



How to be an Anxiety Ally

Caring for a dog with separation anxiety takes a village. Dog walkers, pet sitters, trainers, and behavior consultants are integral members of that village.

Here's how you can help...



Understand what separation anxiety is.

Dogs suffering from separation anxiety are experiencing a genuine phobia about being alone. They are truly terrified of alone time, and the behaviors they display are involuntary, which is why common advice dispensed to “let them bark it out” will not fix the issue. This also means this behavior issue is not the guardian’s fault; they did not cause it, nor did you or anyone else offering support.



Know the most commonly observed signs of separation anxiety.

Many dogs will display one or more of these behaviors when home alone: periods of vocalization, uncontrollable urinating or defecating, destruction of furniture, walls, windows, doors, or flooring, pacing, panting, and drooling. Please keep in mind the appearance of severity (or lack of severity) of an anxiety indicator does not necessarily reflect the level of panic the dog is experiencing.



Recognize that more exercise will not cure separation anxiety.

One common misconception is that tiring out dogs struggling with separation anxiety will help them relax when home alone. Mental and physical exercise is excellent for dogs, but being exhausted is not what will fix separation anxiety. We are not advocating for less exercise than any dog typically gets or needs. Exercise is important to a dog’s well-being; however, it won’t “fix” a dog’s fear of alone time.



Be aware that crating the dog will not “fix” the issue.

Most dogs with separation anxiety do much better without being crated. While most of us have learned about the importance of crate training, the problem with this as a “solution” for a dog’s separation anxiety is that the behavior is a manifestation of panic. Crating dogs who are panicking can actually make it much worse for many dogs.



Support guardians in managing absences.

One requirement of helping a dog with separation anxiety is not exposing them to any scary alone time. Having a trusted dog professional to be with their dog while at work or a doctor’s appointment is one of the best gifts you can offer a guardian. Please remember, it’s important not to leave the dog home alone while in your care, even for something seemingly small like a running to your car for more treats.



Let guardians know separation anxiety is treatable!

Just like any fear, phobia, or anxiety issue, there are positive treatments that can make a difference. If you or guardians you know and/or work with would like support from a separation anxiety specialist, our team is here to help – you are not alone!



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