

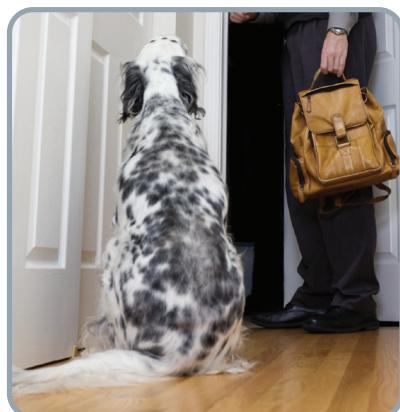
Isolation Distress

Fear of Being Alone

Your dog may react to being left alone a little, by whining and barking, or a lot, by destroying furniture and walls. You will know that it is isolation distress rather than separation anxiety when the solution is for someone, anyone, to be with the dog. Even the presence of a stranger may stop the destructive behavior. You can manage this behavior by finding a sitter, arranging for the dog to spend time with a friend, or possibly with just the company of another dog. To teach him to be okay spending time alone, start by leaving him alone for short periods and build up gradually. Start by leaving the room for ten seconds, then twenty, and so on. The dog must be comfortable and calm when you are gone before you increase the time. You are teaching him that you will always be coming back. You can practice this exercise several times per day for ten to fifteen minutes.



Your dog may be anxious long before you walk out the door because of all the routine things you do getting ready to leave. First, identify the things that trigger anxiety about your departure and teach your dog to ignore them. This will help to keep him calm while you practice the exercise above.



Pick up keys several times during the day and don't leave. This will teach your dog he doesn't need to fear the sight and sound of your keys. Go through your whole routine and don't leave: Open/close the garage door; turn lights, TV, and music off and on; walk out the door and walk right back in.



After you have successfully extended time away to ten or fifteen minutes, give your dog food puzzles with treats to work on whenever you leave. Before too long, your dog will be happy to see you go because he will associate it with great treats and a puzzle to solve.

Written by: Lynne Stott, CPDT-KA

