

Trudi Thorpe runs dogLOGIC Dog Training based in Sydney and specialises in Individual Behavioural Strategies, Puppy Pre-School and Adult Dog Classes. She is an AABP Professional Dog Trainer, Accredited Delta CGC Instructor, Accredited Delta CGC Assessor and a Certified Dog Behavioural Trainer. She is a member of the Delta Professional Dog Trainers Association, The Association of Animal Behaviour Professionals and the Association of Pet Dog Trainers.

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Ask Trudi a question regarding behaviour by emailing [behaviour@urbananimal.net](mailto:behaviour@urbananimal.net)



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**Hi Trudi**

*I got a rescue dog about 2 weeks ago from a shelter who is absolutely gorgeous...very sweet, quiet and a bit shy. But I picked up the broom yesterday to sweep the floor and she was absolutely terrified! She peed on the floor, cringed as if I was going to hit her, and started shaking. I picked her up and cuddled her to tell her it was OK but she didn't like that at all! Even though I don't know what her history is, I'm really worried as she's never done this with me before. What should I do?*

**Anthea**



Hi Anthea,

Rescue dogs can be tricky to understand because the majority of the time their history is a mystery! It's difficult to know what went on with your dog before she was lucky enough to find you - like how long she was at the shelter for. Had she been moved from one shelter to another? How long has it been since she had an owner and had a place to call home? What was that owner and the associated experience like? Did she have a foster carer and if so, how many? There are a lot of variables that can affect a dog and subsequently its behaviour.

Dogs are territorial animals. To move a dog from one place to the next can be very confusing and upsetting. It takes about 4-6 weeks for a dog to settle into a new environment and start feeling comfortable about things, so 2 weeks is not much time at all for your dog to feel 100% comfortable and confident in your home or with you. This will come with time, patience and gentle guidance from you so that you can both build a relationship based on trust.

It sounds as if she has quite a phobia about the broom and whatever the reason it has quite a prolific effect on her. It makes it all that more difficult because you have no background on her so you will probably come across a number of behaviours and/or reactions that you weren't expecting to different scenarios. The main thing is knowing how to deal with them appropriately.

Rather than comforting and mollycoddling your fearful dog, stay positive and upbeat. Remove the broom (or anything else that she reacts fearfully to) and move her into a completely different area of the house. See if you can engage her in a game of some sort so that you can shift the experience from a scary to positive one. Make a mental note of the fact that she is fearful of the broom and ensure that she is not around when you bring it out to use it. This may mean that she is outside if you want to sweep inside and vice versa when you want to sweep outside. Outside of the times that you actually need to use the broom, you could try just laying it flat on the ground and sprinkling treats around it to encourage her to investigate it at her own pace. Allowing her to navigate around different items and articles in and around the house at her own pace will also help build confidence in her new environment.

Use this situation as a learning experience. Take it slowly with her and be aware that as you grow together there will be LOTS to learn about each other and the better you understand her and what makes her tick the easier it will be to work with her.

Most importantly, keep all interactions positive! She will move forward a lot quicker through patience and encouragement and your relationship will develop into something quite special! 🐾

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