



SEPARATION DISTRESS / ANXIETY / HYPER-ATTACHMENT

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog has displayed separation anxiety / distress / hyper-attachment while in the shelter. This means that your dog may be more likely than others to display these concerns while in your home.

The Definition(s):

Hyper-Attachment vs. Distress vs. Anxiety

Another term for **hyper-attachment** is Velcro dog! You cannot move without tripping on your dog however the dog has little to no issue being left alone. This may be a precursor to separation anxiety.

Separation anxiety is a term which is often used loosely and incorrectly. **Separation distress** is what the majority of dogs truly experience while in the home. Distress often displays when the dog's personal exercise / stimulation needs have not been met before the owner leaves for the day. Signs of distress display through the dog destroying personal items, getting into mischief and or whining, barking etc. when left alone in the home but eventually settles.

Anxiety is displayed when the dog harms himself (and everything in his path) attempting to close social distance between he and the owner. The dog will attempt to 'dig through' all exits of the home, harming himself in the process. Separation anxiety requires a strong management plan while running a separation program.

The Plan:

Provide an environment where your dog feels satisfied, exercised, and relaxed.

The Practice:

- Do not make a big deal about your coming or leaving home, the more of an event we make it, the more of an event it will be.
- Implement / introduce a crate if appropriate for your dog. Please note; if your dog has never been introduced to a crate, this requires a slow introduction and training before leaving the dog in the crate for any length of time.
- Desensitize him to your departure routine. What does this mean? Several times a day (to the best of your ability) go through your entire predeparture routine (make coffee, make your lunch, go to the mailbox, "blow dry your hair", place your dog in their regular spot etc.), do everything you would normally do before leaving for the day up to grabbing your keys. Once you get to the door with your keys go to the door as if you were leaving, and then don't leave.

Georgian Triangle Humane Society

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Put your keys down, and go on with your day as you would in the house. This starts extinguishing your dog's anxious behaviour when he recognizes precursors to your leaving.

- Play classical music (the string instruments in particular) when you leave for the day, this provides stimulant control as well as a calm environment for your dog. Studies have proven that classical music decreases stress levels in a *shelter* environment up to 30%! Add this step to your predeparture routine.
- **If your dog is displaying true signs of separation *anxiety*** we strongly encourage you to seek additional assistance through GTHS staff and / or professional Dog Behaviour Consultants.

Support:

Our Behaviour Support Team can help to provide resources and tips if you experience concerns in the home environment. With your adoption the GTHS will provide an over the phone consultation in order to provide you with tips and resources to set your new dog up for success. In all cases of dog adoptions, the GTHS recommends hiring a professional dog training or behavioural consultant to ensure your relationship with your new dog starts off on the right paw! A list of local trainers is enclosed in your adoption package.

Our Behaviour Support Team can be reached at behaviour@gths.ca

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