



Teaching Separation **- The positive way**

This plan is designed as an introduction to separation work and should only be practiced along side the advice from a professional canine behavioural therapist .

Boundaries:

- Say hello to all humans before dogs, giving your dog time to calm down before talking or stroking after you've been away
- Turn your back if they jump when you enter, praising all 4 feet on floor when calm
- If your dog brings you a toy go and find your own and encourage them to play with you, not the other way around
- If your dog is rude and walks over you/lies on you, take your personal space back by pushing them off without using hands or voice
- If you ask your dog to do something ask them once, show them once and if they still decide to wait and think about it say 'oh dear' or 'whoops' and remove attention to make them work harder, better yet walk out of the room!

General serotonin boosters:

- A bone or good chew everyday - given after walks or a training session is ideal for them to relax
- Canine Massage/ Ttouch
- Kong/ Brain toys/ Rocking feeder for kibble

- Work! - Searching - Hide cheese in the house and garden and teach your dog to find it, or practice obedience or agility in the garden
- Serotonin diet - Regular meat meals + a carb meal (pasta, rice or potato) with a B6 Vitamin 30 mins after each meat meal – ask for more info.

Week 1 - In house separation

- Create a 'dog room'. Your dog lives, eats, sleeps and plays here, you shut the door when you come in or go out and your dog has no visual access to the front door.
- Place a value on each room. Your living room is an honorary room with extra special boundaries. Teach your dog when they enter to go straight to a bed or mat and do a down stay. This helps them learn not to attention seek while you are all relaxing and to enjoy time with you without being stuck to your leg. Any obvious attention seeking behavior means a 'whoops' time out back in the dog room - simply 'goal keep' them back out calmly.
- Get your dog sleeping downstairs - Create a bedtime routine eg, last wee's, rub down, beef chew + radio turned down, make yourself a drink, turn a light off, go to bed or relax in living room etc. Stick to it like glue, warn the neighbors for a few days, get some earplugs or a large whisky and you'll crack it in a week!
- General decrease in attention when in the room with your dog. Dogs are attention addicts and we are addicted to staring at them!! Start to notice the key triggers they've found that have turned your head. If you're not asking them to do something, or encouraging them to play with something, or giving them a relaxation massage you don't need to be absent minded gazing at them as it gives completely the wrong impression.
- A high tail carriage tells you a lot! If you see the tail high they are trying to wave at you with whatever they're doing, look at each other, look out the window, turn around or do something else until you see the tail lower as they concentrate on something other than you and begin to relax. Then praise! Then turn away again as they quickly re-focus on you.

- *Lather, rinse, repeat!*

Take your life back

Walk around the house with purpose, walking in and out of the dog room shutting the door each time you enter or exit, leaving them for no more than a few minutes or until they are quiet for 20 seconds. Do not look at, touch, or talk to the dog when you come back in. Just like with any desensitisation we need to work at the level the dog can handle before asking for more. Also try and spend as much time in the dog room after separation as you have done away from them, again busy with something and not giving the dog unnecessary attention. If your dog follows you around the dog room, stroll around in circles reading a newspaper or something until they realise you aren't going anywhere and lie down. Then Praise. Again repeat as any dog will get up to ask for more love.

Prepare to leave:

The first 20 mins are the worst for dogs when left, if they don't notice within this time they are much less likely to fuss later:

- Radio 4 or a Tv should be on quietly all the time so they cannot use this as a trigger and will be less sensitive to noises in the house
- Tired dogs will sleep! Take your dog for a good run in the morning if possible or do a clicker training session to burn some mental energy before leaving
- Leave things to do - Kongs, chews, empty toilet rolls with treats in, Boxes filled with newspaper and treats, parsnips or carrots or anything he can rip tear and chew while you're gone
- Don't let them know you're going just go. Especially don't use trigger words like 'see you later', 'back soon' or 'be a good boy?'

Building up separation is gradual and time scales are dependent on each dogs progress but here is a rough guide of the time steps we want to take. Build up leaving times like this:

Lots of walk-outs, come back as soon as the dog stops whining, scratching or barking - teach them this is what makes you come back, (or even better hearing them crunching on a pigs ear!)

5 mins x 6 throughout day + (2 mins x 10)

7 mins x 4 throughout day + (3 mins x 8)

10 mins x 4 throughout day + (5 mins x 4) + (2 mins x 4)

15 mins x 3 throughout day + (6 mins x 2) + (2 mins x 6)

20 mins x 2 throughout day + (8 mins x 3) + (4 mins x 5)

25 mins once during the day + (8 mins x 2) + (5 mins x 4)

30 mins once during the day + (10 mins x 1) + (5 mins x 2) + (2 mins x 5) etc

Simply put:

A few long leaves + some shorter leaves + lots of mini leaves

Do much shorter leaves just after longer ones so they don't notice the gentle increase in time alone, Take the 'Separation Chart' and using the example row, put the length of time you leave for in each box and the longest time left in the 'Daily Best' box. The Daily best then becomes your standard for the next day!

TIPS: Do the longest leave at the time of day you are likely to want to leave in the future. An end goal might being left for 3 hours in the afternoon and 2 hours in the evening so you can get your freedom back but to begin with have the longest separation in the afternoon, mini ones during the day and short ones in the evening. The more repetitions the quicker the dog will relax into your new regime. If the dog has serious issues with any stage just keep repeating this stage with lots of mini breaks until they can cope and relax.

Toilet trouble

Dogs who toilet as a response to separation are showing that their stress level is so high that they have very little choice about it. If you re-enter to an accident, **do not** scold the dog as they are already distressed and aren't trying to frustrate you. Scolding can even encourage toileting as a way to get you to come back in the future! Quietly put them outside or into another room while you clear it up then let them back in without fuss.

De-sentisisation to Triggers

If two people are home, practice re-entering the dog room when one of you is using a leaving trigger. Leaving triggers could be - putting on your coat or boots, picking up keys, opening and closing the front

door, lifting the handle, turning a key in the chubb lock, turning on the car, locking the back door etc there will be many more you will start to notice & incorporate in your de-sensitisation. As you move further along the program we would start to leave short gaps between the trigger sound and someone re-entering.

How do I know when its working??

- The length of barking and whining will decrease to shorter bouts
- You will re-enter to a dog that is already busy or even better, looking bored at your unpredictable comings and goings

Week 2

Build times according to your own dogs progress but try not to jump more than 15 mins at a time until they can be left quietly for over 90 mins.

35 mins once during the day + (10 mins x 2)+ (5 mins x 2) + (2 mins x 6)

45 mins once during the day + (15 mins x 1) + (5 mins x 4) + (1 min x 5)

Now we are increasing the alone time we need more short breaks than sustained longer breaks

50 mins once during the day + (10 mins x 1) + (3 mins x 6) + (2 mins x 6)

60 mins once during the day + (10 mins x 1) + (2 mins x 6) + (1 min x 6)

If you would like more information on any of the topics above don't hesitate to call or email us at:

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