

**FosterSMART is a framework that outlines the physical, social, and environmental aspects of a dog's life that will help fosters:**

- Provide a safe environment for your foster dog
- Observe your foster dog in order to help determine the best type of forever home
- Communicate your observations with FDR
- Recognize “red flag” behaviors and know when to get FDR’s Behavior Team involved

*Note: this document is not a “how-to” for all the elements in the SMART categories. We will cover specific how-to’s in future foster training sessions.*

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### **STRUCTURE – an environment where dog can thrive physically and emotionally.**

From the **moment** a dog is in a new environment, it is deciding whether it feels safe. A negative experience early in a new environment can greatly impact a dog’s feelings of safety, and delay the relationship-building process with people/animals in that environment.

#### **Safety – the dog’s feelings of safety. Starts with trust.**

- *Fearful behaviors* – fearful body language, reactivity, aggression – will indicate if dog is feeling safe. **See Body Language of Fear handout, Body Language videos on FDR Foster YouTube Playlist.**
- *Decompression* – a space for the new dog to be able to observe and feel safe while they’re taking it all in. Some dogs need several days.
  - **RED FLAG:** dog unable to settle in their “sanctuary” space after 72 hours. Contact Behavior Support.
- *Honoring dog’s choices* – Choice, in this context, is primarily related to shy/fearful dogs. If dog chooses to “hide” in their space to observe and feel safe, allow it. If dog doesn’t actively indicate it wants to be touched, don’t reach for it or touch it. *Note: This doesn’t mean let a dog “choose” to do anything it wants (see Management).*
  - **RED FLAG:** dog hides for more than 72 hours. Contact Behavior Support.
- *Petting consent* – dogs let us know if they do or do not wish to be touched in very subtle ways. **See Petting Consent Test video on FDR Foster YouTube Playlist.**

#### **Safety – the dog’s physical safety (can’t escape, run off, unidentified illness, etc)**

- *Proper fitting equipment*
  - Martingale collar – shouldn’t be able to slip over dog’s head
  - Harness – dog shouldn’t be able to get legs out or back out of it
  - Flat collar – should have FDR tag and shouldn’t be able to slip over dog’s head.
  - Leash/Drag line – allowing the dog to drag a short leash while it’s acclimating to a new environment allows you a way to manage the dog without having to physically grab it. Drag lines may need to be kept on fearful dogs for weeks.

- *Proper transport*
  - Crate - Small dogs should travel in a crate unless the crate causes extreme stress. Leash should be kept on the dog when it's inside the crate for safe removal once crate door is open.
  - No crate - If not in a crate, dog should be leashed and tied down to a secure part of the vehicle so it cannot escape when car door is opened.
- *Nutrition* – make it palatable (at minimum add warm water to kibble). Avoid free-feeding (food always available) to help get dog on a potty schedule (unless instructed differently for medical reasons).
- *Vet care* – alert Medical Support if you observe anything out of the ordinary.

**Gear:** harness, martingale collar, FDR tag, leash for dragging, long line, ex-pen, crate, gates, dog food, paperwork

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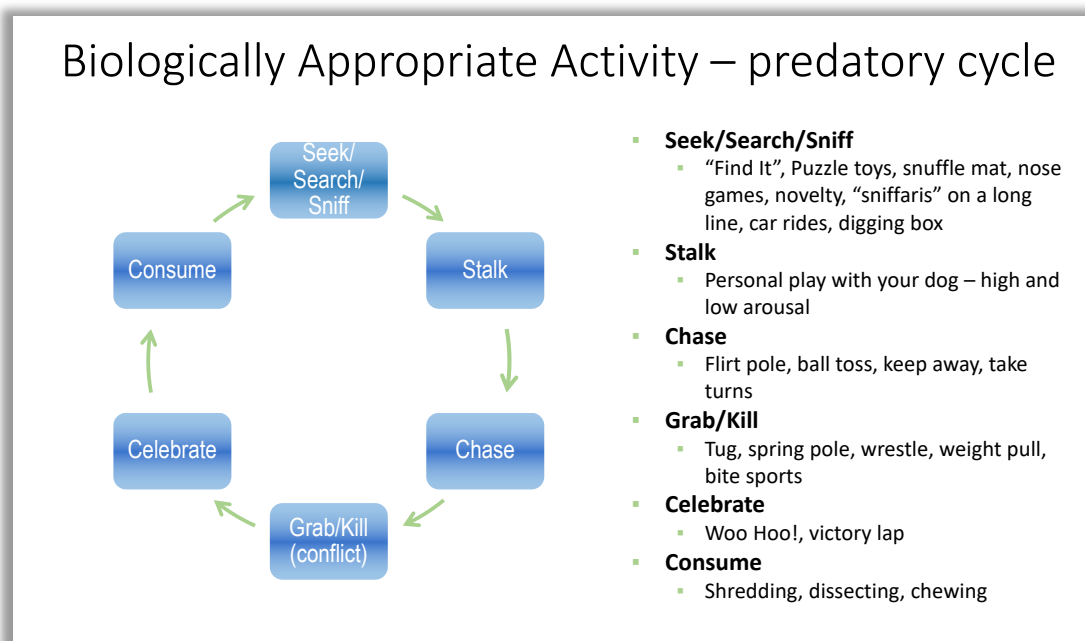
### **MANAGEMENT – managing the environment to help dog not make mistakes, and to minimize the opportunity for dog to practice reactivity.**

- *Routines* – predictability and consistency are important to all dogs, especially timid/fearful dogs.
- *Feeding* – feed separately from other animals. Feed on a schedule (vs. free-feeding).
- *Potty* – pretend your foster dog is a puppy, and go outside regularly, especially upon waking, after playing, after eating. When dog goes potty in appropriate place, give a treat *on the spot* vs. waiting until you get inside.
- *Confinement* – crates, gates, ex-pens, “sanctuary”. Your foster dog’s ability to be confined – both in your presence and away from you – is something a potential adopter will want to know about. Ideally your foster dog will eat in a crate, chew on chewbones in a crate, sleep in a crate, be in the crate for short periods while you leave AND while you’re at home.
  - **RED FLAG:** if your foster dog shows signs of stress (high-pitched consistent barking, excessive panting, etc) in a confinement situation after day 3, contact Behavior Support.
- *Proper crate usage* – dog shouldn’t be pushed or forced into a crate. Use an ex-pen for confinement if dog is resisting crate, and start working on conditioning the dog to the crate. Put the crate in a place where the dog can investigate it on his own. Try leaving the crate door open with a tasty treat just inside the door and see if dog will find the treat on his own (don’t hover around it). Try putting the dog’s meal just inside the crate door to see if the dog will put his head in the crate to eat. Keep moving the bowl toward the back.
- *Trigger management*– when possible, managing things that cause dog to react fearfully or aggressively.
  - **RED FLAG:** by 3<sup>rd</sup> week of fostering, dog still reacting to family members when they enter the room, or move about the house. Contact Behavior Support.

- **RED FLAG:** dog reacts to visitors when they arrive or move around the house. Contact Behavior Support.
- **RED FLAG:** by week 3 you have observed many triggers in the environment – too many to manage – that cause the dog to react fearfully or aggressively. Contact Behavior Support.
- *Undesirable behaviors* – jumping up, excessive barking, destructive chewing, i.e. bad “manners”.
  - Avoid accidentally reinforcing unwanted behaviors.
  - Avoid using aversives (anything the dog might find aversive or painful) to correct behaviors. Contact Behavior Support for help.

**Gear:** crate, gates, ex-pen, leash, harness

**ACTIVITY/Enrichment** – biologically appropriate physical AND mental activity. Also an excellent way to determine how the dog is settling in and what it likes to do.



- *Physical AND mental stimulation*—DON’T overwhelm dog, especially within the first 3 days, with a lot of new people, animals, environments.
- *Social interactions* – people, other animals
  - Meeting new people – instruct new people to allow dog to indicate whether he/she wishes to be touched. **See Petting Consent video.**
    - **RED FLAG:** dog is still afraid of family members or reacts to visitors after 3 weeks. Contact Behavior Support.
  - Intro to your dog – sights, smells, sounds BEFORE introduction
  - Intro to your cat – sights, smells, sounds BEFORE introduction

- *Novelty* – anything “new” to the dog, including sights, sounds, smells.
  - Objects – “normal” items seen in a typical household or neighborhood. Observe dog’s responses and watch for signs of fear or aggression.
  - New environments – how does dog respond when you take her to a new location.
    - **RED FLAG:** dog shows extreme fear (multiple body language indicators) when taken to a new environment. This could be the front yard or anywhere new to the dog. Contact Behavior Support.
- *Feeding* – snuffle mats, puzzle toys, foraging opportunities
- *Sniffaris on a long line* – dog-choice walks in open areas where dog can sniff around and explore at its leisure. This is the preferred method of dog walking if dog appears to want distance from the handler. Work up to a short leash walk.
- *Play* – flirt pole, toys, w/other dogs. Play is the most fragile of the hardwired emotional systems in the brain. Any fear/anxiety will suppress the play system. Observe shy/timid/fearful dogs for any fleeting moments of play.
- *Pack Walk IF/WHEN* dog is ready. If dog exhibits extreme fear (multiple body language indicators) in a new environment, it is not ready for Pack Walk.
- *Training* (see Training section)

**Gear:** snuffle mat, puzzle bowl, chew bones, chew toys, toys, long line, flirt pole

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### **RED FLAGS – Behavior Support should be contacted ASAP**

- *Fear* – show fearful behaviors or reactivity to:
  - Family members?
  - Visitors?
  - Novel objects?
  - New environments?
  - Sounds?
- *Anxiety* – especially if present after day 3.
  - Hypervigilance
  - Light sleeping
  - Excessive panting
  - Excessive pacing
  - Self-harm (excessive licking/chewing body parts)
  - No/low appetite
  - Frequent urination (medical cause ruled out)
  - General inability to settle
- *Handling sensitivities* – dog shows extremely fearful body language, tries to flee, or aggressive behavior during normal handling, such as putting on a collar, harness, or leash. Don’t pick up a small dog if it appears to not like that. Work on building trust by not doing things that scare the dog.

- *Resource Guarding (RG)* - the use of avoidance, threatening, or aggressive behaviors by a dog to gain or retain control of food or non-food items in the presence of a person or other animal.
  - RG against people?
  - RG against other animals?
  - RG against children?
  - Commonly guarded items: food, food bowl, people, spaces (doorways are common, kitchen), furniture, non-edible items (toys), anything “new” can inspire a dog to guard it (new toy, bed, etc).
- *Conflict* with other dogs/animals in the house
- *Reactivity on leash* – dog reacts when it sees other dogs, people, bicycles, skateboards, etc. when walking on a leash.
- *Behavior changes* – dog seemed fine, now acting differently. Medical issue?

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**TRAINING** – positive reinforcement training helps build trust. While it is not a foster’s job to get a dog “trained” for a new adopter, there are a few activities that will help communication between you and your foster dog, which can then be communicated to adopter.

- Name Game
- Marker word
- Leash/collar/gear acclimation
- Recall (Come!) – starts with eye contact in response to name
- Touch (where dog targets your palm or two-finger target with their nose) – great for dogs that aren’t concerned about keeping distance from you, also good as dogs develop trust with foster.
- Visitor protocol for visitor/stranger danger
- “Place” cue (teaching dog to go to and stay on a bed/cot/platform)
- “Circle of Trust” exercise for dogs that are concerned about people/visitors in the home

**Gear:** training treats, treat bag

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### Who to contact:

#### BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

- Ann King\*, 916-221-8833 (text/call), [ann@annkingdogbehavior.com](mailto:ann@annkingdogbehavior.com), Voxel app (annkingdogtrainer)  
\*RED FLAG behaviors
- Anna Morey, 415-819-9451 (text/call), [anna@annathedogtrainer.com](mailto:anna@annathedogtrainer.com), Voxel app (annamorey)

#### MEDICAL NEEDS

- Jacky Gardner, 925-200-7264 (call/text)
- Kerry McBride, 530-306-9710 (call/text)

#### FOSTERING AVAILABILITY

- Eileen Godwin, 530-401-0498, [foster4foothill@gmail.com](mailto:foster4foothill@gmail.com)