

Adult Rescue Socialization Checklist

For Giant Breed Adults Needing Gentle Reintegration

Intentional exposure and trust-building at their pace.

First Steps at Home

- Let dog decompress for at least 3–7 days before structured outings
 - Keep environment calm and predictable
 - Observe body language before introducing new people or animals
 - Establish basic trust: consistent routines, quiet praise, no pressure
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Gentle Human Interaction

- Allow the dog to initiate contact—no forced petting
 - Introduce new people one at a time with structure
 - Teach household members and guests how to engage respectfully
 - Begin consent-based handling (touch ears, paws only if dog is comfortable)
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Dog-to-Dog Observation & Interaction

- Observe calm dogs at a distance before any introductions
 - Practice structured on-leash walk-bys
 - Only allow off-leash time with trusted, balanced dogs
 - Interrupt over-arousal early and redirect to calm behaviors
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Exposure to New Contexts

- Short car rides with praise and decompression
 - Brief trips to quiet, open spaces (parks, sidewalks)
 - Gradually introduce higher-energy spaces with exits (pet-friendly stores, cafes)
 - Stay ahead of stress: if unsure, wait and try again later
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Emotional Support & Recovery

- Recognize signs of old trauma resurfacing (shut down, growling, shaking)

- Give the dog space and don't punish fear responses
 - Use positive reinforcement to associate safety with new experiences
 - End every outing with a calm activity: sniff walk, frozen Kong, or rest time
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Ongoing Progress

- Journal progress and triggers to track improvements
- Celebrate small wins (walking past a stranger, tolerating brushing)
- Use decompression days regularly
- Prioritize quality over quantity—1 good experience beats 5 neutral ones