



DOG'S POINT OF VIEW

These first few days may be difficult for you, and it is very important that you understand that it will be equally difficult for your dog. Your dog may not initially act or respond as you expect him to. This lecture is meant to help you consider your dog's reaction to transition. During the course of this lesson, we will describe what your dog has experienced prior to meeting you.

Most dogs are very adaptable and can adjust quickly to their new surroundings, but they do have a transition time when moving from one stage to another. Each dog's transition process may vary. Puppies are separated from their mother at about 7 to 8 weeks of age. The separation from littermates can be difficult, as dogs are used to being members of a pack.

At approximately 8 weeks of age, your dog went to a new home with a Co-Pilot (volunteer puppy raiser) and became part of a loving family. The Co-Pilot spent a lot of time teaching manners and introducing your dog to new experiences. After a year of living and working closely with the Co-Pilot, your dog was ready to begin advanced training.

When your dog was between 12 and 15 months of age, he took a trip with his Co-Pilot back to Pilot Dogs where he was introduced to his new home in the canine development center. The Co-Pilot said goodbye to him, and a dog care team member took him to his new home. After the Co-Pilot said goodbye, your dog's adjustment process to the canine development center began. He enjoyed the attention of the dog care staff and instructors on campus. After a short adjustment period, he became comfortable with his new way of life.

About the time your dog accepted this massive change in his life, the rules changed again, and he began his training with his new instructor. The instructor understood how to progress your dog through training, allowing him to adjust and learn at his individual pace. Your dog benefitted from the consistent manner in which the instructor handled him. He liked knowing what to expect and relying on the instructor's ability to define what was acceptable and what was not. He learned that certain positive behaviors would result in sincere, heartfelt praise, and that unacceptable behaviors had consequences.

During the 4 months of training, your dog was exposed to a wide range of experiences; some were intended to build confidence, while others were meant to test problem-solving ability. By the end of training, your dog was comfortable in his new role. Change has been a constant throughout your dog's life, including separation from his original family, separation from the dog care staff, and separation from his instructor. It is crucial that you keep these changes in mind while forming and maintaining a strong bond with your dog. Some dogs will be reluctant to immediately bond with a new person because of these previous, short-lived partnerships. Your dog is going through a difficult adjustment, and he needs patience and compassion.

Keep in mind, when your instructor matched your dog to you, no one asked your dog who he would like to be matched with or where he wanted to live. No one can explain to your dog that life is going to become consistent and stable again. For the average dog, it is going to take up to 10 days for the bond with his instructor to be replaced by a bond with you. Given love, care, and consistency, your dog is going to discover that you are a better partner than his instructor was. For your initial investment of patience and understanding, your dog will grant you a lifetime of love and devotion; you initially go into this as individuals, but through hard work and determination, you leave as a team.