

Separation-Related Based Anxiety



Some dogs, when left alone or separated from an individual that they are most bonded to, will develop or experience separation-related based anxiety.

Separation-related based anxiety is an umbrella term to cover three main stress conditions of dogs:

- **Clinical Separation Anxiety:** this occurs when a dog is separated from one (sometimes two) specific individuals. This means that even if a dog has the company of other humans, they will still display stress behaviors because their main bonded human is not nearby.
- **Isolation Anxiety** – this is the most common form of separation-related based anxiety. This occurs when a dog is left completely alone (sometimes excepting other canines). The absence of presence by humans triggers stress behaviors since the dog feels isolated.
- **Containment Anxiety** – A lot of dogs that suffer from the first two type of separation-related based anxiety also experience stress during containment. This is most prominent in dogs who experience stress while crating or kenneling.

Canines experiencing separation-related issues can display anxiety-based behaviors, such as excessive vocalizations (whining, barking, howling), pacing, destructive tendencies, attempting to create an exit, or many other behaviors. A lot of times, it's somewhat easy to see that there is stress occurring for your dog, but it can be a lot harder figuring out how to help them feel better when alone. Before going into what we should do, here's a list of common myths regarding separation-related anxiety.

Common Myths:

- **Spoiling your dog creates separation anxiety.** There is no research supporting the claim that spending valuable bonding time with your pup creates separation anxiety. If you are trying to solve your dog's stress induction, then withholding attention and care from your dog will most likely just add more stress to their lives.
- **Being an 'Alpha' leader of the pack or using positive punishment will solve bad behaviors.** We've talked about how alpha-based or positive punishment-based training can make behaviors worse and causes a huge rift in the trust that your dog places in you. To read more about that, follow this [link](#).
- **Your dog is being destructive or 'bad' out of spite for you leaving them alone.** Many times, owners can tend to think that their dog is deliberately acting inappropriately to get back at the owner for doing something (like leaving them alone). This is especially prominent in dogs that have destructive tendencies when experiencing stress. The truth is that dog's brains don't really comprehend revenge or performing behaviors out of spite. Chewing items can either be a way that they are trying to self-calm themselves, or they are trying to create an exit point so they don't have to be alone anymore.

- Letting your dog cry it out will help decrease the behaviors. Anxiety issues aren't solved this way, but only typically compounded. Like the above myths, ignoring (purposely or passively) the stress that your dog is experiencing will most likely either continue to sustain the issue, or make the behaviors worse.

Treatment

The good news is that separation-related anxiety behaviors are treatable! The most productive and efficient treatment for these behaviors utilize a certified, professional dog trainer while also working with a veterinarian to manage anxiety levels. To find a local, certified professional dog trainer, follow this [link](#).

**The following tips below are only to be used for temporary support, until an appointment with a certified, professional dog trainer can be made.*

1. Try to not leave the dog alone for long enough periods that induce anxiety. It's hard to keep up with being tied to a dog for 24/7 if they experience stress as soon as you leave. However, there are ways to make sure the dog itself is not alone for long periods. Doggie daycares, pet sitters, friends, and family can all be useful in helping your pup fend off anxiety attacks from feeling isolated.
2. Meet with your veterinarian about exploring any underlying medical conditions or selecting medications that can help your dog's anxiety levels. This can be helpful to do with a trainer, since they can help advocate for your dog and present behavior history in a professional manner. In the words of separation anxiety expert Malena DeMartini, medication should be a first resort, not a last resort.
3. Slowly, start to have your dog experience some alone time during brief periods. The most important obstacle when helping your dog feel more comfortable alone is to focus on short time frames that the dog does not panic during. Make sure to provide enrichment items and structure alone time to be in a calming environment. A certified trainer can help you with these desensitization methods, so you and your dog can have support through this process.

To learn more about separation-related anxiety, visit <https://www.calmcanineacademy.com/webinars>.

**If any bite, injury, or other emergency happens while working with your dog- please separate and contain the dog as quickly and safely as possible. Call 9-1-1 for medical assistance and call Animal Law Enforcement at 719-302-8798 for assistance with a dangerous dog.*