

Calming Your Anxious Dog

Observe your dog's behavior carefully to determine what stimuli create an anxious response. If you know what triggers your dog's reactions, you can avoid those triggers or work on desensitizing the reaction to the trigger. Stay aware of the following signs of anxiety:

- Tail down
- Crouching posture
- Trembling
- Sweaty paws
- Ears back
- Whites of eyes showing
- Tongue flicking
- Yawning
- Panting and /or drooling
- Refusing food
- Turning head away
- Restlessness, pacing – or unusually lethargic
- Freezing, slow movement (body tension)
- Shaking off or scratching, especially after physical contact

Here are some steps you can take to help your dog learn to be calmer.

- **Calm greetings and departures**
Certain events are particularly stimulating or stressful to most dogs, such as when you're preparing to go out somewhere or have just returned from an absence. You can make these events less stressful by keeping them calm and neutral. When you enter the house, ignore your dog and go about your business until he/she is behaving calmly, then give your dog attention, keeping it low intensity.
- **Avoid rewarding or punishing anxious or reactive behavior**
When your dog is showing signs of tension or fear, avoid the automatic response to pet your dog in an attempt to soothe him/her. Petting may inadvertently reinforce anxious behavior and stimulates the dog's nervous system at a time when they're



Additional Resources

Please contact our Behavior Team to speak with a skilled behavior specialist.

BehaviorTeam@spca.org

214-461-5169

www.spca.org/petuniversity

For dogs with extreme anxiety, medication prescribed by your veterinarian may be paired with the behavior modification.

already agitated.

At the same time, whenever you can avoid it, don't force the dog into situations that your dog will find threatening or traumatic, and don't scold or otherwise punish your dog for any fearful behavior – including defensive aggression. When you scold a fearful or defensive dog, you're just adding to the fear and defensiveness

- **Try various calming products**

Calming products help take the edge off the dog's anxiety or excitement, making it easier to work through the training and behavior modification routines. These work differently for different dogs, so you'll have to experiment to see if any work well for your dog.

- **Anxiety Shirts** -- This is the spandex vest that can help calm dogs by applying steady pressure (like swaddling a baby). Check them out on www.thundershirt.com or www.anxietywrap.com
- **Calming Cap** – Gentle Leader Calming Cap helps to ease a dogs anxiety during high stress situations., such as car rides, handling, grooming, anxiety. The cap helps to reduce visual stimuli and helps a dog to be more comfortable. www.premier.com
- **DAP** - Dog Appeasing Pheromone -- marketed as "Comfort Zone" or "Adaptil." This product simulates a pheromone from a nursing mother dog and can help calm your dog. Look for it online or ask your vet. It's a fairly expensive product, so try a small size first to see if it helps.
- **Flower Essences** – Herbal infusions – www.Spirit-in-Nature.com
- **Essential Oil** – Peace and Calming by Young Living. www.youngliving.com A drop can be put on your dogs' collar, blanket, toy or place a drop on towel and put in the dryer (the oil will permeate).
- **Herbal calming formulas** -- There are various remedies on the market. Do an online search of 'canine calming formula' for more information and places to purchase the products. These formulas are a combination of herbs such as passion flower, chamomile and vitamins.
- **Homeopathic formula Rescue Remedy**. This product can be purchased at health food stores, pet stores or do an online search for - Rescue Remedy for Dogs/Cats.
- **Massage**- There are different massage techniques to help a dog with behavior, physical ailments and healing. Check out www.ttouch.com or do an online search for "canine massage" for information and practitioners in your area.
- **Music - Through a Dog's Ear**. This is music put together by psychoacoustic expert Joshua Leeds and veterinary neurologist Susan Wagner. Check their website at www.throughadogsear.com This is the latest research on the effects of sound on a dog and the music that helps to calm them and a new series that works with helping your dog overcome sensitivity to specific noises or to prevent your dog/puppy becoming sensitive to certain sounds.