

# Separation Anxiety

Beth Bradley

The term separation anxiety is used to describe a condition that manifests through a wide range of distress behaviors across a broad spectrum of intensities ranging from mild to catastrophic. Distress behaviors include, but are not limited to, vocalization, house soiling, extreme agitated activity, and destructive behavior, such as chewing or scratching.

Ultimately, the goal in addressing separation anxiety is to train your dog to feel comfortable in your absence. As with all training, improvement will be incremental. Initially, you will need to set easily achievable goals. Gradually, you can raise your expectations as your dog's confidence and independence grow. When your dog's anxiety is reduced, the behaviors caused by the anxiety will be minimized and possibly even eliminated altogether.

Reducing separation anxiety can be a very long process, and usually involves a combination of approaches. Because separation anxiety covers such a wide range of intensities and behaviors, there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution. Your dog's individual behavior and responses, as well as the severity of the anxiety, will determine which specific strategies are most appropriate and effective for strengthening his confidence and independence. In general, however, most dogs respond to some combination of strategies within three basic approaches: Distract, Desensitize, and Downplay Departure.

- **Distract** Provide toys and environmental elements to draw your dog's focus away from your departure and absence.
- **Desensitize** Over a period of time, practice exercises that will gradually make your dog less reactive to your departure and absence.
- **Downplay Departure** Make your departures and arrivals very low key. In fact, when possible, you should depart without your dog noticing at all.

### **Before You Begin. . .**

As you prepare to work on reducing your dog's anxiety, make sure you have two key tools in place: the down/stay command and a place your dog recognizes as his own.

**Teach the down/stay command.** If your dog does not know the down/stay command, teach him now. When you begin the desensitization process, you will make the stay gradually more challenging. However, in order to begin the process, your dog must at least understand what is expected with a down/stay.

**Give your dog a place of his own.** All dogs benefit from having a dedicated space of their own where they can relax and feel safe. For a dog with separation anxiety, a "safe haven" is vital to building his confidence and independence.

- Your dog's place should be a dedicated space for his crate and/or bed. It should be in a quiet corner of the house where he can be around the family without being underfoot. A corner gives your dog a sense of security, as he feels protected on at least two sides. A corner also ensures that your dog is not in the path of everyday household traffic.
- Ideally, choose a place with limited exposure to the sights and sounds outside the house. Stimuli such as loud trucks, neighbors' lawn mowers, and other dogs passing by can agitate your dog and increase his anxiety when he is alone.
- Your dog's place should not have a direct line of sight to the door you use to exit and enter the house. Minimizing your dog's awareness of your departures and arrivals is part of the plan for reducing his anxiety. If his place has a clear view of the door, it is unlikely you will be able to exit or enter without his noticing.

Once you have chosen your dog's "place," teach him to go to it and to use it. Use the same command, such as "bed" or "place" every time you tell him to go there. When you first introduce his place, have him go to it for every treat, toy, or bone you give him. If it is practical, you should also have him go to his place for feeding time. At first, you will need to lead him to his place while saying the command. However, if you are consistent in making his place the primary location for all his favorite things, then he will soon have positive associations with it. He will eagerly go to his place—both when you tell him to and when he just wants to rest, chew on a bone, or take a break from the action in the house.

Both the down/stay and going to his place are small but important steps in building your dog's confidence and independence. They are the foundation for being able to distract, desensitize, and downplay your departures.

## **Distract**

For a dog with a relatively low level of separation anxiety, distraction is sometimes sufficient to alleviate the problem. And although distraction alone cannot solve severe separation anxiety, it can mitigate your dog's anxiety, making desensitization and other strategies more effective.

**Toys** For a toy to be an effective distraction, it needs to be something you know your dog likes, but at the same time, it needs to be special enough that it will immediately engage him. Don't leave his "distraction" toys out and available all the time or they will lose their novelty. For example, if your dog loves to chew on his Nylabone, put it away for a while before you need to go out so that he will be excited to get it back when it reappears. Choose distraction toys with caution. Do not leave your dog with toys that can be torn apart and ingested in your absence. While this is a sensible precaution to take with all dogs, it is vital for dogs that suffer from anxiety, because their distress behaviors make them more likely to tear up a soft toy. For the same reason, toys that have squeaker units inside them can also be hazardous. The best toys for dogs with separation anxiety are those that are made specifically to be chewed safely, such as Nylabones.

**Treats** Bones, frozen treats, and Kongs stuffed with treats are excellent distractions because they allow your dog to release some of his anxiety through chewing and gnawing. In addition, they will keep your dog occupied and distracted for a significant length of time.

**Timed feeders** Feeders that dispense food or treats on a schedule allow you to provide a distraction at a specific point during your absence. With a timed feeder, you can provide a new distraction an hour or so into your absence, when your dog may have lost interest in the toy or bone you left with him.

**Hidden treats** If your dog loses interest in chewing his bone and starts to wonder where you are, he may start wandering from room to room looking for you. Because dogs have a keen sense of smell, when he enters a room with a treat, his focus will likely switch from "Where is everybody?" to "Where is that tasty treat I smell?" Don't hide the treats too well. You don't want to encourage your dog to be nosing under couch cushions—nosing cushions could trigger the urge to chew cushions!

Unfortunately, hidden treats have limited usefulness, as most dogs with separation anxiety need to be contained in some way. However, if your dog's distress behaviors are not destructive or dangerous, and you leave him loose in the house, hidden treats can be a valuable distraction. Hidden treats can also be an aid to preventing your dog from reverting to distress behaviors once you have conditioned him to be comfortable on his own.

**Sounds and smells** A blanket or piece of clothing that has your scent can subliminally reassure your dog because even though he cannot see you, he can still smell you. If your dog is likely to chew the item, leave it nearby but out of reach.

Keep a radio or television on, or play a movie or music on your computer. With a steady background of sounds or voices, your dog will not feel as isolated and alone. Choose a station such as a home and garden channel that is likely to maintain a steady volume and will not subject your dog to shouting or violent action scene noises. You want the sounds to soothe your dog, not agitate him.

Begin distraction before you even begin getting ready to leave. If your dog picks up on your imminent departure, his anxiety will begin to build. By the time you are actually walking out the door, his increased anxiety will make it difficult, if not impossible, to distract him from your actual departure. If you have a secure outdoor play area, let him go outside while you get ready to depart. If allowing him to go outside is not practical, keep him in another room (ideally the room where he has his “place”) while you get ready. Wherever he is, give him something to do. Give him a bone, a chew toy, or a Kong stuffed with some treats. A few minutes prior to your departure, give him some fresh toys and/or treats at his place. Do not give him a “stay” command, as you do not expect him to stay for the entire time of your absence. However, if you have conditioned him to have positive associations with his place, he should settle there calmly. Do not say good-bye or focus attention on leaving. Because his place is not in view of the door, you should be able to leave without him seeing you. It is important that your dog is occupied while you depart, and that the distractions you provide will keep him occupied until you are long gone.

Unfortunately, for many dogs, distraction alone is not sufficient to relieve separation anxiety entirely. However, distraction can still be a useful tool as you train your dog to tolerate periods of separation.

## **The Desensitization Process**

The basic process for desensitizing your dog to your departure and absence is to initially separate for only as far or as long as your dog can tolerate without anxiety and work up from there. The repetition and gradual increase of time apart will, over time, dull the intensity of his response to being separated from you.

Do the following exercises with your dog in order. Do a few repetitions per practice session, and have several practice sessions each day. Do not rush the process. Making sure your dog is comfortable at each stage is the key to permanent change. For each exercise, increase the time of separation gradually. You can expect to see some anxiety with each time increase. However, with repetition, your dog will eventually relax. Do not increase the time or move to the next exercise until he can complete the exercise without showing significant symptoms of anxiety. You will experience some plateaus and setbacks. Accept that the process will take time; be encouraged by even small signs of progress.

1. Put your dog in a down/stay in his place. Stay in the room, sitting at a distance. Make sure he is holding the down/stay, but give the impression you are ignoring him. Start with a down/stay of 30 seconds to a minute. Then, release him and calmly praise. If he breaks his down/stay, correct him and return him to his place. Practice until he can hold a down/stay for at least 10 minutes while you are sitting at a distance in the room.
2. Put your dog in a down/stay in his place. Move around the room, pretending to ignore your dog. Initially, he will probably be on high alert as he watches to see if you will leave the room. Eventually, he will relax. Calmly praise and reward your dog for holding the down/stay. If he does not hold the down/stay, correct him, return him to his place, and start again. Practice until your dog can reliably hold the down/stay for 10 minutes while you move around the room.
3. Put your dog in a down/stay in his place. Move around the room for a minute; then step out of the room but return after only a few seconds. Praise your dog calmly each time he holds the down/stay until you return. Gradually increase the time you are out of the room from seconds to minutes to half an hour. Once your dog has built enough confidence to hold a down/stay while you are out of the room, practice the down/stay often in the course of your daily activities around the house. Teach your dog to be relaxed in his place—independent from you--while you go about your business. Do not allow him to follow you from room to room. (He may sleep in your room at night, but he must sleep in his own bed.)

4. Condition your dog to be less responsive to the signals of your departure. (Although you will downplay your departures in real life, dogs can sometimes pick up on signals even when you are trying to hide them!) Do the things that you would normally do before leaving the house: Jingle your car keys; put on your coat; gather your things; walk to the door, but do not leave. Instead, just put everything away and settle into a chair. If your dog gets anxious during your preparations or demands attention when you sit down, ignore him. When he eventually settles down, praise him calmly and give him a treat or a toy. After a few minutes, start preparing to leave, but again, just settle into a chair. Repeat the entire routine until your dog stops showing anxiety during or immediately after your departure preparations.
5. Re-create your departure during a training session. When your dog is able to remain calm throughout your preparations, you can stage an actual departure. Go through your preparations. Then, leave the house, but return immediately. Sit down in a chair for a few minutes, then return to your normal activities. Repeat several times throughout the day. Gradually increase the time you spend outside the house from seconds to an increasing number of minutes until you can be outside the house for half an hour with your dog remaining calm. When you return, do not make a fuss. Simply return to your normal activities. Although in real life you will minimize your dog's awareness of your departures, this exercise reduces his anxiety by demonstrating that you reliably return after each departure.

Once your dog has become accustomed to periods of time when you are out of sight and out of reach, he should be less stressed when you leave. Nonetheless, you should still downplay your departure (and return!)

### **Downplay Your Departure**

Through desensitization, you have conditioned your dog to have a less anxious response to your departures and absences. Ideally, your dog should not even see you leave the house. While a stealth departure may not always be practical, you can improve the odds that he will not be as alert to your leaving by downplaying your departure. Do not spend time reassuring your dog that you will be back soon. Reassuring your dog will have the undesirable effect of calling attention to your departure and giving him the message that he has a reason to need reassurance. Your departure should be low-key and matter-of-fact.

The way you return to the house is as important as the way you leave it. Do not make a big fuss as if your return is some kind of unexpected miracle. Do not try to soothe your dog if he is barking and jumping. Responding to excited behavior is rewarding it. As difficult as it may be, ignore your dog for a few minutes while you remove your coat or move about the house. If necessary, put him in a down/stay to help him become calm. Then, take him outside to relieve himself. Departures and returns should be calm and uneventful. Neither your leaving nor your return should send the message that it was a big deal for your dog to be left alone.

### **Survival Strategies**

Overcoming separation anxiety takes time—often a long time. You are changing the very foundation of how your dog views his world, so you can't expect overnight success. Eventually, the training will reduce your dog's anxiety to the point where he can tolerate your absence without distress and the related distress behaviors. However, in the meantime, you still need to be able to leave your home without worrying that your dog will injure himself, tear the house apart, or aggravate the neighbors with ceaseless barking. The following strategies offer some options for minimizing your dog's stress and maximizing his safety while you work on reducing his anxiety with training.

**Containment** Dogs who relieve their anxiety through destructive distress behaviors are a danger to your belongings and to themselves. They can knock things over on themselves, chew things that can cut the inside of their mouths, chew electrical wires, eat things that are toxic or harmful, and bloody their own paws through excessive scratching. Most dogs with separation anxiety need to be contained for their own protection. The safest and best containment for most dogs is a crate. Crates not only keep your dog away from danger, they serve as a "den" that is his safe and secure place. If you train your dog to recognize his crate as "his place," he will find comfort in the containment of the crate.

You may be tempted to give your dog more space by using gates to contain him to a single room or area when he is left alone. More space will not reduce your dog's anxiety, but it will increase the number of hazards he can encounter and the destruction he can cause in his distress.

While there may be limited circumstances under which you may contain your dog in an outdoor area while you are out of the house, the risks generally outweigh the benefits. An anxious dog left alone in a fenced yard can, and (given enough time) *will* dig, jump, or climb out. In addition, any excessive barking and whining will be a nuisance to your neighbors, which may result in official complaints with official consequences. Finally, any dog left in an outdoor area while you are not at home is vulnerable to teasing, abuse, or even theft. Crating your dog is not a punishment. If you train your dog to recognize his crate as his safe place, he will feel secure in the containment of the crate.

Before leaving your dog in a crate for an extended period while you are out of the house, practice while you are at home. Observe how your dog reacts and determine whether there are any potential problems with the crate or your dog's response to it.

**Restraint** Unfortunately, crates are not an option for dogs that have barrier frustration in addition to their separation anxiety. For dogs with barrier frustration, a visible physical obstacle intensifies their negative responses to stimuli. Dogs that have both separation anxiety and barrier frustration will have heightened anxiety when they encounter the obstacle of a crate. They may relieve themselves, bark, become agitated, or obsessively struggle against the barrier. A trainer can help you determine whether you simply need to do more conditioning to accustom your dog to the crate or are dealing with actual barrier frustration. In the case of barrier frustration, it may be less stressful to restrain rather than contain.

You can restrain your dog with a two-foot, plastic-coated cable tie-down. This type of restraint ensures that your dog will not become tangled by the line or wrap the line around furniture or other obstacles. For anxious dogs, less freedom is actually safer and more reassuring than more freedom. You can purchase the components to make one at a hardware store.

### **Making a Tie-down Restraint**

#### **What you need**

- 2½ –3 feet plastic-coated cable
- 1 swivel eye-bolt snap clip (leash clip)
- 1 screw eye-bolt (Type and weight depend on the wall to which you attach the cable.)
- 2 U-bolt cable clips

#### **What to do**

1. Fasten the screw eye-bolt to a wall at a height that will permit your dog to lie down. (You will lose about 6 inches of cable length making the two end attachments.)
2. Use a U-bolt cable clip to attach the swivel eye-bolt snap clip to one end of the cable.
3. Using the other U-bolt cable clip, attach the other end of the cable to the screw eye-bolt in the wall.
4. Use the leash clip to attach the tie-down to your dog's prong training collar. When he pulls against the tie down, he will self-correct. Make sure you have given your dog sufficient training with the prong collar so that he understands that his action causes the correction. Do not use the prong collar until your dog has had sufficient training.



Restraint is not appropriate for every dog, especially dogs that might chew the walls. Before using the tie-down while you are out of the house, practice while you are at home so you can observe how your dog reacts. From a distance, observe to determine whether there are any potential problems with the restraint or your dog's response to it.

**Doggie Daycare** If your dog's anxiety is so severe that he is unsafe even when contained or restrained, you will need to leave him in a supervised setting until his confidence and independence improve. Leaving your dog in a well-managed doggie daycare can give you peace of mind while you are at work or taking care of other obligations outside the home. Because there are other people and dogs at daycare, he will start to feel more confidence when separated from you because he will not have the anxiety he feels when he is left totally alone.

Alternatively, you may have friends or relatives who can "dog-sit" during the training period. Whether you drop the dog off at someone's house or have someone come into your home, your dog is gaining experience with being separated from you without the full stress of being left totally alone.

Initially, I recommend that you utilize day care (or dog sitting) 5 days a week. Even if you don't *need* to leave your home, it is important to give your dog the opportunity to have positive experiences separate from you. Daycare and dog sitters are intermediate steps that can support the desensitization work you are doing with your dog. Additionally, the exercise and mental stimulation will tire your dog, which will make him calmer at home and less likely to follow you around!

Meanwhile, you can be training and working on desensitizing your dog to prepare him for being left alone in your house. As your training continues and your dog makes progress, you can gradually introduce some time when he is left alone. For example, whether your dog goes to daycare or stays with a friend, you can have someone bring your dog home and put him in his crate fifteen minutes before you get home. Your dog will soon recognize the positive association between being brought home to his crate and your imminent arrival. He will feel anticipation rather than anxiety. Gradually, you can increase the length of time he waits before your return. Eventually, you can incorporate days when he does not go to day care at all. As your dog's confidence and independence improve, you can determine the right balance between daycare and leaving your dog at home when you go out. For example, in the early stages, you may utilize day care or dog sitting on Mondays to ease the transition from having you home all weekend to spending time at home alone during the week. Make adjustments as needed to prevent your dog from regressing to his previous level of anxiety.

Even when your dog is able to tolerate time alone, he may still enjoy the companionship of other dogs or people. You may choose to continue with one or more days of day care or dog sitting. Any enjoyable time he spends apart from you will continue to reinforce his independence and confidence.

**Medication** Anti-anxiety drugs, anti-depressants or a combination of both have been found to be an effective complement to training when addressing separation anxiety. The medications treat some of the more severe physical manifestations of the anxiety so that the dog is able to benefit from the training. However, drugs alone will do little or nothing to permanently resolve separation anxiety. Medications can mitigate some of the symptoms, but a training program that builds your dog's confidence and independence is necessary to truly reduce or eliminate the anxiety itself.

**The Car** Many dogs are calm when left alone in the car. The lack of anxiety may be due to the fact that the times alone are usually very brief. Perhaps the environment of the car distracts the dogs from the owner's departure. For whatever reason, some dogs that are anxious when left alone at home are able to relax during a car ride and wait patiently—and calmly—when their owner leaves the car. If your dog is calm in the car, you may be able to take him with you when you need to leave the house. Obviously, this is only an option when the weather is appropriate, so its usefulness is limited to days that are not too cold or too hot.

Every summer, the news reports numerous tragic cases of dogs dying when left in hot cars for “just a little while.” In warm weather, the temperature inside the car can rise to more than 20 degrees higher than the outdoor temperature within ten minutes—even with the windows open. Because dogs' bodies do not have the same cooling mechanisms as humans, just a few minutes in an overheated car can cause organ damage and death. According to the ASPCA, dogs should not be left in the car when the outdoor temperature is above 70 degrees.

The guidelines for leaving a dog in a cold car are less clear-cut. Texas A&M University, Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences advises that for dogs that usually live indoors, prolonged exposure to temperatures below 45 degrees can be dangerous. However, various factors contribute to a dog's tolerance for cold—including breed, body mass, coat type, and how acclimated the dog is to cold weather. Although leaving a dog in a cold car generally does not have the swift and catastrophic consequences of leaving a dog in a hot car, you should still use your common sense and avoid extended periods of cold that would be uncomfortable or unhealthy for your dog.

Currently Arizona, California, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia all have laws prohibiting leaving a dog in a car in extreme heat or cold. Many local municipalities have their own laws as well.

All that being said, during the months when the weather is temperate, the car may be one of the options you can utilize while you work on training your dog to overcome his separation anxiety. Leaving him alone in the car for short periods may help build his tolerance for being separated from you, making him more confident when you begin working on leaving him home alone.

**Adding Another Dog** Dogs are pack animals. Often, it is simply the feeling of being alone that makes them anxious. Having the company of another dog could make your dog feel less isolated when you leave. However, solving your first dog's separation anxiety should not be the sole reason you bring a new dog into your home. You should be ready for the full responsibility of a new dog and you must be prepared to choose a particular kind of dog. In order for this strategy to work, you must choose a calm, well-trained, adult dog to provide companionship without introducing any additional bad habits. In contrast, a young untrained dog, no matter how cute and friendly, will only exacerbate the problem. An untrained dog will pick up cues from your current dog, rather than the other way around. The new dog will learn to be anxious. Then, you will have two minimally trained dogs suffering from separation anxiety.

You don't necessarily have to take on the responsibility of adding a dog to your household. You can have a friend or relative's dog visit during your absences. In the meantime, you can be working with your dog to build his independence so that being alone is not as stressful to him.

Whether you bring a dog permanently into your home or have a dog visit, you should supervise interactions before you leave the dogs home alone together. Create the illusion that you have left the house so that you can observe how the dogs behave together in your absence. Some dogs become more anxious if they are crated when the other dog is loose. Others find security in the crate and comfort in the presence of the other dog. As you watch how the dogs behave and interact, you can determine the best arrangement for maximizing the sense of comfort your anxious dog derives from the presence of the other dog. As with the other "survival strategies," if you continue working with` distraction, desensitization, and downplaying your departure, your dog should eventually not need a companion dog to live through your absences. However, he—and you--may enjoy having another dog in the "pack."

### **Trends and Technology**

When faced with a problem as seemingly intractable as separation anxiety, it is tempting to look for a quick fix. You will find numerous products marketed for treating or alleviating separation anxiety. While scientific research has led to some promising developments in this area, there is no evidence that any single product can solve the problem. Take any marketing claims with a grain of salt. Marketing materials that cite research studies are often referring to general research on a theory or idea, not tests on the specific product. The few studies that have been done on actual products are generally sponsored by the companies that produce the product. These inherently biased studies do not measure up to the standards of reliable scientific research. Before investing in any product, consider the cost, practicality, and return policy.

**Compression garments** Compression “shirts” for dogs are based on the work of famed animal behaviorist Temple Grandin. While her groundbreaking research did provide evidence that compression has a calming effect on many animals, no studies are provided on the efficacy of specific products that claim to utilize her research. In other words, it has been proven that compression does calm animals under certain stressful conditions. It has not been proven that any specific brand of dog garment provides the amount or type of compression necessary to reduce anxiety. The evidence on the commercially available compression garments for dogs is anecdotal. If you choose to try one of these garments, make sure you can get a refund if it is not effective for your dog.

**Video communication with treat dispenser** Technologies are now available that allow you to watch your pet, speak to him, and even dispense treats remotely. The more advanced (and more costly) versions theoretically allow your dog to see you via videoconference. Although the advertisements make it look as if you have a two-way communication going with your pet, only one of you can actually “see” the video as a video. Dogs need a much higher rate of “frames per seconds” than humans do to perceive motion on a video screen. Currently, videoconference images rarely transmit at the requisite “frames per second” for dogs to perceive movement. Consequently, your dog perceives the “video” on a videoconference as a series of still images. These tiny little pictures with no smell are meaningless to your dog and will bring him no comfort. Furthermore, the sound quality makes it unlikely that your dog will recognize your voice. Even if he does, it could possibly increase his anxiety that he can hear you but not find you. The only feature on these types of devices that your dog will appreciate is the treat dispenser, and you can achieve the same effect with a timed feeder. If your goal is to monitor your dog, there are other types and styles of monitors more suited to the task. If you are looking into this type of product as a way of alleviating separation anxiety, you are likely to be disappointed. The bottom line on these costly products is that they will give you more comfort than they give your dog.

**Pheromones** Several companies now market synthetic versions of pheromones designed to calm anxious dogs. Pheromones are not technically “scents” but they are inhaled and processed by an organ near the dog’s nasal passages. Commercially available synthetic pheromones mimic the pheromone that a mother dog releases when nursing, which calms and comforts her pups. Synthetic pheromones are available in collars, diffusers, and sprays. Although it has been proven that even adult dogs definitely respond to the actual pheromones, there is no reliable research proving that the synthetic imitations are as effective as the real thing. Furthermore, no tests have determined the optimal dosage and delivery. Overall, these products may reduce anxiety and make some dogs more receptive to training, but you will need to evaluate their effectiveness with your dog against the cost and practicality.

**Specially composed music** Some behaviorists and musicians have used the research on the calming effects of classical music to identify the specific combinations of chords and sound patterns that produce calming physiological changes in dogs. There are a wide variety of compositions available online, many for free. So although evidence on the effectiveness of these specifically composed pieces is anecdotal at best, these “dog-calming compositions” cost nothing to try as a complement to training.

Unfortunately, there is no “silver bullet” for separation anxiety. Be skeptical of products that promise amazing or immediate results. While some of these products may help *some* dogs, you can’t know for sure that any of them will help *your* dog. In the absence of reliable, independent studies on specific products, any investment is a gamble. And regardless of whether they live up to their claims, none can completely replace training.

### **Conclusion**

Resolving separation anxiety requires patience and persistence. Your goal is much deeper than simply changing your dog’s behavior. Ultimately, your goal is to develop your dog’s confidence and independence so that he does not feel anxious during your absence. Overcoming separation anxiety can be a very long and often complex process. You will need to utilize a variety of tools and techniques to keep your dog safe and secure until you have eliminated the anxiety itself. Each case is unique. Some dogs take longer than others to desensitize; different dogs need different kinds of distractions; some dogs are more watchful of comings and goings than others, making it more difficult to downplay departure. There will be some trial and error involved as you figure out which combination of distracting, desensitizing, and downplaying your departure work best for your dog.

When your dog’s anxiety is reduced, the behaviors caused by the anxiety will be minimized and, in most cases, eliminated altogether. He may never be happy when you leave the house, but with training he will get to the point where he can live with it. However, if you do not take the time to train, your dog’s anxiety is a problem you will live with for the rest of his life.

## **About Beth Bradley**

As one of the top professional trainers and competitors in the United States, Beth is committed to improving the lives of dogs and people through training. She teaches group classes and private lessons in basic and advanced obedience, competition dog training, puppy training, Schutzhund training, personal protection, Canine Good Citizenship, and therapy dog training.

Beth also trains and places service dogs for children with autism and custom trains “cross-trained” companion/protection dogs for families and individuals. She consults for shelters in the tri-state area and for New Jersey law enforcement on cases involving canine behavior and temperament.

Beth began studying animal behavior and dog training at age twelve. She has worked and studied under many renowned animal behaviorists and trainers. After graduating from Rutgers University with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Criminal Justice, Beth worked as a New Jersey State Animal Control Officer. In 1989, she founded her own company and has made dog training and consulting her full-time career since 1995. Competing with her dogs, Beth has earned national and international titles, championships, and honors in both Schutzhund and AKC Obedience. In 2003 and 2009, she represented the United States in the FCI World Trials. In 2015, Beth and her dog Fyte qualified for the elite team representing the United States at the WUSV in Finland. Although Fyte is the youngest qualifying dog in the history of this worldwide competition, Beth and Fyte ranked third among the US competitors and posted scores that placed the US team in the top ten.

Beth is the author of *Real World Dog Training*, and has produced a number of training DVDs and videos. In addition, Beth trains and handles dogs for movies, television, and theater, with recent credits including appearances at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, *Board Walk Empire*, the *Batman* franchise, *Damages*, *Blue Bloods*, *The Good Wife*, and *The Blacklist*.

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