



Emotional Support and Empowerment Dogs Project

Emotional Support and Empowerment Dogs

Labrador and Golden Retriever Puppies for Reserve Soldiers

A professional document based on data and tables (to be attached separately).

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1. Why Labradors and Golden Retrievers?

Labradors and Golden Retrievers are the world's leading breeds in emotional support and service work, due to a rare combination of biological and behavioral traits:

- High neurological stability
- Naturally elevated oxytocin levels (facilitates bonding)
- Emotional sensitivity to humans without being anxious
- Advanced human body-language reading abilities
- Genetics rooted in "cooperative motivation"
- Fast learners with a natural capability of adjustment to discipline
- Calm, patient, tolerant towards children, families, and noise

Research shows that these breeds release increased levels of oxytocin in response to human touch—strengthening trust and emotional safety, which is critical for trauma recovery.

2. Why Puppies?

A puppy at the age of 7–12 weeks is in the critical socialization window:

the stage where the brain is open to the formation of deep, lasting bonds.

At this age, the puppy:

- Bonds intensely with its caregiver
- Adopts behaviors shaped by its environment
- Learns confidence, trust, and discipline
- Develops in parallel and Vis-à-vis with the human caring for it



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When a reserve soldier holds a puppy, the bond forms from the ground up—not as a “service mechanism,” but rather as a naturally evolving relationship between a caregiver and a being dependent on them.

This relationship provides a healing, corrective experience for individuals carrying emotional wounds or difficult memories.

3. Tailored Support for Reserve Soldiers

Many reservists experience:

- Hyper-vigilance
- Sleep disturbances
- Loneliness or emotional detachment
- Emotional volatility
- Traumatic memories
- Erosion of trust
- Emotional and mental overload

Labradors/Goldens address these exact gaps: they are calm, steady, nonjudgmental, consistent, and offer simple, soothing companionship.

The puppy learns its person — and the reservist, in turn, relearns responsibility, routine, and safe communication.

4. The Puppy Training Process

Training is structured in progressive stages:

- Basic obedience: sit, down, stay, heel
- Impulse control: waiting, ignoring distractions, polite behavior
- Communication skills: vocal cues, hand signals, body language
- Environmental exposure: people, noises, outdoor settings, public places
- Bonding exercises: touch, eye contact, positive reinforcement
- Daily routine: walks, play, shared activity



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At each and every stage, the person experiences small, frequent instances of success—boosting dopamine, self-confidence, and a sense of capability.

5. The Initiative's Unique Training Method

Our method is based on three core principles:

✓ *Positive reinforcement only*

Shown to enhance trust and strengthen emotional connection.

✓ *Clear, structured communication*

Commands are taught gradually, in a safe, non-threatening way.

✓ *Emotional-interpersonal sensitivity*

Trainers are taught to recognize emotional overload and adjust pace accordingly.

The training is not merely “technical”—it is therapeutic.

The dog's progress depends on the emotional stabilization of the handler.

6. Group Training as a Healing Social Space

Training is conducted in groups — a central therapeutic component:

- Creates a sense of belonging
- Reduces isolation
- Provides opportunities to share difficulties
- Allows a healthy comparison: “others struggle like I do”
- Strengthens couple dynamics through shared responsibility
- Offers a non-threatening social framework

The group teaches connection, cooperation, and mutual support — with the dog acting as a bringer of calmness within this space.

7. Biological and Hormonal Benefits

Continuous bonding with a puppy activates a measurable physiological system:

- ↑ Oxytocin: bonding, trust, calm, trauma repair
- ↓ Cortisol: reduced stress, vigilance, irritability



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- ↑ Dopamine: success, motivation, hope
- ↑ Serotonin: mood stabilization, inner peace
- ↑ Endorphins: physical and emotional relief

The entire system responds to touch, play, movement, and routine.

8. Advantages of an Emotional Support Dog Raised in the Patient's Home

A unique feature of this initiative:

- The dog is not a "service tool" — but rather a personal emotional-therapeutic companion.
- The dog grows within the family home, which creates:
 - Stable emotional continuity
 - A healing daily routine
 - A Constant presence as a remedy against loneliness
 - A long-term model for healthy attachment

The dog learns the person "from the inside": their habits, sounds, emotional language, stress cues, calm states and overload patterns.

9. Benefits for Couples

The puppy creates a "shared third space":

- Reduces tension
- Encourages dialogue revolving around a positive subject
- Strengthens cooperation
- Generates softness and positive moments at home
- Reduces conflict triggered by trauma

The dog in fact "softens" the overall relationship.

10. Support for Severe Emotional and Physical Trauma

The puppy helps the handler cope with:

- Traumatic memories



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- Disturbing imagery
- Hyper-vigilance
- Physical tension
- Emotional overwhelm
- Flashbacks
- Panic attacks

The puppy helps ground the person in the present moment—rather than in the past or the future.

This is a critical mechanism in trauma treatment.

11. A One-of-a-Kind Global Model: Human + Puppy = A Shared Life Journey

The initiative does not provide a pre-trained service dog.

Instead, it pairs a trauma-affected individual with a two-month-old puppy.

Together, they embark on a mutual journey of:

- Growth
- Training
- Learning boundaries
- Patience
- Teamwork
- Deep bonding
- Shared development

Including specialized exercises such as rolling, hugging, impulse control, behavioral shaping, focus, and high-level discipline.

This dual development process strengthens both parties — and the reciprocity creates profound healing.

12. The Ability to Detect Stress — Even Without a Having a Formal Service Dog Certification

Dogs can detect:

- Elevated heart rate



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- Changes in scent (cortisol)
- Stress in voice tone
- Body-language shifts
- Sharp movements
- Irregular breathing

Labradors/Goldens in particular excel in all of the above.

Thus, even without having a formal “service dog” training, they naturally respond by:

- Approaching
- Resting their head on the person
- Sitting close to their handler
- Initiating contact
- “Interrupting emotional flooding”

This is exactly what trauma survivors need.

13. Advantages accelerating the Return to Normal Life — Study, Work, Family circles

The dog provides:

- Anchored daily routine
- Motivation to leave the house
- A reason to get up and dress, move, and engage socially
- A Non-overwhelming emotional connection
- Improved sleep
- Motivation to wake up
- Small, daily success experiences

As the puppy matures, the person gradually regains their ability to function within the following environments:

- ✓ Work
- ✓ Study
- ✓ Family
- ✓ Social life
- ✓ Daily function



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An emotional support dog guides a person from fragmentation back to stability.

Summary

The Emotional Support and Empowerment Dogs Project offers a globally unique therapeutic model:

A rehabilitative, biological, emotional, social, and behavioral process that unfolds naturally through the human-puppy bond, from the very first days of the furry companion's life.

It is non-invasive, non-pharmaceutical and rebuilds human connection through the heart, the body, and the soul.