



# SUCCESS WITH AN ANXIOUS DOG



How to help  
your dog build  
confidence

eBook

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# SUMMARY

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## Build Trust

Dog-aware  
Control environment  
Calm Confidence

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## Expand Environment

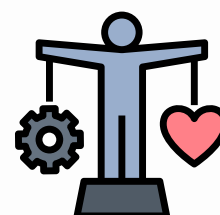
Safe location  
Stationary  
With a partner?

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## Train & Build Confidence

Basic behaviors  
Distance & Height  
Movement & Change

**IT'S A BALANCE OF  
PROTECTING THEM WHILE  
ALSO CHALLENGING THEM**





# BUILD TRUST

## Dog Aware

### Handling is everything to an anxious dog

- Never reach toward these kiddos, let them come to you
- Don't face directly, turn your body off to the side
- Pet under their chin & side of the face, not over their heads
- Never bend over these dog
- Be as predictable as possible
- Don't crowd or corner them
- Be generous & safe

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Just like us, dogs  
thrive in a safe, loving  
environment

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# BUILD TRUST

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## Control Environment



Dogs speak through body language - the more we can speak in the same language, the faster we can communicate

A key component in helping an anxious dog relax, is a low-chaos environment with a strong routine:

- This is an established household with grown kids and a quieter vibe
- A strong routine involving food, water, sleep, love and play allows an anxious dog the ability to stop worrying about the basics, drop their guard, and begin to thrive
- All dogs need their own place (bed); anxious dogs settle when they have their own safe place, such as a covered crate



# BUILD TRUST

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## Calm Confidence

Dogs are constantly picking up on our energy, especially anxious dogs.

They're looking to us for information; for signs of concern, for reasons to bolt or for signs they can relax.

Our goal is to resonate CALM CONFIDENCE, which helps them relax and learn. Smiling helps a lot, laughing too!!



We are always 'talking' to our dogs through our body language. When we tighten up on the leash or get upset, we cause their guards to go up.

But when we laugh, sing, baby talk or provide encouragement, they relax.

Taking a knee (or getting small) can also go along way in building their confidence in you

"We help dogs get their feet under them."

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# EXPAND ENVIRONMENT

## Safe Location

Once a dog has dropped their guard at home and is happy taking treats, it's time to expand their environment.

We need to introduce them to new and different things but in a safe and controlled way



Safe from your dogs perspective, means in a safe place, like:

- In your car
- On a rock
- In a park

The goal is for your dog to having to react to it. Parks can often work well for this; just be sure to protect your pup from anyone who attempts to approach or from too much chaos.

# EXPAND ENVIRONMENT

## Stationary

Training while staying stationary at first is a great way to focus on your dog without trying to manage the leash, treats, and so forth.

It'll help build your muscle memory along with your dogs confidence in new settings



### 3 Strategies when taking it on the road

**Body Block** - guard your anxious dog from everything, until they're ready to engage

**Get Height** - Encourage dog to jump up on something

**Get Distance** - if things get crazy, get away from it





# EXPAND ENVIRONMENT

## Another Dog?

Often another dog is key to helping an anxious dog. Confident dogs can act be a bridge between the scared dog and the world,

When a nervous dog watches a confident, established dog, they learn from them, follow their lead, and often drop their guard quicker.



When Tilly came to us she had lived in an animal shelter for months. She was clingy, anxious and unsocialized. We set her up with a roommate, who she quickly fell in love with.

Socialization began soon after Tilly arrived. In a safe setting, with her buddy she was exposed to different noises, stimuli and people.

Tilly thrived under the attention and dropped her old, unhealthy coping mechanisms allowing us to begin her training program.





# TRAIN & BUILD CONFIDENCE



When your nervous dog approaches someone to say hi, have the person reward the approach, not ask for a sit

We teach anxious dogs to **sit, look, touch** and if the dog has become reactive, **leave it**.

Note: the **down** behavior can be difficult for some anxious dogs, since it causes them to give up their ability to get away

Dogs gain confidence in the same way we do; small tasks repeated successfully again and again.

Consider the 'Sit' behavior, - easy for a confident dog but a big deal for an anxious one.

Once they perfect Sit at home, practice on the porch or the front yard, then on their walk or in the car, then when there's other things going on

If your dog won't Sit - ask yourself what else could be going on to cause them fear?





# TRAIN & BUILD CONFIDENCE



**DISTANCE** - Distance is free. Distance is safe.  
Anytime your dog refuses a high-value treat or they shut down,  
chances are you're too close to something - GET DISTANCE!

Can't get distance? Then get height.  
Often height=distance for dogs

Note: Is there weather?  
Dogs often struggle in wind and other weather conditions



# TRAIN & BUILD CONFIDENCE

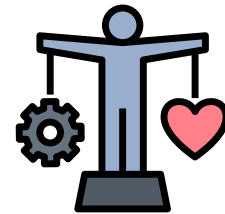
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less is more

Instead of going to a number of places, go to the same place over and over until your nervous dog feels comfortable

Less chaos, less change, less unpredictability - these guys like things slow and steady as they absorb the world

protect/challenge



It's a balancing act of protecting them while at the same time challenging them; ensuring they're safe and someone is looking out for them but little by little expecting more



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We've found that many dogs who exhibit anxiety need to repeat experiences more often than dogs without anxiety.

We repeat new experiences, stimulations or situations 5x

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# TRAIN & BUILD CONFIDENCE

Train

Teach 3 basic behaviors:

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**Look** - look at your face

**Touch**- touch either the front or back of your hand

**Leave it** - don't engage with something

Then ask for these behaviors in different environments, situations, settings - so often that both you and your dog goes to them immediately



Anxious dogs love the Look exercise! You're their favorite thing, by looking at you they're able to let their guard down

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Dogs are constantly forming associations. We use this to our advantage by associating the scaring thing (a person, a dog, etc) with a delicious treat.

If we do it enough times the dog will immediate look to us when something scary appears

# TRAIN & BUILD CONFIDENCE

Train

In practice:

The scary thing appears: a dog, a noise or a person, make sure you have enough distance then,

Tell your pup to "**Leave it**," then "**Look**."  
As soon as they do, **Mark & Reward**, then **Repeat** a lot!



**Mark** - a unique word that you pair with a treat. The key is to pair the word and treat together so often that when you drop the treats the word still has the same association.



We use the word "YES!" with a lot of energy behind it. As the dog continues in their training, we vary the amount of treats but continue using the marker word consistently.



Dog not listening? Interrupt them then ask them to do something.

**Anxious dogs need soft interruptions.**

At pranaDOGS we use squeaker toys to get attention, before asking them to leave it and look.



# TRAIN & BUILD CONFIDENCE

Tips n Tricks

## Puppy Pacifier?

Many anxious dogs need to chew on something to help sooth them; a ball, rope toy or other dog toy is a perfect option for these kiddos



## Dog nervous of men?

Have guy get as small as possible (on floor is best) and don't try to pet, instead wait for dog to ask for petting

be generous, safe and as predictable as psossible

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# SUCCESS WITH AN ANXIOUS DOG

It's possible to help an anxious dog find their footing and gain their confidence, it just takes time, patience and dog-awareness



Less is More for  
anxious kiddos