



### STEPS TO AVOID SEPARATION ANXIETY

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When some dogs are left alone they become very stressed and unsettled. This can easily progress to actions such as destruction, barking, defecating and howling, which can result in a dog which can not be left alone for any period of time, and unfortunately can lead to euthanasia.

If your dog has started to show signs of stress when you are not there, or you have a puppy that you wish to train to cope alone, these are some guidance points. If however, your dog is already showing advanced separation anxiety, you will need to contact a behaviorist or a vet with behaviorist training as you will need to embark on a complete program, possibly along with the use of behavior altering drugs.

The most important thing is not to allow your dog to become dependant on you for its security. He will need to be secure in his place within the family pack, and have a safe place of his own. It is worthwhile considering the use of a **cage** or **puppy pen**. This can be made less daunting for him when you leave him by training him to use it while he is not alone. Another security for him is your presence in the form of smell, so before you intend to go out wear an old T shirt or jumper for a while, then just before you leave, take it off and put it into his nest.

1. Do not allow your dog to sleep with you in the bedroom or sit with you on furniture. Encourage him to move away from you.

The reason; To allow this reinforces his dependency on constant contact with his owner.

2. Do not respond to attention seeking behavior, ie licking, pawing or barking. Give any affection on your own initiative.

The reason; If your dog can gain your attention whenever he wants to when you are at home, he may be unable to cope when you are not there to respond.

3. Get your dog used to being shut in another room some of the time whilst you are at home.

The reason; This helps to reduce his dependency upon you, and provides another level somewhere between together and alone.

4. Be very matter of fact and even distant when going out, and coming home.

The reason; If you fuss your dog just before leaving him, it will make your absence much more noticed. Too much fuss on returning highlights your absence.

5. Provide appropriate items to chew before going out. Remove them when you return home.

The reason; One of the commonest anxiety induced behavior is chewing. By providing a suitable item you will accommodate this and remove the probability of him chewing something inappropriate. Removing the items helps to retain their novelty value.

6. Never punish your dog when you return.

The reason; Almost all destructive or soiling behavior occurs within a very short time of the isolation. When you return later he will not associate your harsh words with his previous actions. He will then become anxious about your arrival as well as your departure.

7. Gradually build up the time you leave your dog alone.

The reason; Your dog will cope with short times alone. Once he feels confident during those times he will then cope with longer and longer periods.

Finally NEVER LEAVE YOUR DOG ALONE FOR UNREASONABLE PERIODS OF TIME.

