

Anxiety & Calming

For dogs that get anxious and have trouble keeping calm, this seminar covers how to spot signs of anxiety, provide a calming environment and reduce stress with techniques such as exercise and massage.

Did You Know?

Sometimes the loudest, most urgent messages from dogs can be the hardest for pet parents to read.

- Your dog speaks using her/his whole body
- Do you know what it means when your dog yawns and turns away his head?
- What if your dog freezes and offers a direct stare?
- What if your dog offers the slightest lip lift, showing teeth?

In the scenario outlined above, your dog is “yelling” louder and louder for help. Your dog is anxious/stressed and may react if you do not step in and redirect the situation.

When a dog draws back its weight on its hind legs, it may be feeling fearful and anxious. It will pull its ears back closer to its head and may hang its tail down between the rear legs. The dog may also lick his lips/yawn/turn away its head in a nervous gesture.

Always be your dog’s best advocate!

Observe your dog’s body language and manage the environment- if you need to increase space or change the environment, do so!

There are different techniques we can employ to help our dogs be calm and comfortable, when we are with them and when they are left alone.

Mental Simulation and Physical Exercise are some of the most important factors

- Provide yummy food stuffed toys
- Play soft and calming music in the background (classical is best)
- Use food dispensing toy: Add your dog’s daily food in the toy, and encourage your dog to move it around to “get to” the food inside (great tip for a rainy day!). This is great mental stimulation (kind of like a crossword puzzle for humans).

Several type of products that may help decrease anxiety

1. Thunder shirts
2. Diffusers and sprays with D.A.P (Dog Appeasing Hormone)
3. Kong Toys
4. Puzzle Toys
5. Chews: Deer/Elk Antlers, Bully Sticks, Himalayan chews
6. Crate Training, Baby Gates, Boundary training
7. Soft Music: Pet Tunes for calming anxiety, Classical Music
8. Television Shows (hearing the human voice sometimes calms dogs when alone)
9. Essential Oils: (Lavender, chamomile, etc...)
10. Calming Supplement (such as Quiet Moments)

It is important to find the right balance for both mental stimulation and the physical exercise needs of dogs. Some tips are:

- Adjusting intense physical exercise to more of a conditioning and maintenance level is a way to start finding balance. A good rule of thumb is 15-20 minutes of structured play two times per day.

- Examples of structured play include earning ball-playing time, hunting for food or puzzle/toys stuffed with treats in the house or yard, and a variety of hide and seek of treat or parent games.
- Brisk walking/light jogging supplemented by mental exercise, such as training or the use of treat filled toys/puzzles, is another good combination.

You can also help your dog settle down by working on a “Settle Down” behavior.

- Set your dog and yourself up for success by creating a “quiet area”, indoor with minimal amounts of sound, smell, or activity.
- Place your dog’s bed or blanket on the floor in front of where you are sitting.
- Call your dog and reward him for coming by slowly stroking his chest in big circles while you are softly telling him what a good dog he is.
- Keep stoking the slow big circles on the chest area and on the ears, as long as he remains calm.
- If your dog is not settling down, get up and leave the area, come back and try again in a few minutes.
- As your dog settles down, softly tell him “settle” as this cue will be associated with this calm behavior.

Massaging your dog is beneficial in more ways than one. Massage increases and maintains flexibility and range of motion; all while they settle down and remain calm while you are busy pampering them.

- Massage weekly.
- While at home, try gently massaging your dog’s muscles. Your dog can be standing, sitting, or lying down.
- Gently rub and smooth your fingertips through the coat.
- Use long and slow massage stroke, traveling from the head to the chest and down the legs to their paws.
- If your dog is sensitive in a specific area, avoid it and inform your vet.
- This should be a quiet time for you and your dog; a soothing 15 minute massage is a nice bonding time and will help your dog relax.

Want to learn more?

- **Stress in Dogs, by Martha Scholz & Clarissa von Reinhardt**
- The most well-behaved dogs sleep or rest 17 or more hours per day. If your dog does not get enough of both sleep and rest, consider finding more ways to help your dog recuperate his body daily.
- On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals, by Turid Rugaas
- Norwegian dog trainer and behaviorist Turid Rugaas has made it her life work to study canine social interaction. She coined the phrase calming signals to describe the social skills, sometimes referred to as body language that dogs use to avoid conflict, invite play, and communicate a wide range of information to other dogs.
- www.throughadogsear.com Soft calming music and data reference
- <http://www.ttouch.com> Linda Tellington -Jones website of TTouch with reference materials, videos and newsletter