

## Decompression: Helping Your Dog Adjust

Decompression allows your new dog to relax and adjust to their new home. Shelter life can be stressful, and even in the best conditions, dogs may experience anxiety, fear, or overstimulation. By giving them time and space, you set them up for success.

1. **Manage Expectations:** Every dog reacts differently to a new home. Avoid comparing your experience to others—your dog's journey is unique. Let go of expectations and be patient.
2. **Give Your Dog Time:** It can take 4–6 weeks (or longer) for a dog's true personality to emerge. Don't rush the process—go at their pace and provide stability.
3. **Create a Calm Environment:** Keep noise and activity levels low, especially in the first few weeks. If you have children, remind them to give the dog space. Avoid having visitors during this time.
4. **Allow Space & Respect Boundaries:** Your new dog may not want constant attention. Avoid overwhelming them with affection or toys. Let them approach you when they're ready, and always respect their comfort level. Provide a quiet, cozy space like a crate or a designated room where they can retreat.
5. **Keep Them on a Leash:** A leash is essential for safety, even in a fenced yard. It helps prevent escape attempts and allows you to guide them without reaching for their collar, which can feel threatening. All Lawrence Humane dogs wear a martingale collar, designed to prevent slipping out.
6. **Introduce Slowly:** Limit interactions with new people and animals for at least 2–3 weeks. If you have other pets, introduce them gradually in neutral spaces, like a walk outside, rather than inside the home.
7. **Establish a Routine:** Dogs thrive on routine. Set consistent times for meals, potty breaks, walks, and rest. Predictability helps build confidence and security.
8. **Provide Daily Exercise:** Walks are essential for both physical and mental well-being. Start with short, quiet walks close to home and adjust based on your dog's comfort level after decompression.
9. **Build Positive Associations:** Help your dog feel safe in their new environment by using treats and praise. Reward calm behavior and create positive experiences with new sights and sounds.