



The Dobie Decompression Period

BONDING TIME WITH YOUR NEW RESCUE DOG

How to set your new rescue Doberman up for success as you integrate him or her into your life. **Hint:** Take it slow!

First, if you already have pets, read the **Slow Introduction Process**. This is CRITICAL to prioritize. Then, consider how important also allowing a decompression period can be. We'll use Duke the Doberman as an example.

You adopt Duke and everyone is excited - you, your family, the rescue, and the dog too! The day you bring him home you want to show Duke the neighborhood, and take him to pick out new toys at PetCo. Duke seems so happy and well-adjusted that later the same evening, you want to meet friends at that awesome new restaurant with a dog friendly patio. The next day, your aunt and her kids will stop over at your house to meet the new guy. **WAIT!**

No matter how good of a dog Duke is, and how well adjusted, he **NEEDS** a bonding period with you, it also works as a decompression period, think of it as a "down time" where he's not focusing on lots of extra outside stimulation - instead Duke is focusing on you and your expectations of him. For some dogs this is one week (minimum), and for others it can be weeks to months. Duke's been through who knows what in his past, he's been bounced between homes, met countless new people, and now is home with you, after just leaving his foster home - a home that he thought was his permanent home. Duke wants to trust you, but he simply hasn't had enough bonding time with just YOU yet.

During the bonding period, Duke is taking in the new environment, the people in it, and is learning who the "leaders" are in his new home. Pushing Duke to experience too many things too fast can make even a well adjusted dog really nervous, and it can make Duke feel that HE has to make decisions for himself which you DON'T want. Dogs who feel the need to make decisions for themselves are dogs who "act out" or "misbehave." It is your responsibility to Duke and as a dog owner to make sure that Duke looks to you for direction and guidance.

How does it work?

1. Give Duke plenty of positive crate time while you are home, and always when you are not home. If Duke has extreme crate anxiety, work with a trainer. Make sure the crate is in a safe and secluded place.
 - a. Allow Duke 20-30 minute intervals of time in and out of the crate, AFTER exercise/yard times. For instance, take Duke out for 20-30 minutes, then crate him for about 20-30 minutes. Duke is not crated for an excessive amount of time and still gets to learn you and the household. As time progresses, the intervals can be increased as Duke relaxes to help him adjust to a more accurate routine. Ignore crying and/or barking. If you run to Duke each time he barks, whines, or cries, you are teaching him that doing those



things gets your attention. He must learn to be secure when you are not there.

2. When not crated, Duke should always be on a leash tied to you. A long line is helpful for time in the yard. Letting Duke have full freedom of your home and yard is telling him to do whatever he pleases and right now, Duke shouldn't have that right because it's YOUR house that Duke is learning. You need to remember that so Duke learns to respect it. If he's left free reign of the house and yard, he won't learn what he shouldn't get into, where he should go potty, where his dog toys are, and what aren't his toys. How can Duke get into trouble if he is right there with someone *ALL* the time.
3. Don't worry about formal training, yet. Interactions with the Duke at this point should be positive to strengthen the bond. This is another GREAT reason to have Duke leashed to you at all times.
4. It is recommended to not go on walks, car rides, public excursions, or have new visitors during this bonding period. Vet trips are excluded from this.

That all seems like a LOT of work, right?! It is! But a week or two will go by quickly, and save you a ton of work down the road!