

Dog Problem: Do Foster Dogs Feel Rejected When Re-Homed?

Question from Layla: Cheri, I've searched the site and found nothing on my question. I've also read Cesar's books and haven't seen the issue addressed head on. My question is: how much do dogs internalize or are aware of, when they are taken to a shelter or given away? Do they know they are being rejected? I'm taking in a beagle to foster but I'm worried about giving her away yet again if I find a suitable home. What happens to a dog when it's passed around and rejected? Will I be making her feel rejected yet again if I re-home her after she's lived with us and perhaps settled into my [pack](#)? I'm taking her in because she's unwelcome in her present environment (long story but grandma is not happy with irresponsible daughter who impulsively took her from abusive environment) and I want to make her feel welcome in our home but what will she think if I re-home her yet again?

Advice from Cheri Lucas:

Over the past 20 years, my rescue organization, Second Chance at Love [Humane Society](#), has rescued and re-homed over 3,500 dogs. In the vast majority of cases, these dogs enter our facility as strays or from death row at the pound. We immediately begin the process of creating a new identity for each dog. Because we have no prior history on these dogs, we give them new names. They take up residence at our shelter, a facility they know nothing about, with caretakers and volunteers they've never met. Part of

their new routine will be daily walks with my existing pack. Practicing this ancient ritual of migrating—moving forward with a balanced pack of dogs and a stable pack leader will go a long way towards helping each **new dog** settle into their temporary home until they're placed.

While it's natural to wonder what kind of past each of these dogs has had, it's not important anymore. Fortunately, dogs live in the moment. Rather than dwell on their past, they are always in the process of moving forward. What's important to them is "right now,"—if they feel safe and secure, and they're being fed, exercised, and cared for, nothing else matters. Like all creatures of Mother Nature, their goal is to survive and return to balance.

Humans love to create stories about the past—what kind of abuse or neglect might this dog have suffered? Did they feel traumatized or feel rejected when they lost their home? The problem with this kind of thinking is that the human begins to feel sorry for the dog based on the assumptions they've created about his past. But in the animal kingdom, pity is seen as "weak" energy. It doesn't help heal a dog or allow him to move forward, it only keeps them stuck in whatever neurotic state they're currently in.

The kindest, most helpful approach the human caretaker can have is to provide the rescue dog with the calm and assertive leadership every dog craves so he can go into his future home in a balanced state. Rather than focus on how sad it is that your rescue dog needs to be re-homed, celebrate the fact that he is one of the lucky ones who's getting a second chance. And in the interim, he gets to live with you! What a deal!

When we rescue a dog and set out to find him a new home,

we are really playing God in his or her life. We find a home and a family that wants to adopt and basically tell the dog, "This is your new family! Love them and behave yourself. Enjoy your new life!" And do you know what? That's usually what they do. We could never take an adult human, pick out a home for them, and expect them to adjust so beautifully. Dogs definitely have it over us in the area of moving on and letting go!

I commend you and others who chose to do this rewarding, although sometimes heartbreaking work. Continue to love and care for your foster dogs, but promise yourself you will only focus on the good going forward. You can be assured, your rescue dog already has! When the day comes that you've found the perfect home for him, celebrate the fact that you can now provide yet ANOTHER rescue with a temporary home.

Keep up your extraordinary, selfless work, and focus, focus, focus on the good...only the good!