

You Adopted – Now What??



3 Days – 3 Weeks – 3 Months

The cute little fur ball that was so cuddly and quiet at the adoption center became a she-devil when you got her home. Or she ran and hid under your bed and it took you like for-ev-er to find her. She won't eat, she won't stop barking, she won't let you near her.

What happened!?!

This is normal and can be expected.

Sure some dogs immediately bond and people have no problems at all. None. Nada. Zero.

But, we could probably count on one hand the amount of times that happens.

It's far more normal and should be expected that you will face a few challenges in getting your new rescue dog settled in.

Perfectly normal.

It's what we call the Rule of 3-3-3

It takes 3 days for a dog to decompress, 3 weeks for a dog to adjust and learn the new expected routine, and 3 months for a dog to feel safe and 'at home'.

Yes some dogs take less time. And some dogs take more time.

So let's look at what these 3 three's represent and get you up to speed on what to expect when you adopt a dog.

The First 3 Days

Your new pup is most likely going to be completely confused, overwhelmed and have absolutely no idea what is going on.

Everything about her life just went topsy-turvy. New people, new surroundings, new food, and the absence of everything familiar to her.

Some dogs will act out and massively test boundaries.

Grace will be your friend - remember this too shall pass. As long as YOU set the stage and remain calm, cool, collected and give your new dog the support she needs to get through this.

Some dogs will cower, hide or desperately try to find something, anything, that mimics safety.

This too will require Grace, calm, consistency, and YOU providing the support your new dog needs.

The First 3 Weeks

Your new pup is most likely starting to get the hang of the new. The routine, the food, the space, and what YOU expect, are like, your moods, your schedule. All-the-things.

She should be starting to warm up, and you are probably starting to see what her actual personality is. And yes that includes her testing what the boundaries are.

Remember she didn't get a manual on what was expected of her and this is all new territory. For her as well as you.

The First 3 Months

After 3 months, provided you have been consistent, your new pup should be at home and feel confident in her new digs.

Now, if you have a dog with emotional issues as many rescued dogs do, you may still have some work to do. That being said, your dog should be at a stage of acceptance and at least being familiar with and fitting into the new expectations of space, routine, and flow of your home.

It takes TIME

Now, let's chat about some do's and don'ts during this 3-3-3 adjustment period.

For the first 2-3 weeks keep your dog to yourself. No visitors, no disruptions, no outside service providers, except maybe a vet if needed.

This is NOT the time to show off your new pooch. She's confused and has no idea what end is up or down. She needs time to get to know YOU before you throw a bunch of additional NEW at her.

Be consistent in your routine. If you have a constantly changing schedule that is your normal, if you have a pretty steady routine then that is your normal - just let her get used to whatever normal is in your home.

Be calm, firm, consistent in your expectations. Yes, you will probably have some moments of crazy. To be expected. You may have moments of oh-my-gawd-what-have-I-gotten-myself-in-for. To be expected.

Ignore most of your well meaning friends - everyone has an opinion when you are in the middle of it. Just get through it, bond with your dog, get used to each other and be YOU and let her be HER.

You may need to adjust her food, that's a whole subject onto itself. Best to keep her on whatever she was eating before you got her and gradually change the food to improve it. Don't try to make big changes all at one time.

Give lots of praise, attention, exercise, and talk to your new dog. Let her hear your voice. Let her get used to you.

Do not force yourself on her if she is shy, or hands-off in demeanor. Let her get used to you.

Just be in her space and let her warm up to you. She will approach you when she's ready.

Wait a minute before you start training programs - you first need to bond with your dog. You are establishing trust during this 3-3-3 period.

Yes, you have every good intention for your new fur pal. She doesn't know that yet. Give her the time she needs to figure that out, to accept and to choose to be part of your family.

Just breathe and remember the few days-weeks-months that it takes to get her adjusted is not much compared to the years you will enjoy with her once she and you get settled in together.

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