



Teach your Wallflower to Bloom

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Dogs that are shy, fearful, a little anxious about new things, or learning new socialization skills can all benefit from confidence building. Many dogs can get overwhelmed when forced into situations that are too scary for them without any skills on how to cope. Dogs that remain afraid in these situations are at risk for biting or using aggression when faced with something that causes them fear. It is also important that as the owner of a dog that you become familiar with the way that your dog communicates that they are stressed so you can respond appropriately.

Learn their “language”

Dogs speak to us in body language and when they are afraid they will respond with fight, flight, or freeze. Here are some indications that your dog may be scared:

Fight - barking, baring teeth, hackles raised (hair on the back)

Flight - running away, hiding, ducking behind legs, startling easily

Freeze - moving in slow motion, cowering, stop moving

Some other signs that your dog may be feeling stressed include tail tucked, shaking, wide eyes, licking their nose, looking away from the thing that scares them, scratching themselves, yawning, or making themselves look busy by sniffing or attending to other things.

How to teach your dog

1. Go slow. Use lots of patience when working with a fearful dog.
2. Allow the dog to approach things that he may be scared of but don't force him. This allows the dog to feel secure that they can set the pace of the interaction and they won't get spooked away by fast or forceful interactions.
3. Use treats liberally! Dogs learn best by receiving positive reinforcement when they do things that you like. For fearful dogs this could include approaching things they have not been able to approach before or sitting politely ask for things that they want, see our [Say Please](#) program for more information.
4. Give your dog a safe place where they can get away from crowds or if they need to take a break. This can be a separate room or a crate set up away from the heavy foot traffic. When your dog chooses to go into this place it should be respected and no one should be allowed to bother your dog while he is in there.

For behavior and training advice, please contact Operation Kindness at behavior@operationkindness.org or visit www.operationkindness.org/training.