

## AMERICAN DOG TRAINERS NETWORK

# SEPARATION ANXIETY



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## What is Separation Anxiety?

### Causes or Contributors of Separation Anxiety

- Fear of abandonment caused by prior re-homing. Second-hand dogs, dogs adopted from animal shelters, and rescued strays, are particularly prone to develop separation anxiety problems.
- Changing one's daily routine, from where the dog spends most of its day with the owner, to where he spends most of his day alone.
- Change in dog owner's work schedule or daily routine.
- Moving to a new home, and/or other major changes in environment.



## Typical Symptoms of Separation Anxiety

When people experience stress or anxiety they often attempt to relieve this stress by chewing their nails, chain smoking, drinking alcohol, etc. Dogs have similar stress-relieving behaviors which typically include one or more of the following:

- Vocalizing (barking, whining, screeching, and/or howling)
- Destructive Chewing (ie: Furniture, pillows, owner's underwear, TV remote control)
- This is often exasserbated by insufficient outdoor exercise (see tips below)
- Eliminating (urinating and/or defecating) in the house within a short time (between 5 to 60 minutes) of owner's leaving home without dog. (In some severe cases, diarrhea may occur.) This is often a separation anxiety issue not a housebreaking issue
- Obsessively following owner from room to room
- Acute alertness to owner's every move
- Vigorously attempting to escape enclosure (crate, room, or apartment)
- Excessive drooling or panting when left alone, particularly when enclosed in a crate or small area
- Self-mutilation, caused by excessive chewing or licking of the paws or tail
- Any other obvious signs of distress that occurs whenever owner leaves dog

Separation anxiety is often exasperated by insufficient outdoor exercise (see tips below).

After-the-fact discipline is NOT recommended for housoiling (or anything else)!

## Preventing Separation Anxiety

Get your puppy used to being alone for brief -- then gradually longer -- periods of time. Don't reinforce your dog's neediness for constant attention, particularly when your dog attempts to get attention by whining, barking, jumping on you or pawing. Give attention and affection for good behavior.

## Remedies for Separation Anxiety











- Give your (fully inoculated) dog plenty of outdoor exercise and stimulation. **BACKYARD EXERCISE IS NOT ENOUGH!** Constructive outlets for your dog's natural energies, such as leash walks, puppy laydates, agility or obedience training, fetching a ball, romps in the park or local dog run (if your dog is friendly with other dogs) are all good ways to tire your dog out, which will help reduce your dog's stress, destructiveness and hyperactivity.
- Keep both farewells and return greetings very low-key, even to the extent that you ignore your dog for 10+ minutes before leaving and 3-5 minutes upon arrival. Offer low-key greeting once your dog settles down. This reduces the emotional roller-coaster many dogs experience when their owners come and go. After all, if you kiss, hug and say sad goodbyes every time you leave your dog, then celebrate your reunion at the door each time you return, the void of being alone without you will make things that much harder for your dog to be without you.
- Don't reward barking, whining, jumping, pawing or hysterical behavior with any attention, affection or interaction (not even eye-contact). Reward calm, quiet, and non-dependent behavior with low-key praise and attention.
- Temporarily reduce affection for 2-3 weeks, saving the majority of your affection for when your dog complies with a command.
- If you spend all day petting, pampering, fanning, and peeling grapes for your dog, then your dog will have a lot to adjust to every time you leave him.
- If things don't begin to improve relatively soon, please contact qualified animal behaviorist.
- Homeopathic remedies may be helpful (as recommended by your vet or

behaviorist).

- In severe cases of separation anxiety, in conjunction with behavior modification, psychotropic medication (such as Clomicalm) may be recommended by your vet or behaviorist.

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