



THE DOGGY DIGEST

TRAINING TIPS BROUGHT TO YOU BY MUTTS WITH MANNERS

Home Alone: Separation Anxiety and Our Canine Friends

By Trelle Dandridge

You just adopted this really amazing dog, and you even took a week off of work to assist him in his post shelter decompression. You are sure you are doing everything right. You read so many books to prepare for bringing Fido home. You decide to put Fido in his crate and head to the grocery store for a few items you will need through out the next week, because of course, you have to go back to work.

You come home with your arms full of groceries to find Fido greeting you at the front door. He is manic. He is whining, yelping and barking. He is panting like he just ran a marathon, and your house is a total wreck. Your couch cushions are turned upside down, everything is off of the coffee table, there are blood stains on the corners (or what used to be the corners of the window sill, the crate is destroyed, and he has even urinated in several areas in the house.

Raise your hand (or paw) if you know what I am talking about.

Most of us have either had a dog with varying degrees of Separation Distress Behaviors or know someone who has. Correct diagnosis is imperative before embarking on a behavior modification program. For example, just because your dog is having accidents in his crate doesn't mean he has SA. However, if Fido is able to hold it all night, and when you are home, but is soiling his crate, this could be a sign of SA. If your neighbors are texting you every day complaining about Fido's vocalizing, it isn't necessarily a sign of SA either. Perhaps he is howling because of sirens from an ambulance, or the mail man dropping mail in the mail box.

Labeling people and animals without all of the information isn't fair, and it can cause more damage later on down the road. If you suspect SA in your dog, try setting up some cameras or an audio recorder to find answers to some of these potential symptoms.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ISOLATION DISTRESS SYNDROME AND SEPARATION ANXIETY?

There are many different forms of Separation Distress Behaviors including separation anxiety, and the lesser form of this, Isolation Distress Syndrome. Either of these behaviors can be difficult to navigate with your dog, and can leave the human feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. Going unresolved can lead Fido and his humans down a path of sadness and sometimes even euthanasia.

Both IDS and SA are variations of Separation Distress Behavior that causes a dog to panic when left alone.

Dogs with IDS are generally fine as long as they have any human with them, and sometimes a companion animal is even suitable to reduce the behavior symptoms. Dogs with SA are generally not able to be soothed or comforted by any person or companion animal, the behavior is usually targeted towards a specific person or even bonded animal from a young age.



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WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF SEPARATION ANXIETY?

If all behavior has a function, what would the purpose of separation anxiety be? Especially to the extremes that some dogs experience it?

It can appear as an illogical behavior at first but, Separation anxiety is a survival behavior. It makes sense that puppies in the wild would want to stay close to mom, for protection, to learn how to hunt, and for other social benefits.

When a pup gets too far away from mom, he cries and whines, which allows mom to find him again, inadvertently reinforcing the separation anxiety behavior.

It really says a lot to our domestic canine's adaptability that we are able to get most of them comfortable with confinement and separation while we have to be away at work. Over the last 50 years, our home dynamics have changed a lot as well. Moms are less likely to stay at home with the children leaving Fido home alone more often, while the parents are working, and the kids are in school.

Signs and Symptoms of Separation Anxiety

- Destructive behavior, especially around door frames, window sills and walls.
- Urination or defecation out of fear (when otherwise potty trained)
- Excessive Vocalizing - Whining, howling, barking, when other triggers for vocalizing are not present.
- Will not eat or drink while alone (including enrichment items)
- Cannot be crated or otherwise confined because they will break out with disregard of injury to themselves to attempt to find their humans
- Excessive salivating and panting while distressed

HOW TO HELP YOUR ANXIOUS FIDO

Exercise

Exercise Fido before you leave. A tired dog really is a good dog, and a less anxious dog. I definitely feel better and less anxious after I have had a good workout. The same goes for Fido. Take him for a nice long walk, or play a great game of fetch 30 to 45 minutes before you have to leave. This will give him some time to relax and settle before you have to go to work.

Provide Fido with enrichment 5 to 10 minutes before you leave

We don't like to think of Fido as a captive animal, but he is. He relies on us to meet all of his needs, biologically, socially, psychologically, and physically,



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Mental stimulation is important to Fido's psychological wellbeing. Providing him with a stuffed Kong can give him something positive to engage with while you are leaving your home. Dogs with full blown separation anxiety will need to learn how to engage with the enrichment you provide him when you are gone. Make sure to add this in to his day, most importantly when you are home. The last thing we want Fido to do is to associate this great enrichment with you leaving. Instead, focus on giving him various forms of Kongs and other enrichment and puzzle feeders when you are home, so you have more options when you are gone. This also allows you to supervise him while he engages with the enrichment items to make sure they are safe for him to be left alone with.

Calm exits and relaxed returns

It is so easy to fall in to the trap of greeting your dog when you return home, and giving him a heart felt good by complete with all of the hugs and kisses and promises of your return before you leave. This does not set Fido up for success. Especially if it has been determined that he does have IDS or SA. It is the hardest thing to do, but walking out and essentially ignoring Fido when you leave will help him realize over time that you leaving and returning isn't a big deal. When you return, wait for Fido to calm down before you talk to him or pet him. Speak calmly to him and pet him softly. This isn't the time for rowdy petting or going straight into a game of fetch.

Desensitize Fido to your leaving and returning rituals

Fido would make a great anthropologist! Dogs are amazing at reading and learning our behavior patterns. Make sure to begin desensitizing Fido to your departure cues. Departure cues are those patterns of behavior humans do ritualistically every day before we leave to go to work. WE also have a set of departure cues before we take Fido on a walk, or to the beach. Put your work uniform on while you cook dinner, play with your keys while you are talking on the phone, put your purse or back pack next to you while you watch TV, eat breakfast after your shower instead of before, and put your briefcase in your car the night before. Mix up your day with all of the little rituals you have around getting ready and leaving the house. We want these little signals to become non-events in your dog's life.

I have had 3 dogs with varying forms of isolation distress and separation anxiety. IDS and SA dogs are extremely observant and learn your routines quickly. Keep them guessing and don't lose heart. This is an important step to the entire process. Fido will get through this faster and you guys can get on with your lives.

Crate Training

Most of the time attempting to crate train a dog with SA is not successful. The confinement makes the anxiety worse and the dog more fearful. We do understand that sometimes to keep your dog, means he will have to learn to be confined in a crate. If you have to crate Fido due to his level of destruction when you have to leave, there are several crates that are 'escape proof'. I have had clients have great success with The Empire Crate, and other brands of crates marketed to the dog with separation anxiety.



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However, the special crate is not enough. If you suspect your dog has separation anxiety, or isolation distress syndrome, be very patient in the behavior modification process, and use a lot of positive reinforcement while teaching Fido to endure confinement. We take it for granted when we adopt a dog who crate trains easily, but it isn't a natural behavior for dogs, and it can leave them feeling fearful. Dogs who are experiencing Separation Distress Behaviors can feel even more terrified when having to endure confinement in their human's absence.

Don't hesitate to hire a positive reinforcement dog trainer with experience in dogs with separation anxiety to help coach you and your family on how to train this correctly, the first time. Lastly, some dogs with separation anxiety do better free in the house instead of being crated. Two of my dogs could not be crated.

Adaptil Products, CBD and other natural Remedies

There are many products on the market that are natural and fairly easy to obtain. Research these products thoroughly before using them on your dog. Find a professional in your area who specializes in homeopathic remedies, or has the knowledge of CBD to advise you on how to implement them into Fido's routine, and be okay if natural remedies aren't enough for managing Fido's anxiety. Most importantly, SPEAK TO YOUR VETERINARIAN before using any of these products to make sure they are right for Fido.

With saying all of the above, this section will outline several products you can research to see if any of them help take the edge off of Fido's SA or IDS.

- Adaptil Products (www.adaptil.com)
 - Mother dogs communicate with their puppies through Dog Appeasing Pheromones. These are calming messages that sooth the puppies and help them feel safe and relaxed. These pheromones cannot be detected by humans, and humans aren't affected by them either. You can choose between an air diffuser, a collar, travel spray for your car or their dog bed, or my favorite, all three. These products are especially effective for puppies who have recently been weened, but can help dogs of all ages.
- Richards Organics Pet Calm www.chewy.com
 - This is a liquid that is administered from a dropper directly to your pet's mouth. It smells awful, but dogs seem to love it. It is good for assisting with anxiety and short-term stress. You would use it with your dog before a stressful event like a vet visit, impending storm, travel or grooming. Key ingredients are valerian root, skull cap chamomile and passion flower.
- CBD
 - Be very selective when trying to choose a CBD brand. Not all of them are created equal. Always look for brands that are water-soluble, post their labs for third party testing, and utilize nanotechnology to make it more bio-available. When a product is bio-available, it means better absorption, which means you need less milligrams per bottle and saves money in the long run. I have been using a brand called CBD American Shaman for my dogs since 2018. It doesn't just help with taking the edge off with anxiety, but it is an excellent anti-inflammatory also. If you are interested in researching more about CBD, and want to learn more about this brand, please use the franchise we recommend. They are a small company and will ship for free if you give them a call. The Store number is (479) 372-6552. If you already know your order and prefer to text it, that number is (479) 270-3204. Tell Bill and Kari we said 'hello'!



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- Rescue Remedy Stress Relief Pet Supplement www.chewy.com
 - This is an easy to use, homeopathic remedy that is alcohol free. (There is a human version that has alcohol for better absorption.) The ingredients are made up of five flowers, Star of Bethlehem, Rock Rose, Cherry Plum, Impatiens, and Clematis. It can also help Alleviate stress and anxiety.
- Melatonin, L-theanine and ashwagandha www.chewy.com
 - Search these terms on Chewy and you will get many options on pet calm products. One of my favorites is made by the company Zesty Paws. I give my dogs one of these at night before bedtime. They love the taste; it freshens their breath and helps them relax for a good night's sleep.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CALL IN AN ANIMAL BEHAVIORIST?

Sometimes behavior modification just isn't enough. Like people, some dogs really need medication to help them over this anxiety hump and to allow the behavior modification program to actually work.

This is okay, and it doesn't mean that Fido will need the medication forever. Some dogs just need it for a little while, and others need it periodically for specific events in their lives, like the 4th of July, or New Year's Eve for the noise anxious dog.

Your veterinarian can prescribe these medications, but the benefit of going to an animal behaviorist is that they are also a veterinarian. They specialize in behavior related issues with animals, and not just the medical side.

Most animal behaviorists will address your dog medically, if needed, and then send you home with some homework. This homework will probably include practicing the medications with Fido to see what works best for him, and then recommending a BMod program and referring you out to a positive reinforcement dog trainer in your area.

Resolving IDS and SA doesn't happen overnight. Reach out to family members or friends to help keep Fido company if you need to return back to work. Try a half a day of day care at a well ran doggy day care facility, and if you need to, get professional help either through a board-certified animal behaviorist, or a positive reinforcement dog trainer with experience in separation anxiety in dogs.

Keep it pawsitive!
www.muttswithmanners.com

Additional book recommendations:

- "Don't Leave Me" by Nicole Wilde
- "I'll Be Home Soon" by Dr. Patricia McConnell