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DECOMPRESSION: THE KEY TO A SMOOTH TRANSITION

Just like humans, dogs aren't at their best when stressed. Take Boone, for example, the sweetest, most well-mannered dog belonging to one of our volunteers. Yet, on his first day at home, Boone tore window curtains to shreds before escaping the backyard by scaling a six-foot wall. His mom has since learned strategies that would've prevented these incidents, and we'll share those strategies here.

WHAT IS DECOMPRESSION?

It's a period (about three days to two weeks long) during which your dog adjusts to their new surroundings, routines, and family. While they're still adapting to all the sudden change, they are likely to exhibit some unusual behaviors.

COMMON BEHAVIORS AT FIRST

- **Shyness:** Your dog may initially appear shy, withdrawn, or hesitant to engage with you or their new surroundings. They may even seem lethargic.
- **Hyperactivity or Overstimulation:** On the other hand, some dogs may display hyperactive or overstimulated behaviors such as excessive barking or pacing.
- **Potty Accidents:** Even if your dog is house-trained, they may have accidents indoors at first.
- **Destructive Behavior:** This can include chewing on furniture or belongings, digging, or scratching.
- **Decreased Appetite:** Your dog may choose to skip a meal or two at first. Don't panic.

HOW TO HELP YOUR DOG DECOMPRESS

- **Establish Routine:** From feeding and potty times to exercise like leashed walks, predictability can help alleviate stress and provide a sense of security.
- **Create a Safe Space:** Set up a designated area in your home that your dog can retreat to when they need privacy or a break. We highly recommend a crate.
- **Go Slow:** Familiarity and trust are gained over time. During decompression, do not offer petting unless your dog seeks it out. Do not rush introductions between pets or leave them unsupervised together.
- **Avoid New Experiences, People, and Places:** You may be tempted to introduce your dog to friends, take them to the dog park, or expose them to your favorite activities right away, but it's best to keep their routine simple and quiet while they acclimate and get to know you.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Praise, treats, and gentle petting will help them associate you with feelings of safety and happiness.
- **Be Patient!**