EVERYDAY CONFIDENCE-BUILDING IDEAS

A gentle guide for puppies and their people

Confidence doesn't mean being fearless or greeting everyone. It grows through manageable experiences, a little curiosity, and knowing there's someone nearby to help when needed. You don't need a special training program to get started.

Little opportunities in everyday life

Let your puppy investigate. Put a safe, unfamiliar object on the floor, such as a cardboard box or a new toy. Allow your puppy to choose whether and when to approach.

Try different surfaces. Offer a few safe, steady textures to walk across, such as a mat, a patch of grass, or a smooth floor. Avoid slippery or unstable obstacles.

Make room for sniffing. On a quiet outing or in the garden, follow your puppy's curiosity for a little while. Exploring doesn't always need to mean moving forward.

Offer a simple puzzle. Scatter a few treats in a towel or use an easy food toy. Start with something your puppy can solve comfortably, then adjust as needed.

Practice comfortable alone-time moments. While you're nearby, offer an appropriate chew or toy in a familiar resting space. Keep it brief and pleasant, and build gradually.

Let watching count. Sit at a comfortable distance from ordinary activity. Your puppy can watch bicycles, people, or other dogs without having to greet them.

Notice your puppy's response

Comfortable might look like: loose movement, curiosity, normal interest in treats or play, and choosing to explore or return to you.

Time for a pause might look like: trying to move away, freezing, repeated avoidance, a tucked posture, or becoming too worried to enjoy something usually pleasant.

What helps? Add distance, make the activity easier, let your puppy rest, or try another day. Calm reassurance is fine. Never force an encounter to "build confidence."

There is no checklist to finish. Some days, a quiet cuddle and a good nap are exactly what your puppy needs. If fear is frequent, intense, or getting worse, speak with your veterinarian or a qualified reward-based behavior professional.

Companion to Article Three, "Confidence Comes With Experience," in Section Four: Understanding the Dog in Front of Us.