

Please Don't Sit so Close to Me!

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Why do greyhounds get returned from adoptive homes? The number one reason is when the greyhound and the new owner misunderstand each other's body language. Greyhounds spend their lives living with other dogs responding to their communications through body language before being placed into a home environment where they are now expected to live as pets. A high percentage of greyhound "bounces," or returns, happen because the new adopter sits with or leans over their new greyhound and doesn't understand what that means to the new dog.

Greyhounds need time to adjust and understand the different body language and communication between humans and dogs. If another dog stands over him in a turn-out area at the track, the greyhound may interpret that communication to be a threat or domination, a sign the other is getting into his space is "calling him out," so to speak. A newly rescued greyhound doesn't realize you mean something different and only have the best intentions. If you stand over your new grey while he's sitting on his pillow or lying in the middle of your living room floor, he may react the same way if it were a dog trying to dominate him. Your grey may feel unsure or uncomfortable and will sometimes growl or snap at you. Adopters may see this as aggressive behavior when really the dog doesn't know any other way to tell you that they aren't comfortable with you in his space.

Never allow children to share a greyhound's pillow or let the dog sleep in a child's bed. That goes for you, too. Some new adopters are shocked when a grey sleeping in their bed growls or snaps when touched or when someone leans over him. Remember, your new dog has spent his life being able to sleep undisturbed in a crate where he felt safe. Even though you mean well, he may see your affection as intrusive and may react in a dog way by growling. Give him time, this is a whole new world...and life.

That being said, it's not OK for your greyhound to growl at you and it's up to you to teach him appropriate behavior. The best way to avoid this situation is to allow your greyhound plenty of time to adjust to his new environment by setting rules for your greyhound, establishing a routine and building trust. Some greyhounds will never be comfortable sharing their pillow; they are all different just like us!