Introducing your Resident Dog to your Foster or Adopted Dog

Fast is slow in the dog world! There is no rush to get all of the dogs in your house integrated and together right away. Dogs need time and shared positive experiences to build trust with one another. If you move too fast and put them in too many *Sticky Situations,* you may do more harm than good. Miscommunications happen when we put dogs in situations they cannot handle and when we are not paying attention to what their body language is telling us.

Create Safe Spaces in the Home

You will want to use a crate and/or a separate room or space with a baby gate or pen to create a safe and calm area for your new dog where he can eat, drink and get plenty of rest away from your resident dog(s). You may allow your resident dog(s) and new dog visual access to each other through pens, gates, etc. They will likely choose to sniff through these barriers and get to know one another without too much direct interaction which is what we want in the beginning.

First Introductions at Your House!

We'll need two handlers, both coming into the situation calm and confident. You should do slow introductions through parallel leashed walks to start. Even if the dogs have met at the shelter group, follow this step by step process to set them up for a long, trusting relationship.

1. Meet on neutral ground preferably away from your house. Meet at a park, a few streets away from your house or building etc. Keep the dogs about 15-20 feet apart as you walk on and allow them to acclimate to one another while moving forward.

   DO NOT bring your new dog right into the house or yard with your resident dog loose. **DO NOT** allow the dogs to rush up to one another and collide into an energy filled leashed greeting.

2. As they walk on, if all is going well, move closer to about 5-10 feet away. Allow one dog to walk in front of the other then switch so they can pick up on each other's scent without direct contact yet.
   a. Throughout this walk you'll want to keep an eye on their body language, if we see a stiff body, hackles up, lip curl, snapping or lunging we'll want to give them a long break and try again.
      i. If any reactivity or miscommunication occurs, don't allow any more direct contact. Don't panic, either! It's normal to have some misunderstandings.
      ii. Continue to walk at a distance, take them inside one at a time and keep them in separate rooms.
      iii. After at least a few hours or an overnight break, you can take them out and give it another try!
3. If things are going well, allow the dogs to make indirect contact. Yay! You'll want to avoid a nose to nose meeting but instead allow them to approach and circle one another. Try to follow behind your dog and keep the leash as loose as possible to avoid any leash tension or frustration.

a. Watching for similar body language from above is very important here too. Some barking or vocalization may occur but we'll want to be vigilant.
b. If the dogs become too intense, don't yank them away from another. Calmly walk in opposite directions calling your dog to follow.
c. Try again after some walking once they have calmed down a bit.

4. Once the initial meet happens and we have happy loose bodied dogs, you can move to an enclosed outdoor area, drop their leashes and let them really get to know each other.
    a. Pick up all toys and do not give them food, bones or treats together now or within the first few months.
    b. I recommend having drag leashes kept on both dogs while they get used to one another's playstyle so you can easily grab them in case of a miscommunication.
    c. Always be mindful of arousal levels and unequal play interactions between your resident dog and the new dog.
    d. You can let them work some things out on their own. A growl or correction is ok, but if you see one dog can't take a hint, is getting too worked up or if it looks like one dog is being pushed around by the other, a verbal cue like "break it up!" or "cut it out!" is necessary.
    e. If they're really not getting it or one dog is just being too pushy, calmly step in and redirect by grabbing their leashes to give them a break away from each other.

Intros Went Well? Lets Head Inside!

1. Make sure anything of "value" is taken up off the floor and put away before entering the home
    a. Toys
    b. Bones
    c. Treats
    d. Food and water bowls
2. Your resident dog(s) and new dog should have separate resting areas where their food and water bowl, bones and toys are. These should not be in common spaces like the kitchen, living room etc.
    a. **Routine:** you should allow some time for them to be loose together indoors, continue parallel leashed walks and supervised outdoor play sessions while you continue to monitor their body language.
    b. Give them breaks in their separate spaces for resting, meal and enrichment times (bones, puzzle dishes, kong etc.)
3. Meal times, including preparing food, should always be done in separate rooms/spaces.
4. Avoid **Sticky Situations** that may create conflict.

    Sticky situations are areas of potential conflict between multiple dogs or between human and dog. These areas of conflict are a risk for diminished trust or even risk of a fight between dogs. Potential conflict areas can come in the form of **space** or **resources**.

We can easily recognize *Sticky Situations* by assessing any resources that might be valuable to the individual dog. Even if you don't know the dog, you can make an educated guess on what the dog might hold value in. Here is a list of common resources:

- Food or toys
- Bowl (water or food)
- Comfortable space (an area with a blanket, bed or elevated cot)
- Enrichment devices (ex. kong even after it's finished)
- Human affection
- Treat pouch
- Handing out treats - two dogs go for the same treat

Factors that can cause Sticky Situations to be even more important to pay attention to are:

- increase stress level in the dog and stress layering
- if they are new to the environment, person/people or dogs
- senior dogs with potential body pain
- dogs with medical issues
- dogs who had a recent aggressive incident or reaction
- dogs with a history or aggression, fear or reactivity

5. Always supervise their interactions, do not leave them alone together no matter how well they are doing. When you are out of the house, the dogs should be safely contained in their own crates or in separate rooms.
6. Just like people, sometimes dogs need breaks from each other! You can take one dog for a solo walk to give them some one-on-one attention or just hang out in another room.

**Sometimes an outdoor area, while ideal, isn't an option. In these cases you can move indoors to a large room. We want them to have enough space to feel like they can get away from the other if they need to.

DON'T'S

- ➢ DO NOT bring your new dog right into the house or yard with your resident dog loose.
- ➢ DO NOT allow the dogs to rush up to one another and collide into an energy filled leashed greeting.
- ➢ DO NOT give your new dog and resident dogs bones, lick mat, toss treats on the floor or other high value resources together.
- ➢ DO NOT leave items around that your resident dog and/or new dog might find valuable enough to have conflict over, like food, bones, bowls, toys.
- ➢ DO NOT prepare food or feed your new dog and resident dogs together.
- ➢ DO NOT leave your new dog and resident dog unsupervised together.
- ➢ DO NOT crate or pen your resident dog and new dog together.