



Separation Anxiety in Dogs

WHAT IS SEPARATION ANXIETY?

Separation anxiety in dogs is a behavior disorder characterized by anxiety and distress when a dog is away from their pet parent. The condition typically occurs when a pet parent leaves, and it often includes excessive excitement, clingy behavior, and restlessness upon the pet parent's return.

COMMON SIGNS OF SEPARATION ANXIETY

- Excessive Barking (especially when leaving and returning home)
- Pacing
- Jumping on you or others
- Mouthing/Biting on people, clothing, leash, etc.
- Urinating or defecating in the house only when alone
- Destructive chewing
- Different vocalizations (whining, howling, screeching)
- Excessive drooling
- Panting
- Cowering/hiding
- Repetitive behaviors
- Stress induced vomiting/diarrhea

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP DECREASE SEPARATION ANXIETY?

- Never punish separation anxiety behaviors.
- Always leave and return calm. Excessive touching, talking, and quick moving can over-stimulate a dog, leading to more anxiety and frustration.
- Use a crate, kennel, play pen, or smaller areas of the house. Many dogs settle quicker and feel safer in smaller environments. Crate training info can be provided.
- Let your dog outside for a potty break before leaving to ensure they have a chance to eliminate fully. This can help take away those sensations of needing to go before you leave rather than causing them more discomfort while you are gone.
- Burn some energy! Play, fetch, dog puzzles, or quick training sessions are great ways to get your dog tired and ready to rest when you leave.
- Create shorter separations regularly by getting the mail, coffee, or going for a short walk while your dog stays at home.
- Limit some access to you when you are home. Your dog does not need to accompany you in the restroom, have a full free range of the house right away, or sleep in your bed. By allowing total access, they can't understand the difference between a few minutes in another room and when you are leaving for a workday. Baby gates, kennel time, or spending time with another member of the house are good ways to get little separation in your everyday life. As your dog starts to settle in more and remain calm when you leave, limit the barriers and begin giving more access to the home overall.

- Try calming products like plug in Adaptil (DAP) diffusers, calming collars, rescue remedy and thunder jackets to help take a little edge off. The diffusers are my favorite!
- Talk with your Veterinarian for more extreme separation anxiety that doesn't improve with these tips. Some dogs require medical intervention for anxiety.
- **Be patient.** Changes will not happen overnight. Your dog loves you and feels safe with you. This can be extremely hard for them to understand at first, especially with a recent rescue dog.

Note: Remember that not every dog is the same. Some methods work really well for some and not another. This is a very generalized approach to curving separation anxiety. I recommend trying a few options and if they are not showing success for you and your dog, please reach out to our training and behavioral team below for more support.

QUESTIONS?

Contact the HSSW Dog Training Team at dogtraining@southwesthumane.org or visit hssw.org/training.