

Beggin' To Behave

Sandy Strychor, ABCDT

Separation Anxiety

Many dogs experience separation anxiety (SA) when they are alone and the family is out. It can be frightening for your dog and it isn't a quick or easy thing to relieve. These dogs might chew on furniture or shoes or scratch at the doors or windowsills. They bark and whine and forget that they are housetrained and defecate or urinate in the house out of stress. But you can take steps to make it better for your dog.

It might be a new dog in your home who doesn't want you to leave, something may have happened while you were out (loud noises outside your home – like construction), a change in routine or the loss of a family member (human or canine).

What you can do....

When you come and go: it's no big deal. Don't look deep into his eyes and say 'goodbye' or fuss over him. Just get ready to leave and then go. The same applies upon your return home. Don't rush through the door to tell him how much you missed him. Go over to the door and let him out to potty. Then pet and tell him you love him.

Practice the 'cues of your leaving' the house. Pick up your keys, or your purse, and put them down during the day to desensitize your dog. Put on your coat and take it off during the day.

I suggest you crate him if your dog is already familiar with a crate and views it as a safe place to reduce the chances of him getting hurt in his panic, and to preserve your home. Do not force a dog into a crate.

*A crate should be a safe place in your dog's mind. This only works if you don't use it for punishment. Place the crate in a happy familiar place like the family room or kitchen.

*Make it comfortable with some safe toys for him (like a Kong filled and frozen with peanut butter mixed with yogurt).

*Place an article of your unwashed previously worn clothing in for him to smell your scent.

Play music specific for calming dogs like: Through a Dog's Ear or RelaxMyDog (found on Utube.com).

Exercise your dog, if you can, before you go. Walk or throw a ball to tire him out.

Use Adaptil, available as a wall plug in, spray, or collar. The plug in is very inexpensive and lasts a long time. It contains synthetic Dog Appeasing Pheromone, or D.A.P., a pheromone in

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mother dog's milk. It has a very clamming effect on both adult dogs as well as puppies relieving stress, fear, and anxiety.

For severe cases, consult with your veterinarian or one who specializes in separation anxiety. You may not have to medicate your dog forever. A good drug for SA should not be a sedative, but an anxiety reduction drug.

Ignore any bad behavior while you were out. Never, ever, punish your dog when you come home and find a mess. This can increase your dog's fears while you are away because your dog won't know why you are punishing him anyway. Dogs live in the moment. If punishment or praise doesn't happen the second the act occurs, your dog will not make a connection between them.

Baby steps. When you first leave your dog, don't go out for a few hours. Start with a few minutes, gradually extending the time you are gone.

<http://www.adaptil.com/>

<http://throughadogsear.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OHEB41yRdU>

