

## Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety is a condition in which animals exhibit symptoms of anxiety or excessive distress when they are left alone. This is scary for your dog and not fun. It can be treated with training and lots of patience.

When your dog seems to worry when you're heading out, destroys stuff, follows you from room to room when you're home you may be dealing with a case of separation anxiety. Dogs will exhibit distress and behavior problems when left alone. They may:

- Dig and scratch at doors or windows attempting to reunite with their owners.
- Destructive chewing
- Howling, barking and whining
- Urination and defecation even if they are house-trained

Some dogs suffer from separation anxiety and some don't. It's a panic response. They are not trying to punish you, they just want you to come home.

Some of the triggers are:

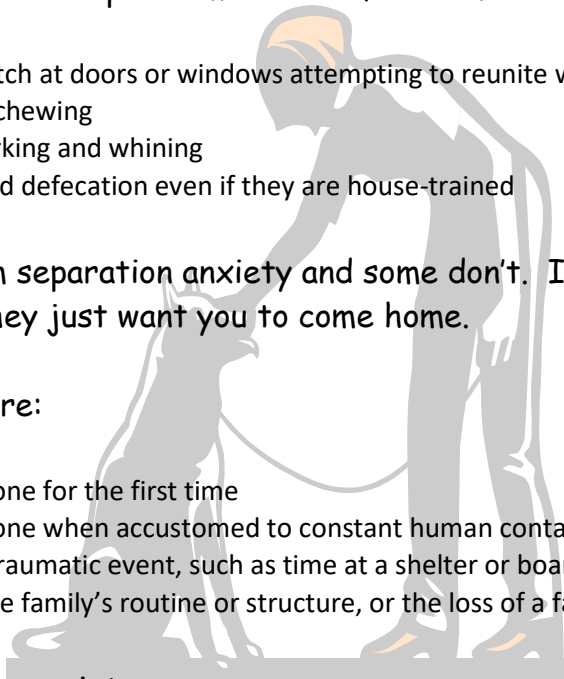
- Being left alone for the first time
- Being left alone when accustomed to constant human contact.
- Suffering a traumatic event, such as time at a shelter or boarding kennel.
- Change in the family's routine or structure, or the loss of a family member or other pet.

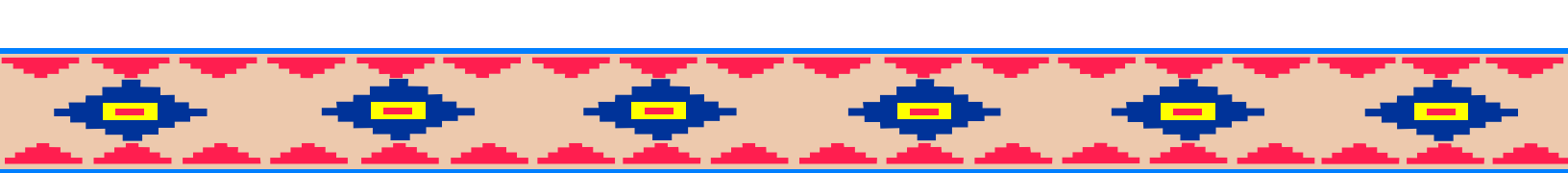
If it's minor separation anxiety:

- Always keep your departure and arrival low-key and calm. When you come home, let your dog calm down before you say "Hi".
- Exercise your dog well before you leave. He will have less energy to be anxious.
- If you have an old T-shirt that you can sleep in then give it to your dog when you leave. It will comfort him because it has your scent.
- Leave a radio or TV on.
- Establish a word or action that you use every time you leave that tells your dog you'll be back.
- Consider using an over-the-counter calming product (check with your vet first).

If it's a more severe problem:

- Try desensitization training. Teach your dog the sit-stay and down-stay commands using positive reinforcement. This helps them to remain calm when you go into another room.
- Create a "safe place" to limit your dog's ability to be destructive while you're away. Like:



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- Confine the dog loosely (maybe a room with a window and toys).
  - Leave your dog with recently worn clothes.

It may take some time for your dog to unlearn their panic response to you leaving. You can try the following:

- Take your dog to a doggie daycare facility
- Leave your dog with a friend, family member or neighbor when you are away.
- Take your dog to work with you, if possible.

### **WHAT WON'T HELP:**

Punishment - can make the situation worse

Another dog - getting another dog won't help. Your dog's anxiety is the result of their separation from YOU.

Crating - your dog will still have anxiety and he may even urinate, defecate, howl or injure himself trying to get out.

Radio/TV noise - usually won't help unless it is used as a safety cue.

Obedience training - is a good idea but separation anxiety isn't the result of lack of training.