Separation Anxiety Training Stages

Stages nine and ten: Leaving your dog alone

STAGE NINE: Front door:

ONLY start this stage once you have completed the previous stage and reached 30 minutes out of sight

Hang out with your dog for 20-30 seconds after each return.

Repeat each task and wait for your dog to be FULLY relaxed and calm before you try the next step.

- Put your dog's favourite goodies in the kitchen by or in her bed. Allow them in and let them get their food/toys
- Step nonchalantly out of the door, shut the door, pick up your keys, walk halfway to the front door then return
- Repeat, until you can walk all the way to the front door (but don't touch it) while carrying your keys
- Touch the front door (but not the handle) and return immediately
- Touch the door handle and return immediately
- Touch the handle and open the door a crack then return immediately
- Open the front door half way, close it, and return immediately
- Open the door all the way, close it and return immediately

By the end of this phase you should be able to open and close the front door 15-20 times over around 30 minutes without any reaction from your dog.

STAGE TEN: Practice, practice, practice

This final stage has two parts: a mix of daily sessions and longer sessions 3-4 times a week

Daily sessions:

Try to fit in one training session as below each day. Just leave your dog wherever they happen to be when you start – kitchen, your bed, living room – wherever.

Simply get up, don't say anything, then do one of the following (vary things):

- Go to front door and return to where you started
- Open front door, close it and return
- Go into another room, pause for between 3 and 20 seconds, and return
- Open front door, go out, come straight back in and return
- Open front door, go out, count to 5, come back in and return

When you return, just ignore your dog.

Do 10-20 brief absences in this way in each session, with only a few seconds between each trial.

Main sessions: 3-4 times each week

Move your car up the road out of sight of the house AT LEAST one hour prior to doing this training.

- Get ready to go out as you would usually do.

- Set up the camera(s) (if you have them), and put food/toys out by your dog's bed

- Don't say anything to your dog, just go out of the door.

Go to the car and sit and watch what your dog does on the camera/ phone.

Go back to the house several times (every 5-10 minutes or so), just going in and ignoring your dog initially – but pet them when they are calm and sitting. Just potter round or sit and read for between 1 and 5 minutes, then go back out again, saying nothing to your dog.

Do 5-10 returns using a random routine (see below) before going back to end the session. Review the recording when you return to make sure your dog did not become stressed.

Please note any stress signs your dog shows during these sessions – whining, barking, jumping for example, and also note how long they take to become fully relaxed again afterwards.

> *NOTE: If at any time you see your dog become stressed and upset, end the session and go back to them immediately.*

Going out and leaving your dog

Suggested Random Reward Regime with an average of around 13-15 minutes:

      5 minutes
      10 minutes
      5 minutes
      20 minutes
      10 minutes
      5 minutes
      15 minutes
      10 minutes
      20 minutes
      5 minutes
      20 minutes
      15 minutes
      25 minutes

Continue in this random way, gradually increasing the average time away up to 30 minutes.

Once you reach 30 minutes, you should be ready to increase by an average of 10 minutes at a time up to one hour.

Once the magic hour mark is reached it will be even easier to increase the time up to three hours.

And you'll have cured the problem.

Well done!