



Managing Separation Related Behaviours (SRB)

If your dog is living in a family, try to prevent him becoming over attached to one particular family member. Everyone should spend time with him and share responsibilities.

All dogs can react differently to separation. When your dog is left alone he may be showing one or more of the following behaviours.

- Constant barking / self-mutilation
- Destructive behaviour
- Urinating and/or soiling in the home

Your dog is stressed and anxious because he is missing you. He isn't deliberately being naughty. He doesn't understand why you're not there. He will try anything to get you back. He may try to escape in his desperate bid to find you.

Do NOT punish this behaviour. Remember it happened because you weren't there. All he wanted was for you to be with him so punishing him upon your return will only distress and confuse him further and it certainly won't help.

When you put your coat on he recognises this, he knows you are about to go out. Pick up his lead and, that's ok with him, he knows he is going with you. If you don't pick up his lead he knows he is going to be left and doesn't like it. His breathing and heart rate will increase. He may start to "get under your feet" as he becomes agitated.

There is no quick fix. It may take a number of weeks to stop this behaviour and get him to accept when you go out he can't always come with and that you will be coming back. You will need to be patient with him.

During the first couple of weeks when you get your dog, it's best if he is never left alone for any length of time. During this time you should be teaching him to accept you will leave the room and eventually the house and he will have to be alone but will accept it because he knows you are coming back.

Initially leave him for just a few seconds and slowly and gradually build up the time. He needs to feel relaxed when you leave the room and this will happen with patience on your part. In time he will accept that you will go to other rooms in the house and he won't always be allowed to come with you because you have taught him you will return and that's all he wants to know.

In a bid to stop his SRB, never shut him away in a kennel or closed room. He suffers with anxiety when alone so you will only make things worse for him.

It is so important to help your puppy/dog accept being left alone and not destroy your home. This may be quite simple. Try leaving him alone with a toy or dog chew for around 20 minutes at a time on a daily basis.

Why is he Destructive

This may be to do with a previous experience. It's not always the fault of the current owner. Did his previous owner live alone? He may cope better if there were another dog or even a friendly cat in the home. He may have become over attached to one person in a family.

Destructive behaviour can include persistent barking, self-mutilation, urinating and soiling in the house. These behaviours are a way the dog copes with the worry and anxiety caused by being left alone. It helps them to take their mind off the loneliness and can release Endorphins, "happy" hormones, which will make him feel better.

If your dog has a serious problem with separation he will start showing anxiety even before you have left the house, he'll see you getting your bag ready to leave in the mornings, picking up your keys, getting your coat. He will start to stress and could have a full blown panic attack the minute you leave the house. Most dogs will exhibit their destructive behaviour shortly after being left alone, generally within half an hour.

Remember punishment is not the answer and will only add to his anxious state making the problem worse. He isn't deliberately being naughty he's just trying to cope with his anxiety.

All these problems can be reduced with a patience and work from you, thereby making your relationship with your dog a much happier one.

While your dog is suffering separation anxieties it will make training difficult. You may need to take a 2 or 3 week period where he is with someone 24 hours a day.

During this time you can do his training. The more sessions of training the better and you should soon see quicker and better results.

Your dog needs to relax when you are around and not become anxious when you can't give him your full attention. He may follow you from one room to another and be watching every movement you make.



- Try to involve other members of the family in the care of your dog. He is less likely to become over dependent on you if other people are involved with him. You could ask friends or neighbours to help with dog sitting or dog walking. This will help your dog break his dependency on you.

Most importantly, do NOT punish him. He isn't deliberately being naughty he is just trying to cope with his anxiety the only way he knows.

In extreme cases of Destructive Behaviour and Separation Related Problems you may require help from a reputable behaviourist.