

# Five Ways to Help Your Nervous Puppy

By Katie Bedrossian

Puppies are usually excitable bundles of fur, but puppies (particularly between 8-16 weeks) are also learning that their world is big and sometimes scary. They are learning that us, their human companions are there to help them through the nervous moments. Here are some ways to help them become that confident adult dog you have dreamed of!

1. Watch for early signs of stress. These include, but are not limited to yawns when not sleepy, shake offs when not wet, lip licks when not anticipating food, scanning, pacing, frozen body posture or pauses. Avoidance and reactivity such as barking are later signs of stress.
2. Give space. As soon as stress signs are observed, allow your dog to choose how much distance they want between themselves and the scary thing, person or animal.
3. Encourage movement away, never towards. Most puppies choose to either freeze or react rather than calmly move away. If you face your body away from the scary thing, keep the lead loose and lightly jog on the spot it can encourage your puppy in your direction. This increases trust that you will lead your pup out of scary situations.
4. Give your dog an extra special treat or tug toy whenever they see the scary thing. However, make sure they see the scary thing first and then add the good things (otherwise they get more of a fright and start scanning for the next ambush).
5. Take note of what is scary for your puppy and aim to keep them below threshold (maintain a comfortable distance so your dog can stay stress free).

Nervous puppies can become anxious adult dogs if unmanaged. Please [contact us](#) for further assistance. We would love to help you reach your behaviour, socialisation or training goals with your dog.