

Before Giving Up on Your Adopted Dog

by Patricia Rummel | Mar 9, 2020 | Blog | 9 comments

People who work at shelters see it all too often. Someone comes in all smiles, eager to adopt a dog, only to return it to the shelter within a few days. The reasons vary. But the results are always the same. Heartbreak for everyone involved. Maybe you've adopted a dog and things aren't working out quite the way you planned. Before giving up on your adopted dog, please read this.



When a dog is returned to a shelter, the reasons vary. But the results are always the same. Heartbreak for everyone involved.

As [Vicki Clinebell of Dogtime.com](#) explains: “Even if a dog comes from a great shelter and is entering a loving home, there’s a lot of stress associated with so much change. “

Every dog will make the transition to a new home in their own way at their own speed. But for a shelter dog, the adjustment period can take a bit longer. [Six weeks](#), [eight weeks](#) or even [up to three months](#).



Imagine going for a ride in the car only to be dropped off by your family in a strange place and they never, ever come back.

Think about it for a minute. Most shelter dogs were abandoned or surrendered. They had a family, sometimes for many years. They were surrounded by familiar securities. They were loved, cared for, taken for walks and sleeping in their own snuggly bed. Then one day, everything changed. Their owner put their leash on and took them to the car and they went for a ride, the way they had done so many times before. Only this time, they left him in some strange place, with strange people and they never, ever came back.

Then again, maybe the life of the dog you adopted was never great. Maybe they were never loved and always unwanted, eventually dumped on the side of a road somewhere and forced to live as a stray, struggling to survive on the streets, getting yelled at and chased away by strangers who didn’t care. Or maybe the dog had an abusive or neglectful owner and was rescued or confiscated and taken to a shelter. Even if the dog was taken to a great shelter, where it was treated with kindness and lovingly nursed back to health, the trauma of what they suffered does not just evaporate and the confines of a strange new environment surrounded by strange people can be terrifying. Then, even if the animal is adopted into a loving home, there’s a lot of stress associated with going through even more change with yet another new place and even more strange faces. The ability to trust and to feel safe is understandably challenged.

Remember: As the new pet parent, ***you*** made the choice to bring them into your life. So, are you going to accept them for who they are and work with them to find common ground or are you just going to expect them to conform to what you want them to be? Are you going to prove to them they are worth your effort or are you just going to give up on them, like everyone else?

Of course, the best way to avoid having to return your adopted dog to the shelter is to make sure you are ready for a dog in the first place. A great way to find out if you’re prepared — especially to take responsibility for the particular dog you’ve chosen — is to just foster a dog first and see what you can handle. Shelters and rescues need fosters to help care for dogs while they look for their forever homes.

But if you’ve already taken the plunge and adopted a dog, only to have things work out in a way you weren’t expecting, please reconsider your plan to just give up. Below are four of the most common reasons why people return adopted dogs to a shelter and the alternative measures you can take to keep your dog in your family.

Bad Behavior:

Bad behavior is by far the most common reason why dogs are returned to a shelter after adoption. Whether they’re going potty inside, chewing on shoes, furniture or TV remotes or they are driving your neighbors crazy with the loud barking/whining/howling songs of total separation anxiety, it can always be very stressful. Before giving up on your adopted dog, know this: As frustrating as it can be, most – if not all — of a dog’s bad behavior can get better with time, patience and training.



Just one of the many abused animals nursed back to health by the loving staff at the Humane Society of the Nature Coast.



Typical Bad Behaviors May Include:

- Going potty inside
- Separation anxiety
- Leash aggression
- Herding behavior
- Too much energy
- Digging or chewing
- Biting or jumping up

Food aggression

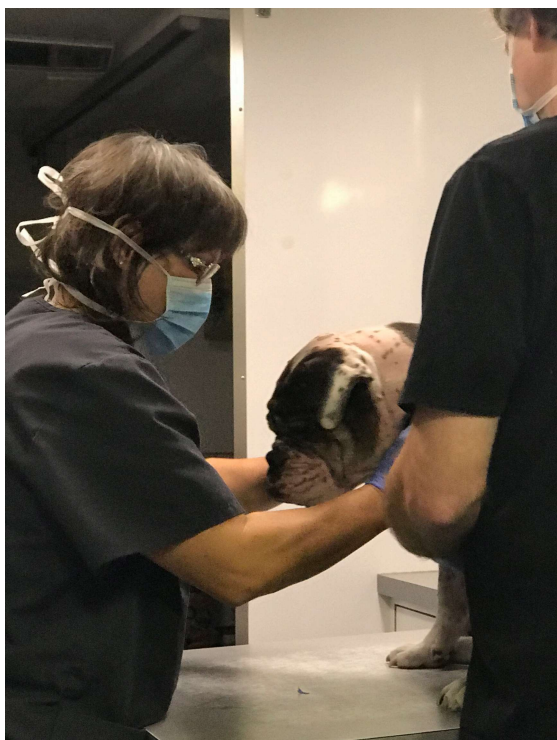
If your personal training efforts don't succeed, you can find help from a dog training class or a personal dog trainer. Contact the shelter where you adopted the pup. Most shelters and rescue organizations already have a list of trainers or facilities they work with when trying to rehabilitate some of their less social intakes. Just reach out. No one expects you handle the transition alone. Just don't feel discouraged. Training can be a long process, but it can also be very rewarding.

[Group training sessions](#) not only give your new pup a chance to learn how to be social and obedient around other dogs, [it will benefit you as well](#). It will give you an opportunity to get out of the house and to share in the company of other fur parents who are going through the same thing. You can share stories and find support among those who understand what you're going through.

Medical Costs:

Even if you adopted a perfectly healthy dog, the sad fact is that some dogs will develop some sort of medical condition that will require the attention of a veterinarian. While most conditions can be treated quite easily, some medical conditions can become very expensive.

Before giving up on your adopted dog because you can't afford the care required, please realize that covering the cost of your dog's medical needs may also cause financial strain for the shelter. Remember, they have many other animals in their care. If the condition is contagious, there will also be the risk that your dog can infect the other animals at the facility.



Eight months after being adopted, Maximus was diagnosed with Canine Lymphoma. After six months of chemo therapy he is now cancer free.

A dog with a medical condition is much also harder to adopt out, so your pup may be suffering at the shelter for a long time. In the worst case, the dog may die at the shelter, alone.

On the bright side, there are places where you can find help with the cost of your dog's medical needs. Talk to your veterinarian. Most will be willing to work with you to reduce the cost or to set up a payment plan. In addition, you may have a university in your area with a veterinary program that may also offer low-cost services.

In addition, while you might not be aware until you find yourself in need, there are many organizations out there that help people cover the cost of their pets' conditions. You can find a list containing the names of fifteen of these organizations [here](#).

Moving to a place that won't accept Pets:

If you've adopted a dog, you should consider it to be a member of your family. You wouldn't move to a place that won't allow you to bring your child with you, would you? When looking for a new place to call home, you shouldn't consider a place that won't allow your fur-baby to come with you in the first place.

However, it's understandable that financial circumstances will sometimes limit your options. If you're going to rent, ask your potential landlord what you can do. Explain that your dog is a member of the family. Some will allow a dog to stay for an additional security deposit or monthly fee.

If not, remember there are other housing options available to you. You can even use filters on most property search engines that will show only places that let pups come with you. Before giving up on your adopted dog over a problem that has solutions, remember that **you** are the one who chose to adopt the dog in the first place. It's **your** responsibility to at least try to live up to the responsibilities of that choice.

A New Baby:

First of all, CONGRATULATIONS! What a wonderful new adventure to *em-bark* upon. Second, one of the best things about dogs and babies is that they both spend most of their time napping! Still, there's a good chance that those nap-times aren't always going to be at the *same* time.



With a new baby, find ways to adapt daily family life, gatherings and events to include your dog in “the family.”

It's a fact. A new baby is going to take up a lot of your time. So it's hard to imagine that you're going to have enough time to properly devote to your dog as well. There are, however, ways to take care of a baby and a dog at the same time.



If one place doesn't allow dogs, remember there are other housing options available to you.

Before giving up on your adopted dog because you have a new baby, please know there are things you can do to have both. Try taking your dog for a walk on a leash at the same time you take your baby your baby out in the stroller. Find ways to adapt daily family life, gatherings

and events to include your dog in “the family.”

It's like one Top Social Media Influencer Terry Alex once said: “If it's important to you, you will find a way. If not, you'll find an excuse.”

Still, if you really have tried and you are genuinely unable keep your dog, please show your adopted dog one final act of kindness. Try to find your dog another loving home among people you know and trust. Ask family members, friends, co-workers and neighbors, people that you've known and trusted for a long time .

If you are unable to find someone willing to make your dog part of their family, contact the shelter you adopted them from or some other rescue group or reputable no-kill shelter that does thorough background checks for adopters.

Never sell or give away your dog through social media. Dogs who are given up this way can end up as bait dogs in dog fighting rings where they are torn apart for sport. They can also end up in an abusive or neglectful home. You have no idea who could be taking your dog. Remember: The dog you are going to surrender may have lived a life of abuse or neglect before you adopted them. Before giving up on your adopted dog, please reconsider. Please don't put them through that again. The [effect of being abandoned again](#) can be utterly devastating.

Please, do this last favor for your pup. Return them to the shelter you adopted them from or find some other organization The [Humane Society of the Nature Coast](#) has one of the best reputations for providing a clean, caring environment for their furry residents. who is going to care for them until they find their true fur-ever home. You will break their heart when you surrender them again, but at least you'll be giving them the best chance of finding a new home and new pet parents who will love them and help them heal.



Georgie Waite, Shelter Manager at the Humane Society of the Nature Coast giving one of the fur-babies some love and cuddles.



If you must surrender your adopted dog, please give them the best chance of finding a new home and new pet parents who will love them.