

In-House Behavior Modification Protocol
Do Nothing Exercise

This protocol to be used for dogs who become hyper and aroused when with people.

This exercise is helpful for dogs who cannot settle down when in the company of a human. It teaches the dog to lie down at the feet of a seated person in order to get attention and petting. This exercise is perfect for hyper-aroused dogs or for any dog who needs to learn to be quiet with a human. This exercise serves many functions - it provides stress reduction, social enrichment and a positive learning experience.

Set up:

Put a chair in a quiet room and lay a small rug in front of it.

Procedure:

Bring the dog into the room on leash and sit in the chair.

Hold the leash between your knees giving the dog only enough slack to be able to lie down comfortably at your feet but not enough to jump up on you (See Figure 1 below). Sit like this, ignoring the dog, for as long as it takes for the dog to lie down (this could be 10-15 minutes the first time you do the exercise, but this time will decrease with each session).

When the dog lies on the rug reach down and pet the dog gently and speak softly (See Figure 2 below). If the dog gets excited by the attention and jumps back up - go back to holding the leash tight and ignore the dog until he/she lies down again.

Do this everyday and the dog will soon learn that when in this setting - the best thing to do to get attention is to lie down at the feet of whoever is sitting in the chair.

The other advantage of doing this exercise is to increase adoption. Research shows that when a dog sits or lays down near the potential adopter, they are more likely to adopt the dog. After the dog practices this exercise with a few staff members or volunteers, the potential adopter just needs to be told to sit down while you get the dog and when you bring the dog in to see them, the dog should be cued by the environment to lay next to the person.



Step 1 - sit and ignore dog - prevent jumping



Step 2 - pet and talk to dog only if lies on rug



Step 3 - do daily until dog immediately calms on rug