEW HOME?

The best strategy is to let the dog go at their own pace. Any kind of pressure or coercion to make contact makes things worse. Let the dog hide if he needs to, investigate things and come to you when they feel ready. Make the world safe for them and they'll improve.