



1/27 - 1/31/20 "Itsy"
Pawsco

Goals for session

- Assess Itsy's fear level, plasticity, ability to be happy and healthy in an average home
- Build Itsy's confidence

Initial Impressions:

Itsy was very fearful in the car, would not take treats. Exhibited shut down behavior. She was very excited to meet Magill, my pro-social female, she showed pro-social behavior toward her right away. She was very nervous and looking for exit points in the yard and in the house. She spend the first day cowering, remained in a down stay on a bed that was the furthest away from the activities of the house.

Training:

- I started with decompression protocol, leaving Itsy completely alone and letting her relax and become comfortable. If I had to go near her, even just within 5 or so feet from her, I tossed very high fat content food, chicken, steak and cheese. She wouldn't eat the treats while I was near her, but after I turned my back she gobbled them up.
- Day 2 I began approaching Itsy, then tossing her food. She was already more relaxed and ate the treats even with me standing by her. We went out for a walk on the long line, she stayed very close to Magill but took food from my hand towards the end of it. She began to be more confident and even sniffed around the last half of the walk. Toward the end of the day, Itsy was following me around everywhere.
- Day 3 I began addressing Itsy and looking her in the eye before delivering her HVT. She did very well, still showing signs of fear, but eating the food and even hovering around me for more. She began jumping on the couch and bed next to me at the end of day 3.
- Day 4 I took Itsy with me to play group. She was terrified in the car, would not take food and tried to dart anytime the door was open. She got along very well with every dog she interacted with, 17 in all over the 4 days. By the end of day 4 Itsy, was accepting pets from me as long as I was sitting down. She even appeared to enjoy this touch. I of course gave her a tasty treat after every touch.
- After a couple of days, Itsy began to growl. She did this several times when approached by me or my partner. At times this seemed to be a reflex, as she then got up and followed me when I backed away. She also appeared to growl at anyone who came near Magill, who it

appeared she was “protecting”. I see this as an indication that Itsy is feeling more confident, and she is attempting to exercise control over the space around her body, and her body its self. Go Itsy! I encourage Itsy to let me know when she is uncomfortable, if she growls, I say “ok Itsy, I hear ya!” and walk away. I was always able to get Itsy to allow approach, touch, or get her to move by sticking to the food contingency; “if you allow **something scary like, approach, touch, or eye contact** you will get **something yummy**”. Once Itsy knew the rules, I was able to get her to consent to each of the things she found scary.

- I did not have time to do any obedience training with her, I would suggest several more days or weeks of trust building before placing food on a behavior contingency.

Training Suggestions:

- Continue training with the If-Then relationship of scary thing = high fat food. This will eventually change the chemistry in Itsy’s brain from fear to anticipation when she is approached or reached for.
- Refrain from punishment of any kind. Itsy’s behavior displays as a severe neglect/abuse pathology. With her level of fear is is likely that she will never fully trust that humans will not be violent or scary, but, the best chance she has is if she never experiences pain or fear from a human again.
- Avoid direct eye contact, reaching, or approaching Itsy as much as possible when not training. Let her come to you and investigate on her own time, but ignore her otherwise.
- Do not punish Itsy for growling. If she learns that she cannot growl when she feels terrified, she is more likely to “allow” approach but still be afraid. This sets up a situation where people feel comfortable getting close to her because she’s not growling, but she is still terrified of approach. This is when we get a dog who bites “out of the blue”, because fear just keeps building and compounding in the dog.

Adoption Suggestions:

Itsy is going to need a home with humans who can resist the urge to touch her, and give her plenty of space for several days. A home with a confident dog or more than one would be best, would likely expedite Itsy’s progress. Cats likely ok. I can’t speak to Itsy’s true personality, since I only had her for 4 days, but I’d guess that she will be a very sweet girl once she’s comfortable. She’s easy to leave at home alone, so would be good for someone who works all day. She’d likely be happy with a short walk, lots of treats and cuddle sessions on the couch.