

Decompression Walks



What are decompression walks? A walk where the dog is allowed freedom of movement in nature, the ability to make some choices about where to go next, and is unlikely to encounter things that cause stress.

Tools needed:

- **HARNESS:** Harnesses that clip on the back is preferred, so the dog isn't stepping on their leash. We recommend a front-clip harness for bigger or stronger dogs.
- **LONG LEASH:** Leashes can be of different lengths - from 10 to 50 ft., and made out of different materials. The leash will usually be dragged along the ground between you and your dog, so something easily cleaned may be preferred. Flexi leads are never recommended as the risk of injury can be high.
- **SHOES** you can off road in and a positive attitude!

Recommended locations:

- Nature areas that allow dogs
- Large city parks with plenty of open space
- Empty fields
- Some industrial areas

Decompression walks are very beneficial for all dogs! If a dog has any behavioral issues or struggles with walking in busy neighborhoods' they can be especially helpful.

For dogs who are frightened or excited by seeing dogs and strangers while on walks:

A break from reactive behavior such as lunging and barking can be a huge stress relief for your dog (and for you!). Often reactive dogs end a neighborhood walk more wound up than they began it. Decompression walks allow them to have a walk where they get exercise and relax.

For high energy dogs:

In a visual world that we mostly experience with our eyes, dogs live in a chemical world that they mostly experience with their noses. By having them use their sense of smell, we can decrease their stress.

Dogs benefit from a mixture of high excitement exercise (fetch, running, chasing, dog play) and calming exercise like decompression walks. High energy dogs need as much calming exercise as possible to help them relax when home.

To assist in teaching loose leash walking behavior:

While we find relaxing a treat, these dogs find it a chore. It's a common misconception that loose leash walking is easier on a short leash. Going on these walks is a great way to teach the foundation behavior for loose leash walking: the check-in. Anytime your dog acknowledges you at all, mark that moment with a high pitched "yes!" and high-value food reward. They should come towards you to collect the reward. Hold the reward down by your knee, so they are almost in a heel position when they take the treat. The repetition will increase the frequency of your dog being in that particular position by choice.

As with all loose leash walking training, if your dog pulls hard at the end of the long leash, stop walking and wait for them to relieve the tension just a bit, then allow them to continue.



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