



DOGGIE DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY
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OVERCOMING SEPARATION ANXIETY

Sometimes dogs have a problem with being alone and like to let the owners know about it. Here are some guidelines to help you overcome this problem and have the dog be happy and safe in the crate or in the home.

1. Make sure the dog is healthy by having him checked by a vet. Medical issues can cause stress in a dog which can contribute to separation anxiety.
2. First don't make a big deal of leaving. Creating excitement can be great fun for the dog but when you leave, he wonders what happened to his playmate and can whine or bark. Put the dog in the crate at least 15 minutes prior to leaving or if you don't put him in the crate, ignore him and leave. When you come home, don't give the dog any attention until he is calm and quiet (this includes before you let him out of the crate). Then you can give him attention and reward him for offering the correct behavior.
3. Give the dog something to do in the crate. Some dogs get bored when alone even when there is another dog with them. Nylabones and Rhino toys are an excellent choice to occupy a dog when have to be alone. Nylabones are a hard nylon and a safe chewing toy which can also help keep the dog's teeth clean. Soaking these in beef or chicken broth can make them even more desirable by your dog. Rhino toys are perfect for keeping a dog occupied. They are designed so the owner can hide treats, peanut butter, or even liver paste in them so the dog has to work to get it out. The Rhino is made of a natural rubber that will not break off in large chunks causing a choking hazard. Only give the toy when in the crate or when leaving so the dog can get a positive association out of being left by himself.
4. Practice leaving your dog alone. Start with putting him in the crate (or leaving him alone) and leaving the room or house for a few minutes. He may cry in the beginning but don't reward him unless he is quiet. Gradually build up the amount of time as he becomes successful with being quiet. If he consistently still cries then drop down the amount of time until you can successfully leave the room with him being quiet. Do this at random times throughout the day when you are home. Be patient and consistent and you will gradually see the problem disappear.
5. Increasing the dog's exercise and play can help to curtail a separation anxiety problem. Take the dog on a walk, work some obedience cues, or play a game with your dog prior to leaving. This will help tire him out and he will be more apt to rest while you are gone.

6. Are you the pack leader of your dog? Dogs that rule the household can sometimes put up a fuss when you leave because they feel like it was your decision to leave instead of theirs. If this appears to be contributing to the problem, contact us for a list of Leadership Exercises to aid in the owners establishing themselves as pack leaders.
7. Examine your dog's environment when he is left alone. Something might be stressing him out or scaring him. Observe his reactions when you are home to common sounds when it is quiet in the house or to certain objects. Remove any objects from his sight that make him uncomfortable and consider leaving a radio on in the background.

One important point to make when treating this problem, if the dog destroys or damages something in the home while you are gone, do not punish the dog. Dogs cannot relate to past events if they are being punished for something they did (they live in the now). For example, if you call him over or go to him to punish him for destroying the carpet, he would think he is being punished for you calling him or with you walking up to him. You risk developing an additional bad behavior that can lead to aggression. Work with and train the dog and set him up to succeed as much as possible and you will be your separation anxiety problem disappear.

If there is a point you are frustrated and are considering re-homing or taking the dog to the shelter or rescue, consider a citronella collar. This collar sprays a bad smelling mist when the dog barks or whines while he is wearing the collar. This collar should be used last resort and only temporary when you need the dog not to bark or whine while away or other occasions where it is necessary. Also, you can consult with your vet about various medications to help your dog with this problem. Again this is a last resort as no one likes to have a medicated dog and some medications can take several days or weeks to become effective. Neither of these options should be considered a permanent treatment but as a temporary solution to prevent the dog from losing his home. Start a training plan immediately to teach him that being left alone is okay and safe then gradually wean him off of to where he doesn't need a citronella collar, or medication, or anything.

I hope these guidelines help you to overcome your problem of separation anxiety. If you have any questions or concerns or if you need clarification of any of the treatments listed, please feel free to contact us at 815-566-5893, email us at info@ddacademy.com, or visit our website at www.ddacademy.com