

How to Help Your Dog Avoid Separation Anxiety

STORY AT A GLANCE

Clingy dogs are typically **made** that way by humans, although certain breeds seem **predisposed** to clinginess.



While clinginess can be endearing, it can also be a problem. Especially when it has the potential to advance to full-blown **separation anxiety**.

Clingy dogs should be helped to become more **confident** and **independent** to prevent separation anxiety from taking hold.

Encourage independence your clingy dog by increasing **physical exercise** and **mental stimulation**, creating a special **dog-friendly space** and **desensitization**.

Give a try to **Bach remedies**, consult your practitioner and consider remedies such as Chicory, Heather, Rock Rose or White Chestnut.

More on www.bachremediesforanimals.com

Some people know how nice and charming, but at the same time, annoying or even dangerous it can be to have extremely bonded dog or animal in general. Let's speak about dogs here, but think later on about your own animal or animals in your surroundings.



Dog following you everywhere, constantly alert and watching you, paying attention to moves you make, where you go and how you speak. Should your dog's adoring look on its face be a sign of appreciation or rather worry for you? Should you already worry about your sweetly clingy dog developing separation anxiety and consequent emotional and behavioural problem?

Most clingy dogs are **MADE**, not **BORN**

According to veterinarian studies, clinginess often a learned behaviour. Needless to say, they learn it based on how we respond to them when they follow us about. If we reward them in some way (e.g., with a treat or a scratch behind the ears), the behaviour will very quickly become imprinted. If we give puppies constant

attention when they are still small and developing, they might easily become fearful of being alone.

Other reasons for clinginess can include the gradual loss of vision, hearing or cognition in older dogs, as well as illness or boredom in dogs of any age. Anxious dogs are often strongly sensing their human companions clingy, and can also become clingy when they sense anxiety or stress in them.

Some dog breeds are prone to clinginess. For example, lapdogs, like Shih Tzus, tend to be needy dogs. Also, working dogs, who are trained to be dependent, can become clingy.



Clinginess can progress to separation anxiety

While clingy dogs and those with separation anxiety share certain behavioural characteristics, the major difference between them is the way in which they handle being apart from their humans. Is your dog suffering from panic when left home alone?

Separation anxiety is what triggers panic attacks in affected dogs, causing them to engage in behaviours that can be destructive and self-harming. It's important to understand that dogs with true separation anxiety aren't "acting out" because their owners are away – they're feeling overwhelming panic they have no control over.

Unfortunately, clinginess can progress to separation anxiety in some dogs, so it's important to keep a close eye for any signs of nervousness or panic when left alone. If you suspect your dog's clingy behaviour is moving in the direction of separation anxiety, it's important to address the situation right away.

How to eliminate dog's clinginess and encourage independence

The best approach to managing the situation is to help the dog to build confidence and encourage their independence while you're at home with them, which will increase their ability to manage any anxiety they feel when you're away.



Increase your dog's daily exercise — Engage your dog in at least one rigorous exercise session daily. Intense exercise is very beneficial for not only anxiety, but boredom and behaviour problems as well. Good idea might be to go for a energetic exercise just before you leave the house. A tired dog gets into less physical and mental mischief when left alone.

Stimulate dog's mind — Keeping your dog's mind active is also critically important in preventing undesirable behaviours. Boredom is the breeding ground for all manner of “bad dog” behaviour. In addition to daily activities to engage the brain, your dog should be continuously socialized throughout whole life with frequent opportunities to interact with other dogs, cats, children and adults.



Regular training sessions, nose work are also a great way to keep her mind occupied and strengthen the bond you share with her. Dogs “lead by their noses” as they explore the world, so it’s very important to your pet’s mental health to allow doing lots of sniffing on at least one walk each day. „Nose work“ is a great way to keep her mentally stimulated. Even allowing your dog to have 10 minutes a day of sniff-time in a natural setting will enrich the senses and fulfil needs to experience the world through a nose. And don't overlook the value of treat-release and food puzzle toy. It's also a good idea to rotate your dog’s toys. If you leave all of them out in a big basket, she may lose interest in them quickly.

Create a special dog-friendly space — This can be a crate (with the door left open) or a corner of the room outfitted with a comfy, nontoxic dog bed and a favourite toys. Make sure in this dog-friendly space “all is good”. Avoid connecting your dog’s special place with any unpleasant feelings. Respect the privacy of your dog there and do not disturb.

Use positive reinforcement behaviour training to teach your dog to respond reliably to a verbal cue such as “Go to your crate,” or “Go to your special space,” and give him the cue when you notice he’s obsessing over your every move.

Desensitize your dog to your movements — If your dog is kind of clingy, it is acutely aware of the movements you make as you prepare to leave the house, such as putting on your “outside” shoes, pulling on a coat, grabbing your car keys, etc.

You might try to “normalize” these movements by performing them when you’re not planning to leave the house. Once these movements no longer signal to your dog that you’re leaving, the animal will pay less attention to them.

Use Bach flower therapy to ease the process – As one of the steps you might like to take is supporting your and animal’s effort with harmless and fully natural Bach flower remedies. Typically in case of clinginess and (pre)developed separation anxiety, you can look at the following remedies.



Chicory (*Chicorium intybus*) – Remedies clinginess, possessive behaviour and attention seeking. Restores normal protectiveness and caring. Chicory is typically

diagnosed for dogs seeking attention and not allowing any other to grab your time and interest. Chicory is also often successfully used for natural protectiveness being exaggerated.

Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) – Remedies loneliness and noisy attention seeking. Restores composure. Heather is typically recommended to animals craving attention, being noisy, obtrusive or destructive.

Rock Rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*) – Remedies extreme terror, panic and fear. Restores courage, bravery and calmness. Rock Rose might be considered as too strong in case your dog did not develop full separation anxiety and does not act as having a panic attacks and fears. We do mention the remedy here in order to demonstrate another level of treatment, targeting rather more serious and critical situations.

White Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) – Remedies preoccupation, sleeplessness and constant alert. Restores ability to rest. White Chestnut is an advisable remedy for situations often accompanying clinginess, such as obsessive behaviour (licking the skin, chewing the fur, persistent scratching, lashing of the tail etc.). Such behaviour might manifest as symptom of separation anxiety, fear, boredom etc.

Sources:

Dr. Karen Becker (Healthy Pet)

Dr. Joanna Pendergrass (PetMD)

Bach Flower Remedies for Animals (Helen Graham, Gregory Vlamis)