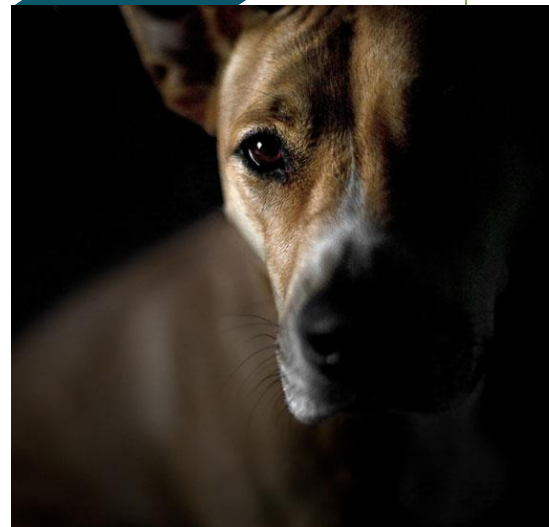


HOW TO BOND WITH AN ALOOF DOG - ADVICE BY AMY

Imagine wandering the streets for days, weeks or months – or spending a lifetime chained up in a yard – or being kicked and hit just for existing – or being trapped in an endless routine without the love of a human and without the comforts of a proper home – or being surrendered by a family whom you thought loved you only to find that your surroundings, bedding, toys and those who cared for you had suddenly disappeared!

Your first stop is likely a noisy and cold shelter surrounded by concrete floors, chain link fencing and other just as scared dogs while you wait for, what seems to be, an eternity. If you're extremely fortunate, you might go on an occasional walk with a total stranger but you can't even count on that. Then one day you're escorted into a room. Several people are awaiting your arrival. They gently touch you and speak to you in a soothing voice but you don't know who these people are let alone if they can be trusted. They take you for a walk. Next thing you know you're in a strange car. When you arrive at your destination everything is different all over again. No familiar smells or toys. Unknown rules. Uncertainty in the humans caring for you.

No wonder building trust and breaking down aloofness with your newly adopted dog can sometimes be a slow and daunting process. But we're here to help! Please use our checklist to help you bond with and build confidence in your newly adopted dog!



BOND WITH YOUR NEW DOG:

- Always remain calm. Yelling, getting angry or lashing out can make an aloof dog even more aloof. Respond to frustrations with a calm voice and level manner. Never, ever use violent actions such as hitting, kicking and screaming harsh words. Please refer to our checklist [How to be More Patient with Your Dog](#) for more tips and recommendations.
- Give your new dog some space and go slow. Don't loom over your dog or force your dog to sit with you on the couch or sleep with you in bed. Do offer them a comfortable alternative (like a dog bed) that is theirs alone, somewhere within eyesight but just out of reach.
- Let your dog guide your interactions, go at a pace that your dog can handle and use non aggressive body and voice language.
 - Stay away from petting sensitive areas including their head, ears, tail and paws. Instead pet areas like your dog's side or back.
 - Never hover or, bend over your dog, attempt to hug your dog close to your body or put yourself directly in your dog's face. You can squat or sit down close to your dog, turn slightly sideways so your side faces your dog or even lie down a little distance away to begin making your dog more comfortable with your presence. Avert your gaze and speak in a higher-pitched, upbeat yet calming tone of voice.
 - Never allow someone unfamiliar to approach and pet your dog unless your dog is soliciting attention from them.
 - Don't subject your dog to loud noises or conditions which can scare them.
- Help your dog feel at ease as you move around. Try classical conditioning.
 - Walk towards your dog with a chunk of high-value food (chicken, turkey, etc.) Drop the object close by then continue walking away. Speak to your dog in a soothing tone but don't stop to pet him/her. Repeat this (multiple times per day and as many days as needed) until you see your dog begin to "perk up" when you approach.
 - As soon as your dog reacts favorable, drop the food but instead of walking away, hang out nearby. Also speak to your dog in a soothing voice but don't interfere with your dog's eating. Of course never take food away from a fearful dog. Repeat this until your dog is able to comfortably eat their treat with you nearby.
- Work your way up to hand-delivered treats.
 - Initially toss the treat a few feet away from you. Repeat regularly until your dog is comfortable within a few feet of you and happy to hang out there. Decrease the distance you throw the treat. Continue to shorten the distance slowly until, eventually, you offer the treat from your hand.

- If your dog darts in to grab the treat then darts away, you will know you are pushing him/her too fast. Watch your dog's body language to ensure that he/she remains relaxed as you proceed with the above steps.

USE ACTIVITIES TO BUILD CONFIDENCE:

- Play with your dog. Dogs love to run, chase and chew. Experiment to determine your dog's preferences – ball fetching, frisbee catching, tug-of-war or even just running around with a favorite toy. Maybe your dog isn't as playful as some, especially at first, so see if your dog would prefer riding in your car and sightseeing!
- Walk your dog. Create an adventure for you and your dog by visiting different parks, neighborhoods dog parks, beaches and trails. Keep the leash loose so they can explore but continue to control the leash "just enough" plus lead your dog and keep him/her out of danger. Interact with your dog during their walk by talking with and occasionally petting him/her. Don't place him/her in a frightening situation. Remember that "scary" is relative. A rumbling truck or busy street or even a busy enclosed dog park can be noisy, chaotic and overwhelming to your dog.
- Socialize your dog. Help your dog make other dog friends. While some dogs don't trust humans, they may be comfortable with their own kind. Start with one or two dogs at a time or where there is enough space to encounter dogs without feeling pressured to interact.
- Train your dog. Take your dog to obedience class plus train your dog in your home so he/she learns what to expect and becomes comfortable with you and your surroundings. Use basic physical commands to start then eventually teach them more advanced verbal commands. Go slow and don't "switch it up" (mixing physical and verbal commands) until they master the basics first. If needed, use short time-outs in your dog's crate as a consequence for bad behavior. Above all, be consistent with YOUR commands and YOUR behavior since dogs like routine.
- Give physical affection. Touching your dog can help you build a bond. Learn where they like to be petted and where they don't. Try grooming your dog plus scratching, rubbing and simply cuddling with your dog.
- Make every experience positive. Praise your dog when they are calm, even when they're just sitting or lying down. When you need to do something your dog may not like, try using positive reinforcement to make it more pleasant for your dog.
- Never punish your dog for not wanting to do activities such as going for walks, being groomed or taking a bath. Instead be patient, calm and use positive reinforcement. Also never punish your dog because you're frustrated or in a bad mood. If you may have frightened your dog, which has led to the aloofness, work on providing your dog with more positive associations with you.

CONSULT WITH YOUR VETERINARIAN:

- Take your dog to the vet. If your dog doesn't warm up to you or doesn't get excited around you, there may be an underlying medical problem that is causing them to feel bad, fatigued, depressed or lethargic.

References include:

Dog's Standoffishness is Only Skin Deep, Bestfriends.org.

Timid Behaviors in Dogs: Are They Normal?, PetMD.

How to Approach a Fearful, Shy or Aggressive Dog, The Spruce Pets.

How to Teach a Fearful Dog to Love Again, Rover.com.

How to Bond with an Aloof Dog, Wikiphow.com.

