



generosity breeds joy.

## Shy and Fearful Dogs

*Helping your dog build confidence in a big, loud world.*

Dogs can be shy for many different reasons, genetics or trauma, but the most common reason a dog is shy or fearful is because they [were not properly socialized as a puppy](#). But you're in luck! Whoever said old dogs can't learn new tricks were wrong! While it might take slightly longer than it did as a puppy, your adult dog can learn to be confident in your world.

You are your dog's spokesperson. Your dog cannot say, "Hey, I'd rather you not come over here and touch me right now." However, you can say, "I'm sorry, we're training and Daisy isn't meeting any new people right now". Watching your dog's body language will tell you when they are uncomfortable and when they are not.

Initially, your dog may not be ready to make many new relationships. Focus on the ones that are most important, anyone who lives in the house first, and then anyone who visits more than every month. To start it's best if your dog stays in a quiet room with something to do while other visitors are over. Remember, we need to take things slow to make sure we don't overwhelm and take steps backward.

New people should completely ignore your dog and drop treats as they slowly move around the room. This will show your dog that your visitor is a great Pez dispenser! As they get more comfortable around the new person, have the new person hand feed them their dinner. You should always have a safe space, such as a crate or corner, where your dog can retreat when overwhelmed. No one (not even you) should invade that space.

Dogs learn better from each other than they do from humans. If a shy dog watches another dog interact with humans and nothing bad happens, they may be more likely to try it in the future. Having another dog, or even dog friends, can help your dog handle new situations that may have otherwise been scary alone. Taking your dog to a dog park or doggy day care where they can learn to be in a new place with new people and other dogs is a great step towards being more confident.

Training classes can be a great way to boost confidence and [we offer them at JHS](#). Group classes are held in a controlled space where you and your dog can build a relationship and work on skills being out in the world. Some training facilities may even have shy dog specific classes.

Please email [behavior@jaxhumane.org](mailto:behavior@jaxhumane.org) for more information.