

# HELPING TO PREVENT SEPARATION ANXIETY IN OUR DOGS DURING COVID-19



## TIPS FOR ANXIETY

## COLD NOSES AND WARM HEARTS

### WAYS TO HELP YOUR DOG COPE

- Keep a daily routine that closely resembles the one you had in place prior to your stay-at-home orders (similar bedtime, similar shower time, etc.)
- Practice brief absences from the house so your dog continues to feel comfortable being alone (taking a walk around the neighborhood, reading in the car, hopping on your bicycle for a quick ride, pulling weeds in your flowerbeds)
- Incorporate daily mental enrichment for your dog to keep her brain active and engaged (puzzle toys, interactive feeding toys, hiding toys or kibble throughout the house for her to find)
- Gradually build the duration you're out of the house as you transition to a more normal workday (plan at least 1-2 weeks to slowly build time outside the house before heading back to work)
- Use a camera or free app on your phone to check in and see how your dog is handling your absences (observing her body language will give you helpful information about her comfort level while alone)

It's safe to say the current COVID-19 pandemic is a sudden and drastic change in all our lives and in our dogs' lives as well. For some dogs, this strange, new (hopefully temporary) way of life will be taken in stride the same way they adjust to most things. However, there will be many who experience stress, anxiety and even panic when their routines begin to shift back toward normal.

As a Certified Separation Anxiety Trainer (CSAT), I have found these changes can be especially challenging for dogs who have suffered from anxiety in the past.

The good news is there are ways to help your dog cope with these unprecedented times and thankfully they are all quite simple. (Please see box to the left.)

If your dog appears stressed during these brief practice absences, you'll want to back up a bit and shorten the amount of time you're outside. Ideally, you will return before she displays signs of distress (this could be under 1-2 minutes for some dogs). There are also a few products on the market which may reduce some of your dog's anxiety. Dog-appeasing pheromone (DAP), white noise, and nutraceuticals like Anxitane or Zylkene are all options to try, but please always check with your veterinarian first.

If your dog is still experiencing stress, anxiety and panic when you leave the house, it's time to consult your veterinarian, a veterinary behaviorist or a Certified Separation Anxiety Trainer to help your dog feel calm and relaxed again.

