

Stress, in general, is not uncommon in dogs. While dogs are typically adaptable and able to cope with our busy and changing lives – some dogs find it harder to adapt to different situations and new environments or experiences. Every dog is unique and understanding their stress signals and helping them navigate changes at their own pace can lead to a happier, healthier transition. As your dog experiences changes over the years, you can manage their exposure to stressors and help them navigate new situations comfortably to help them live a happy, healthy life.

Understanding Transitional Stress

Transitional stress is the impact of environmental changes on a dog's emotional state. Some dogs experience mild excitement, while others may struggle with anxiety, fear, or even reactivity. Stress, in general, is not uncommon in dogs. Recognizing and addressing stress can help your dog adjust more smoothly and improve their quality of life.

Common Stress Triggers

Big transitions, as well as minor changes, can make a dog feel like their whole world is crumbling if they don't have coping skills to adapt easily. Some common stress triggers include:

- Moving to a new home
- Changes in household routine (new baby, different work schedules)
- Shifts in human behavior due to stress or emotional changes
- Missing expected activities, such as a delayed mealtime or skipped walks

Signs of Stress in Dogs

Keep in mind, dogs tend to live in the moment – whatever behavior or body language changes you are noticing are likely related to what your dog is experiencing in that moment, rather than what happened a few hours earlier. How a dog handles stress is different for every dog – they have their own character traits to be considered, and even the **characteristics of their breed** can sometimes play a role. The following, however, are some **typical signs of stress** in dogs.

- **Body Language:** Tucked tail, ears pulled back, pacing, panting, whining, jumpiness, yawning, lip licking, horizontal lip retraction (you'll see their front and back teeth), or whale eye (you'll see the whites of their eyes).
- **Behavior Changes:** Clinginess, hiding, loss of interest in walks or play, appetite changes, urinating or defecating in the house
- **Self-Soothing Behaviors:** Excessive licking, chewing, pacing

Helping Your Dog Adjust

- **Help Them Feel Safe & In Control:** Dogs feel stress when they aren't sure what's coming next—like a runner waiting for the starting gun. Give your dog time to take in their surroundings before expecting them to react. Then, help them regain a sense of security with predictable routines, clear communication, and positive reinforcement.
- **Provide Predictability:** Keep routines as consistent as possible, even if timing changes. Use familiar sequences (e.g., same leash routine before walks).
- **Offer Choices:** Let your dog choose between toys, or hold up your dog's leash to see whether they want to go for a walk.
- **Go at Their Pace:** Allow time for adjustment; don't rush or force changes. It could take several weeks or more for your dog to acclimate. Remember to go slow and be patient. Learn how to **comfort your dog** in stressful situations

Support Options

Supportive options should be used in combination with environmental or behavior modification strategies for the best chance of success:

- **Pheromone Products:** ADAPTIL diffusers, collars, or sprays can help provide reassurance.
- **Supplements & Medications:** Consult your veterinarian for calming aids or prescription medication support if needed.