



# Fearful Dog Tips

## *Lifestyle Tips to Ease Your Dog's Anxiety*

### **Up the ante in the stimulation department.**

A great many dogs are owner-diagnosed with anxiety issues when they may be simply plain ol' bored! Before you go see a trainer or behaviorist for help, try increasing the physical exercise your dog is getting daily. Bring them to new parts of the city, do obedience, and feed them only from puzzle toys or training to exercise their mind as well!

### **KONGS, KONGS, KONGS!!!**

PUZZLE TOYS! CHEWIES! Give your dog the mental stimulation of working for their meals. If you are not using their food to actively train, feed them solely from Kongs and other puzzle toys. This activity for a dog is akin to doggie Sudoku – keeps their mind sharp, focused, and (hopefully) out of trouble! Stuffed and frozen Kongs are the best for tough chewers, but any dog can learn to use them. Be sure to start easy and make sure they can get into it while you are home before you leave them with it!

### **Patience & baby steps will help you succeed!**

Start by giving your dog a reward for tolerating her anxiety-trigger while still under threshold. Slowly increase the intensity of the stimulus but make sure they are still feeling comfortable! Depending on how severe the anxiety, you may need to start with a large distance to the trigger at first.



### **Never PUNISH fear-based responses!**

Certainly there are times when fear in your dog is, at best, frustrating and at worst, frightening. As humans, we have the (arguable) luxury of suppressing these emotions. Dogs do not suppress the strong emotions of fear and anxiety – they cope by using passive or active means to “make it stop.” So give them something else to do for coping besides a naughty or undesirable response – brush-up on impulse control, learn your dog's thresholds and boundaries, and avoid putting him or her over the edge.

### **Ask not what your dog can do for you, Ask what you are doing to your dog...**

Are you putting tension on his or her leash before they get to greet that stranger? Does your voice become frantic as you try to ask them for a sit while that dog passes by? Look at your handling when an anxiety-inducing event is about to occur or happening. Your response may be inadvertently feeding his reaction. Take a breath!

### **Always find a QUALIFIED professional!**

Dog Training & Behavior is NOT a professionally regulated field – always make sure to ask about your trainer or behavior consultant's credentials and research them prior to your initial consult. Look for legitimate certification, references, & a command of applied animal learning theories.

*Source: Content adapted from San Francisco Animal Care & Control*

