



Separation Anxiety When You Return to Work
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"Life in 2020 was upended for both people and dogs. For us, it meant a lot of anxiety that's finally starting to ease. For our dogs, however, it meant a lot of extra time and attention — more walks, more playtime and more belly rubs as we binge-watched everything we could find ... twice.

So, as you begin shifting more of your time and attention to the outside world, make sure to watch your furry friend for signs of separation anxiety. It can be frustrating for both you and your dog, but there are things you can do to help.

What Is Separation Anxiety in Dogs?

Separation anxiety is a serious condition dogs can experience when separated from people they're bonded with. It's not clear why some dogs develop separation anxiety and others don't, but dogs who have to deal with it can become distressed just by recognizing that you're getting ready to leave. And once your best buddy is alone, their behavior can be pretty dramatic, ranging from household destruction to self-injury. Whatever you do, don't punish them for these actions — your dog is already confused by what's happening, and

punishments can worsen the situation."



Common Signs of Dog Separation Anxiety

- **Barking, howling and whining:** If your dog has separation anxiety, they might loudly bark or howl when left alone. It's possible you wouldn't know this is happening unless you have security cameras. Or irritated neighbors.
- **Chewing and scratching:** If you come home to find random destruction and a dog who's out-of-their-mind happy to see you, you can be fairly sure it's separation anxiety. This can result in harm not only to your home and possessions, but also to your pup in the form of damaged teeth and injured paws.
- **Urinating or defecating:** If your dog starts doing their business indoors once you start leaving the house more often, it's probably caused by separation anxiety.
- **Coprophagia:** If while you're away your dog defecates and then also eats their poop, this too is probably a case of separation anxiety.
- **Escape attempts:** If your furry friend tries to get out of their crate or room by attacking points of access such as doors and windows, the behavior can lead to self-injury in addition to household havoc.
- **Pacing:** Separation anxiety can cause some dogs to repeatedly walk or trot the same route when you're not home. This is another symptom you might not be aware of unless you have a way to remotely monitor their activity.



6 Ways to Ease Your Dog into a New Routine

To help counter the effects of separation anxiety, start prepping your pooch by easing them into your new schedule.

1. Go Part-time if Possible

You've been so lucky to have all this extra bonding time with your little pal. If you have the option to keep working from home a few days a week, this flexibility will help your dog get used to you being away more often.

2. Try Some Trial Runs

Leading up to your new work schedule, leave the house each day to run errands or take a walk, and slowly increase the time you're gone. If you wear certain clothes for work or carry specific items like a lunch box or laptop bag, bring them along. Give your dog a few tasty treats just before you leave so they associate a positive feeling with your departure. A food puzzle or food-dispensing toy can also keep them entertained for a while.

3. Normalize Other Daily Moments

Many of us tossed our “normal” schedules out the window in favor of more relaxed mornings or nontraditional working hours. If your dog’s schedule shifted along with yours during the past year, start easing them back so the change isn’t a shock when you return to work. And while it seems harsh, try not to engage in too much playtime during your soon-to-be workday hours. (OK, you can sneak in a few ear scratches.)

4. Make Your Home Feel Familiar

Think about what a given work-at-home day has been like for your dog. If you always had music or the television on, your pooch may benefit from the familiar “white noise.” If you had your workspace organized a certain way or had curtains open on specific windows, set it all the same way before you go. Overall, your goal is to temporarily mirror the everyday experience your dog is familiar with.



5. Restart Your Dog's Social Life

If going back to work means doggie daycare or a dog walker for your pup, ease them into it like everything else. Remember: Their social interaction was probably as limited as yours in 2020, so gently reintroduce them to other people and dogs. Before you go back, set up a few playdates with dogs of friends or family, and schedule some time at daycare and with your walker — don’t wait until you head to work and surprise your dog with new faces and places.

6. Reinforce Your Relationship

Our best buddies are remarkably resilient. If you notice mild symptoms of separation anxiety in your dog, don’t worry — often they can adjust quickly with your help. Spend as much extra time as you can sharing bonding moments with your four-legged friend — bring on the couch cuddles and fetch marathons! In particular, mealtime is a great opportunity to strengthen positive associations, especially when you’re indulging them with something as delicious as [CESAR® WHOLESOME BOWLS™](#).

Getting Professional Help For Your Dog's Separation Anxiety

Should your dog show signs of unusual behavior as your schedule changes, separation anxiety is the likely culprit. Your goal is to help your pal get used to being alone without experiencing fear or anxiety — but if your own efforts don’t succeed, you can get outside help for your furry friend.

Talk to your vet. They can definitively rule out any medical issues and may be able to recommend a trainer or behaviorist to help ease your dog’s anxiety. If your dog has severe separation anxiety or doesn’t respond well to training, your vet may prescribe anti-anxiety

medication, too.

We've all faced unique challenges in the last year or so, but one silver lining is all the quality time we've been able to share with our four-legged co-workers. Now that our work lives begin switching back closer to what they were before, let's be extra aware of how our routine changes affect our dogs and take every step possible to ease any anxiety they feel.

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