



Basic Puppy Socialization Protocol – The **No Big Deal!** Lessons

Much has been written about socializing our pups, and all that information can be overwhelming. There is an important “window” of time (8-20 weeks) where we should introduce our pup to people, other animals, the veterinary hospital, walking in neighborhoods, etc. When you are trying to do a socializing activity, whether it’s an older dog or a young puppy, keep these things in mind:

- **Your dog HAS to be having a good time.**
 - Exposure to things that are different, unique, and novel must happen, as this is life, and we can gauge how our puppy feels about it by simply watching him. Is he content, happily engaged with you or others (puppy says this is **No Big Deal!**), or is he looking at you with wide open eyes, hiding behind you, tail tucked, not eating treats, or laying down non-responsive (shut down)? This is a fearful response, and is not helping your dog. Just get out of the situation, and take puppy back to where she feels safe! If meeting something new, allow puppy to initiate the contact if she wants to meet. If she does not want to meet, that’s ok! Speak softly and smile at your pup – this is reassurance that everything is ok, and that she has choices ♥
- **Have great treats with you when exposing them to things!**
 - Pairing a delicious treat with something puppy is not sure about can make the difference between fear and confidence. For instance, during handling exercises, give your puppy something tasty while your neighbor meets her for the first time. Make that experience wonderful! The appearance of my new neighbor is the predictor of chicken! Yay!
- **Make the exposures very short and sweet!**
 - Lots of small, short exposures are much better for your dog than longer, overwhelming exposures.
- **More advanced socializing means exposures to different places.**
 - If your puppy is having a good time with his puppy friends in class, it doesn’t mean he will be comfortable on the street or in the mall meeting strange dogs. It takes lots of little exposures and time to build her **No Big Deal!** response!
- If your puppy is not taking treats, you must get him to a safe zone and stop what you are doing. Something about your routine is too much for your pup right now! Look at your steps, and perhaps do less exposure. **This is not a race.**
- We also do not need to do training during these exposures (no sits, downs). All we want puppy to do is look around, get treated, and go back into his safe zone inside for some rest time afterward. If the front of your house is very busy or noisy, plan to do this socialization when it’s quieter out front. You can slowly get puppy used to the busier times as she becomes familiar and comfortable with the routine.
- Your dog should not be forced to sit while a dog, human, stroller, bike, skateboard, noisy truck or motorcycle passes by. Simply move away from the surprising, scary, or exciting trigger, and reward your dog for coming with you and being engaged with you.

