

Separation Anxiety

**You're Not Alone : An Empathetic
Guide to a Complex Condition**



WELCOME

Sleepless nights, constant pacing, anxiety, and that's just you! Having a dog with separation anxiety is heartbreaking. It feels like you are alone and have little to no help.

It is estimated that 20%-40% of dogs experience some sort of separation anxiety during their lifetime, yet it's a topic that very few trainers address beyond obedience. Your dog's ability to sit has little to no impact on how they FEEL about being left alone.

Separation anxiety is also one of the leading causes of dogs being surrendered. Problem behaviors such as destruction and barking are symptoms of this disorder. Like any mental health condition, it can take a lot of time to get to the root of the problem. Separation anxiety puts a mental strain on everyone who is a caregiver for that dog.

You are not alone. In this ebook I will offer an empathetic approach to a very difficult but common topic.

WHY MY DOG?

The truth is a lot of trainers do try to put it on the owner that separation anxiety is created. I tend to believe separation anxiety is genetic, and some breeds are just more prone to developing it than others. I think that combined with how we live with these dogs, is just a recipe for disaster.

It is not anything you did; you probably lived with your dog the same way you have lived with other dogs, and it isn't a problem til it's a problem.

Sadly, this is one of the most challenging things in dog ownership and takes a lot of time to manage. It may never be fixed. This manual was created to be easy to read and help you think about the way you LIVE with your dog and how that could be contributing to an existing disorder

One thing I tell my clients to ask themselves is. "would you date your dog?" Let's not make this weird, but is this personality type something you would like in a partner? No? Well, let's help them feel better about life and not so co-dependent.

LET'S FIRST FIGURE OUT WHAT TYPE OF SEPARATION ANXIETY YOUR DOG HAS.

Primary caregiver absence:

Is the dog only anxious when their primary human is away?

Isolation Distress:

It doesn't matter who is around or who leaves it doesn't necessarily have to be the primary caregiver.

Symptoms of Separation Anxiety:

- Lack of the ability to rest
- Pacing
- Panting
- Vomiting
- Defecation/Urination
- Destruction (Be careful with this one as it could be a sign that the dog is lacking fulfillment if other signs are not present)
- Trembling
- Howling or barking (But there are many dogs who are suffering and make little to no noise at all)

Now that we have established that we do have a disorder going on let's dive into what I do when I am working with a separation anxiety case.

PREDICTABILITY AND A SCHEDULE

You need to make a deal with your dog. You will stick to a very predictable schedule for a while. Write it down, and make a Google calendar. Whatever it might be to help you stay consistent.

My schedule for separation anxiety varies a bit, but generally, other than sleeping at night, I don't have the dogs in the crate for more than 2 hours, which I start to extend out in 15-minute increments.

I know, I know that isn't feasible for people who work out of the house, so we are going to do the best we can to work with your schedule. (see fulfillment section).



PREDICTABILITY AND A SCHEDULE

Dinner time should be consistent, Breakfast time, and walks too. You get the picture.

If you train with me, one of my homework assignments is to send me a sample schedule of what an average day will look like when your dog comes home from a retreat, both a work day and an at-home or off day.

Truth is, after a training program some people think they will suddenly walk 50 miles a day. This reminds me of every time I joined a gym and planned to be there five days a week.

Slow down and don't overdo it.

Good dog training is boring, and separation anxiety treatment is emotionally draining. So create a schedule that is doable.

Be realistic.

I am more impressed by people who send me schedules I know they can stick to vs. ones I know will leave them feeling like they failed.

ALONE TIME WHILE YOU ARE HOME

Wait, crate while we are home? Yes... it's a thing that is often overlooked. I get it! You've worked ten hours and just want to be with your dog. You are already feeling super guilty.

First, stop that!

You are working hard to give your dog a fantastic life. I am going to tell you some ways to add crate time into being home without it feeling so daunting.

Meal time: Add 30 minutes to the tail end of the meal.

While you eat dinner: Add 30 minutes during your meal.

While you shower: Add 30 minutes while you shower.

While you write an ebook on separation anxiety, oh wait, that's me!



ALONE TIME WHILE YOU ARE HOME

Your dog also needs that downtime like kids need naps and breaks. Your dog mustn't be associating their crate with you leaving them.

It does not make it a big deal. Just find ways to add it in. The most important thing is not to let your dog out while they are whining.

Trust me, it is one of my most disliked sounds on earth, I would rather listen to five people loudly chewing but you do not want your dog to think that you come running when things are perceived as wrong.

I do not say much; I keep about what I am doing. If they are crated in a different room, I make appearances showing that I am still home and back out again. I don't tip toe around the issue.

Once you've established it's about 15 minutes, slowly increase the duration.

Keep a close eye on the clock and try and get ahead of those anxious moments.

PLACE WORK

This is where your dog needs to be when out of the crate. It is unsuitable for their state of mind to be right on top of you, following you around the house, couch, or bed.

You all know my feelings about sleeping with dogs; I LOVE MY DOGS WITH ME!

However, the type of codependency and anxiety your dog experiences is contributing to this anxiety that is causing so much stress.

“Would you date your dog?” the answer is likely no.



WHEN CAN WE START SNUDDLING AGAIN?

Well, some people can have one glass of champagne and never overindulge. There are others who can't have it at all. We have to determine if that's a level of affection that is contributing to your problem.

The only way to know is to fall off the wagon, metaphorically speaking, and see what happens. I have some dogs who have had no fallout once we addressed their issues and can lay on the couch and be fine; for others, we saw regression.

I would try it once you have multiple weeks in a row of no issues with the crate/confinement.

That brings me right into →

CRATE OR NOT? DOES MY DOG HAVE TO BE IN A CRATE?

Well, that depends! Dogs are crated in my home for safety. If you train with me, I have told you the cautionary tales, but if your dog is not destructive, I am flexible to confinement in a space: bathroom, office, dog room, or kitchen.

The key words are **IF** the dog is not hurting themselves. My biggest thing with this is, **IF** your dog is also suffering from reactivity, I don't like dogs to have access to pace, peak out the window, and bark since those behaviors lend to fostering reactive moments outside the home. However, if your dog is not reactive, I am okay with being flexible here.

WHERE DO WE PUT OUR CRATE?

Wherever you can. I don't like the crates in my room. When I am training for separation anxiety, I have headphones I sleep with and a fan going on high. I need a good night's sleep to be at my best for the dog, and you do too.

COVER THE CRATE?

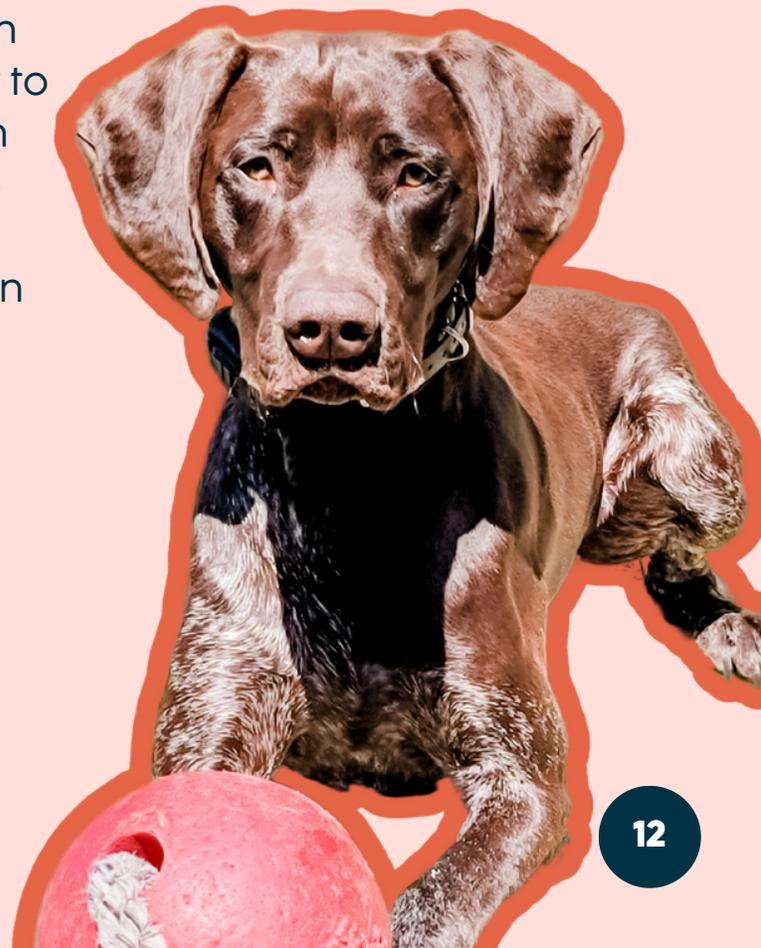
Depending on the dog, some do better with their vision limited others do better seeing what's going on. A lot of this is trial and error. The same goes for background music. Some dogs love it, and for others, it is an issue.

ENRICHMENT

Toppls, kongs, bones, toys???? I am all for all these things, but I want you to give them while you are home before giving them when you leave. This is where I want you to be a bit mysterious and unpredictable.

If your dog only gets these fantastic things when you leave, they will associate it with you leaving, meaning you just cued the dog of your evil plot to sneak out the door while they are nose-deep in their peanut butter kong, which, by the way, they will lose all interest once they finish and they hear that door shut.

Also, do not offer those items freely in the house. Pick all that up and limit it to the crate. I like to keep toys for when you are outside interacting with one another. That way, the toys feel exclusive and are more enticing than being freely available all the time.



SAYING GOODBYE

**Stop. Just leave. Make it a no big deal. Just go.
Same when you come back. Make it a nonissue.**

EXTINGUISHING RITUALISTIC CUES

We are creatures of habit. I get ready to leave, and grab my Stanley cup... well I grab two “hydrate and caffeinate!” I pre-start my car to warm up and gather my jacket and bags.

As I am doing this, the dogs realize I am leaving... well actually, not in my house because I randomly do this throughout the day to de-ritualize my leaving the house. I don't even use the same door. I will go out the garage, the slider, and the front door to mix it up.

This is when you can be a person of mystery.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET HOME

You can take care of yourself first. Put your stuff down and take a breath. If you've been working a long shift, I would let the dog out and have them go to the place. Hold off on lots of love and excited pets...

Wait, hold up, Tiff, you told us we could say hi to our dog, that it's weird not to...

Well ya, it can totally be weird to withhold affection, but your dog is likely already making a huge deal that you are home. Love them through activity. Grab a leash and walk, do some leash work in the house, practice some down stays, get their brain working, or go outside and play fetch or work with the flirt pole.

Let's channel that anxious energy into something positive.

USE OF DOG CAMERAS

I use them, absolutely, but do not talk through them. That tends to freak the dogs out. You can look in to see how they are doing and use it to dispense treats for good behavior, but talking through them tends to freak them out.

WHERE ARE YOU AND WHY CAN'T I GET TO YOU!!!!



FULFILLMENT

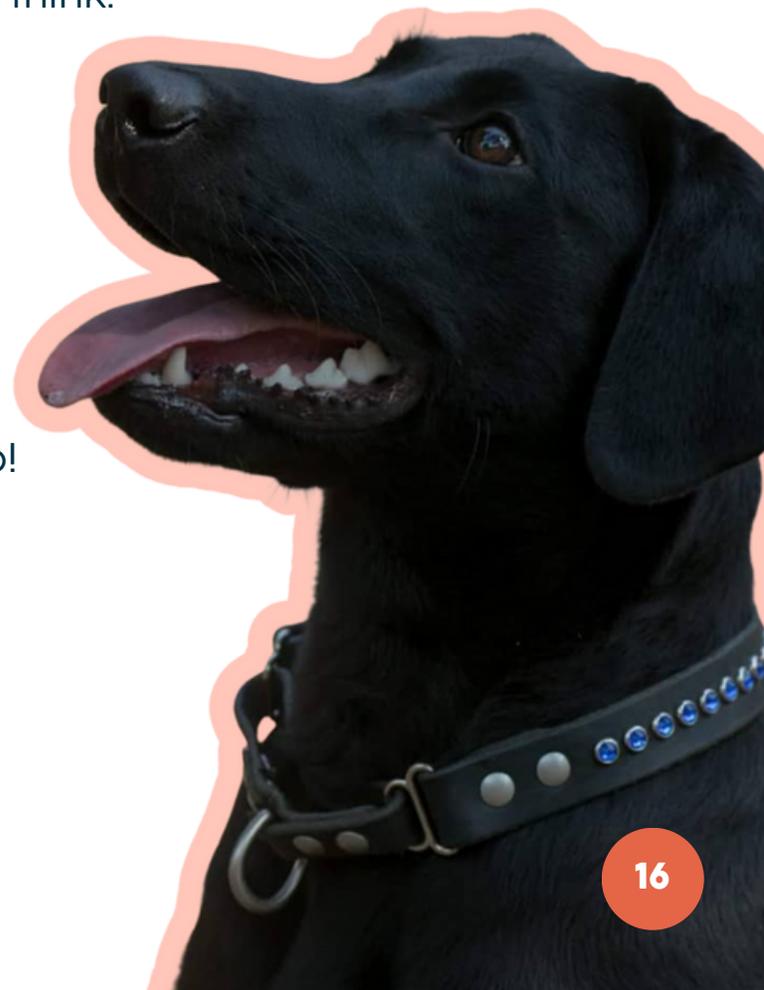
What does it take to fulfill your dog physically? Is my dog tired mentally and physically? Did I do this in the right way?

In addition to a nice structured walk, I might go throw a toy and play fetch (bonus points if you tell your dog to sit or down before throwing it), or I take out a flirt pole to fulfill a dog's desire to chase, possess, and flush.

If you have access to a treadmill, this is another way you can physically fulfill your dog. It is a lot harder for them to be on a treadmill than to run and chase dogs in a park. They have to match the pace of the treadmill and think.

I will not lie; treadmills are not my favorite way to work my dogs, but it is an option on those off days. I would instead connect by doing leash work or playing intensely with my dog.

Remember the power of sniffing, too! That can be as fulfilling for some dogs as a walk.



AVERSIVES

Bark collars are not my favorite tools, but I have families facing eviction, and while working on this problem, we have to manage the noise. However, this can make the issue ten times worse if you are genuinely dealing with anxiety. My advice is not to use them.

MEDICATION

I am absolutely okay with you seeking help from a medical professional to help ease this anxiety, but it needs to be paired with a training plan.

you!

The most crucial person is reading this.

Separation Anxiety is exhausting to work on, and it's important you get out of the house and do something for yourself without your dog.

It is easy to build up resentments or feel frustrated. Taking it out on the dog will only worsen your relationship.

If you have to take a break, take it. As long as your dog's needs have been met and they are in a safe space, you have my permission to leave the house and breathe.

I hope this ebook helped a little bit in offering some insight into a complicated affliction.

For more information or additional help, please feel free to book a virtual coaching session with me by clicking the button below.

[**Book Your Virtual Coaching Session**](#)

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Do you have additional questions?

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