

## **What to do to prevent the start of Separation Anxiety (SA)**

This is some basic information of what to do and what not to do when you first add a new dog to your family.

The first major DO NOT is over fuss the dog or spoil it. I know that it's so hard not to BUT you need the dog to find its own feet around the house and settle happily without becoming too dependent on yourself. Basically, for the first few days become hands off, if you already have existing dogs let the new dog take the lead from them, after all you need them to slip into the pack and if you constantly reassure the new dog it's going to be bonding with you first and foremost and not them. They should see you as provider, the one who feeds, cares and walks, the other dogs should be companions first and foremost not you. Once the dog has settled into the pack happily \*then\* you can start to indulge it a little bit more.

Make sure the dog has a quiet place it can take itself off to over the first few days. A crate is usually a good idea set up in another room away from the hustle and bustle of the other dogs, the children, etc. Remember the dog is going to be confused at first and things will seem strange and overpowering, if the dog feels too much responsibility it will become overwhelmed and this could lead to behavior traits. The dog may choose not to take itself off and settle easily but if it does want time out and you have provided the bolt hole so to speak it will lead to happier settling.

If you don't have other dogs in the house then it is even more important to get the dog used to being given time out. If you don't do this and do it consistently you could end up with problems resulting in separation issues (this will be noted in a separate topic). From the very first day the dog arrives with you make it have time out on its own, during the course of everyday. Use the bolt hole tactic again and find one room with a smallish space (i.e. kitchen) provide a bed and feed the dog there also.

Top tip is probably DO NOT shut a door on the dog, greyhounds especially tend to freak when presented with a solid door, yes, these dogs have been kenneled during their racing lives but they can still see out, shut doors usually results in manic scratching, blind panic and damage. Use a dog gate from Argos £34.99 OR a baby gate hanging it off the floor around a foot. The dog gates are already higher than standard baby gates and you can also open them and walk through.

Start by placing the dog into the kitchen or safe area for as little as 1 minute (if the dog is already displaying problems when left) - if the dog does the minute without whining then open the gate, do not say a word and let the dog out (don't praise for being quiet you want the dog to think its normal and not what is expected) if the dog does all right with one minute try two up to five and so on and so forth. Do this literally on the hour every hour.

For dogs that aren't displaying problems start with five to ten minutes and continue pushing up the time. Remember consistency is the name of the game, don't get complacent or drop your guard - the dog needs to learn to have independence.

If the dog is already showing signs of stressing after as little as two minutes and starts to howl/whine/bark, ignore the behavior for a couple of minutes, it may subside. IF it doesn't then you are going to need to take things a little slower.

We sometimes have a dog put through these methods that does just fine all through the working week then the following Monday I receive a call from the owner to say that they have returned to work and the dog has struggled again. WHY?? Because the weekend they have spent the whole time once again with the dog. The first few weekends of new dog ownership need to be kept to the routine - time out during the day. If you have the dog settling with your work routine, make sure you still leave the dog alone for an hour or two morning and afternoon Saturday and

Sunday for the first few weeks.

I hope this helps to explain and although it may be tiring to begin with it will lead to a happier, healthier dog with a better relationship with the family and other members of the dog pack

### **Whoops! I didn't do what I was told so now we've got full blown SA!**

Now for the dog with fully blown SA. The most obvious answer is the dog is confused, stressed and his routine is shot. You need to start an intensive training programme NOW.

Start to think from your dog's point of view not your own, he/she doesn't understand why sometimes when you get up to leave, you put on your shoes, you pick up your car keys, and you place on your coat, he/she gets to come but other times you leave them behind! They don't understand you need to go to work, they think your life revolves around them and the park, and the truth of the matter is you have probably let them.

Follow the outlined steps on the You've got your new Hound Home thread and make sure that whilst at home your dog gets time out while you are in and around the house. You can't have your dog glued to your hip when you are in and then expect it to just accept you are out can you? Think about it sensibly.

SA training needs the use of a smaller, securer area, too big an open space can give the dog too much to think about and too much responsibility.

Things you need to deal with SA:

1 dog gate Argos £34.99

Rescue Remedy (chemist)

Dap Diffuser (vets)

Possibly a Pet Interactive Camera (selection on Amazon)

If the methods I explain don't work you may need to consider investing in a crate (I use SAVIC) for an initial training period. Some dogs really panic in a crate, so perhaps a smaller area is better, an item of your clothing also can be of comfort to them.

Once you have started to establish a routine whilst you are home and the dog has started to learn to stay in the safe area alone while you are home then you are already making progress. Be creative – sometimes leaving a radio on helps (something not too chaotic, maybe a talking channel), try them with some licky mats, kongs.

When you first start to leave a dog with SA even for five minutes there are things you need to do before leaving. Dogs' anxiety levels usually peak within the first twenty minutes of you leaving and any damage done is usually within this time. So, take the 20-minute peak out of the equation. Place the dog into the secure area 20 minutes before you leave, put on your shoes and coat, pick up your keys, you bag everything you would do as you are about to leave the house and then SIT DOWN!! Spend 20 minutes drinking a cup of tea, reading a book whatever. Then simply get up and leave without saying a word. It is no use telling the dog "It's okay I'm going now but I will be back." In dog language this translates to "come on then let's go for a walk." They don't understand simple!! Leave the house and hang around and listen!! If after 5 minutes you have no barking howling go back into the house, don't say a word, NO GREETING, hang up your coat, your bag, take off your shoes and still do not speak to the dog! By this time, if true to form he/she should be bouncing head height with you – fine, let them, make a cup of tea and ignore them. Then go and sit down, once the dog has given up and settled YOU can then call the dog over for a gentle fuss. Continue with the time out while you are in as well. Push the time you are out of the house after going through the shoes, coat, keys routine to ten minutes, then twenty, then thirty and upwards.

**If whilst you are listening outside the dog barks or whines DO NOT go back into the house whilst they are doing it, wait and listen to see if they settle down. If they settle, return calmly and make another cup of tea!**

**It may escalate. Again, wait and see. It is unfair to leave a dog in a highly stressed state. Their stress levels may well induce panic. So, take a deep breath or several and enter CALMLY and yes, you've guessed it, make another cup of tea! Remaining calm is so important as your dog has shown signs of stress so you certainly don't want them to be picking up on your stress as well. Perhaps you have moved too fast with the training. So, go back a step or two.**

What is the rescue remedy? The rescue remedy is a mixture of Bach flower remedies used to quell anxiety, it is used in humans as well as dogs, if you keep this up at times of stress it will help the dog settle.

What is the Dap Diffuser? A Dap is a plug in device much the same as the plug in air fresheners, only it releases appeasing pheromones similar to those a lactating bitch would release whilst feeding her puppies. It helps to give the dog a sense of security and calmness and helps them settle easily. The Dap should be plugged in and left running at all times in the training/secure area of the house that the dog is being left in.

The main results in SA dogs are maintained with consistency, do not think *oh okay, after three days he has been fine* – stick with the routine. This is something the whole family needs to keep up, children, in laws, dog walkers, whoever. Also, if you return home and the dog has soiled, damaged whatever DO NOT reprimand them and do not use the training/safe area as somewhere to place the dog for punishment! Not rocket science but they will no longer feel safe and secure there, plus they will have no idea what they have done wrong.

