



Separation Anxiety

The basic idea is to teach your dog to be independent. By teaching the dog to be independent when you are at home you are instilling confidence in him while you are away. Hopefully this will help his anxiety. Some of the ideas are adapted from “Dogs Behaving Badly” written by Dr. Nicholas Dodman.



Signs of Separation Anxiety

Destructive Behavior
Barking
House Soiling
Refusal to Eat while you are away
Self Mutilation (Lick Granuloma)
Depression
Exuberant Greeting



Does your dog follow you every time you leave a room? Or is he always right next to you when you are sitting or relaxing? These are suggestive symptoms of a dog with separation anxiety. Before you can get your dog to relax when you leave the house, you must get him to relax when you leave the room. He must become independent. Here's how to do it.

-Do not let the dog follow you out of a room. Make him stay, leave for a few seconds, then return. Positively reward your dog for staying. Gradually stay out of the room for longer periods until the dog does not react to your leaving the room.

-If your dog tries to follow, you should gently take the dog to a “rest area” (a favorite chair, rug etc). Instruct or make the dog lie down and stay. Praise the dog for doing this, then leave the room.

-Do not let your dog lie at your feet, or in your lap. He needs to learn that being some distance away from you (even if it's only two or three feet) will not hurt him or cause him ill harm.

-Do not let your dog sleep in bed with you. It is okay to sleep in the same room, just not on the bed. If necessary, tie him to a post or dresser until he learns to stay off the bed.

-Ignore your dog for 15 minutes before you leave, and for 15 minutes after you return. Just before leaving, give your dog a “sustained acting food treat” (peanut butter packed into a hollow toy). This will hopefully associate your leaving with a positive treat.

-Give your dog lots of exercise. If possible, especially before you leave. A tired dog may not be as anxious.

-Some dogs are so anxious that medication is needed to help them. Hopefully, once the dog learns not to be anxious the medication can be stopped, or decreased in dose.

Another thing you can do is desensitize him to the things you do as you prepare to leave in the morning. For example: pick up your keys, then put them down. Walk to the door, but don't leave. Put on your coat, then sit down. Repeat these things until your pet stops reacting. Your dog knows you are leaving just by your routine. So do your routine so much (without actually leaving) that your dog stops caring.

