

PREVENTING SEPARATION ISSUES

TEACH YOUR PUPPY TO REALLY RELAX ON THEIR OWN

It takes time for our puppies to be comfortable with being left on their own, even for short periods. We should never force a puppy to experience isolation before there are ready but there are some key things we can do to help set our puppies up for success.



WHY DO PUPPIES STRUGGLE?



When we bring our puppies home everything changes for them in an instant. They are separated from their brothers, sisters, mum and family that have been with them since the moment they were born. It's not surprising that this causes our puppies to want to be close to us, as they learn all about the strange new world they find themselves in.

IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL

Puppies naturally will want to be around their family, particularly in the early days of coming home. With so much change going on our puppies need to know they are safe and as they can't look after themselves nature encourages them to seek comfort from us. It's our job to be there for them and support them fully.

CAN I LEAVE THEM?

It's really important that if your puppy isn't ready to be on their own, that we don't force them to be separate from us.

If your puppy starts to cry when you go, then we mustn't leave them to 'cry it out' as this will only cause them distress and teach them that we cannot be depended on for support when they need us the most.

If your puppy is relaxed and calm when you leave the room, you can leave them for short periods whilst you go to the bathroom, or make a cup of tea.

Don't be surprised if this is too much for your puppy to start with though!

1

Be supportive and available for your puppy

2

Never leave your puppy to 'cry it out' before returning to them if they're distressed

3

Be prepared to go at your puppy's pace - never rush them

DON'T RUSH

We know that forcing separation too soon can be really damaging to our puppy's emotional and physical well being. So how do we help them to be ready?

Puppies will naturally become more independent when they develop a secure relationship with us. When they know that we are always on hand to support them and they can rely on us to keep them safe and happy, they will start to feel much more confident in their surroundings and the wider world.

We don't have to enforce isolation to make sure our puppies are able to be left. Exposure to being alone won't make your puppy feel happy about it. Instead what we need to do is build a secure relationship so that they know we won't leave them to fend for themselves. This will help them not to panic when we leave and instead feel fully relaxed and settled in our absence.

"BE WARM AND NURTURING IF YOUR PUPPY IS DISTRESSED"

We can help our puppies achieve this by doing a few simple things which make a world of difference.

- Be present and engaged - that means actively doing things with your puppy, not passively entertaining them whilst you watch TV or play on your phone.
- Go to them if they are upset. At this age they really do need you if they're in distress, so go to them, be warm and nurturing .
- Rescue them from situations that are causing them fear or distress. If your small puppy puts their paws up on you when a larger dog rushes over to them, lift them into your arms so that they feel safe and know you will always protect them. You can't reinforce fear with kindness...
- Engage in fun activities together. Explore new objects and locations. Learn new things together using fun, reward based training methods.



"INDEPENDENCE COMES NATURALLY WITH A SECURE RELATIONSHIP"

SET PUPPIES UP FOR SUCCESS



When we are teaching our puppy to relax on their own for short periods of time it's important that we make it as easy as possible for them to succeed.

THE ROUTINE

Before leaving our puppies we must first ensure that they have had everything that they need first. This should include:

- A walk or physical exercise appropriate for their age (typically 5 minutes per month of age)
- Food, preferably given to them in a way that is interesting and enriching. E.g. in a snuffle mat, Kong or puzzle toy
- A chance to use their brain by doing some fun training games with us
- A trip to the toilet before settling down

THE DEPARTURE

When these are in place your puppy will be more relaxed and ready for a nap. This is the perfect chance to practice leaving them on their own.

Settle your puppy down in their crate or pen and stay close by until they start to settle and fall asleep.

Quietly leave the room and let your puppy have some proper rest whilst you are in a different location.

If you hear them disturb a while later, make sure you go back to them before they start to cry and see if they are waking up properly or settling down again for more rest.

Remember puppies need a lot of sleep each day - up to 18 hours! So be sure to let them rest as much as possible

1

Always ensure your puppy has had everything they need before leaving them

2

Go back before they fully wake up or start to cry.

3

Make sure your puppy is getting plenty of rest in a quiet area of the home.

CHOICES

One of the most powerful things we can do to help our puppy succeed is to give them a choice. We know that choice helps to create confidence and it's a great way to allow our puppies a chance to practice being on their own, without any risk that we will go too quickly for them.

To set up this exercise you will need one of your puppy's chew toys, attached to a rope. A quiet area with a comfortable blanket/bed and something fixed to attach their toy to.

1. Start by stuffing your puppy's Kong with their favourite treats such as small amounts of cream cheese, peanut butter, mashed banana or frozen yogurt.
2. Tie your puppy's Kong to the inside of their crate/pen or other fixed location next to their blanket. Make sure you don't close the crate/pen door.

"LET YOUR
PUPPY DECIDE
WHETHER TO
STAY ON
THEIR OWN OR
FOLLOW YOU"

3. Let your puppy start to chew on their Kong, whilst you move around the room. Your puppy is completely free to follow you if they wish, or remain on their blanket enjoying their chew.

4. When your puppy is fully choosing to remain with their toy instead of following you around, you are ready to start leaving the room for a few seconds before coming back. Make sure that you aren't gone for long and that your puppy can choose to follow you if they want to.

You will find that your puppy becomes less and less interested in what you're doing and more able to settle on their own with their chew toy the more we practice this game.

You can then start to increase the duration that you leave for and if your puppy is still fully relaxed even build up to closing your puppy's crate/pen door for short periods whilst you leave.

As you begin to lengthen the time you leave for, be sure to record your puppy whilst you're gone. You need to know that they are happy and relaxed and not stressed by your absence.



"CHOICE HELPS TO
BUILD CONFIDENCE"