

## Be Right Back! Podcast with Julie Naismith

### Episode 019 Transcript – 3 Tips To Help You Smash Separation Anxiety Training

<https://julienaismith.com/episode-19/>

Well, hi there. I'm Julie Naismith, and you're listening to another episode of the fixing separation anxiety podcast. Now, I know you have tons and tons of options for listening to a huge variety of different podcasts, so I can't tell you how grateful I am for you tuning into this episode. And today I'm going to be talking about how you can make your separation anxiety training go that much better.

And I saw a post in my Facebook group which prompted me to raise this topic with you. It was by someone who said they tried everything to fix separation anxiety, and that's not uncommon. I hear that phrase all the time. I've tried everything and nothing worked. And I've been there, too, by the way. I was there with my dog ten years ago, trying everything and finding nothing was working. But alongside the usual stuff that this poster had tried just like the rest of us, from anxiety raps to calming treats to calming music, you name it, we've all tried it, right? So alongside all of that, this poster had tried leaving their dog for a few minutes and returning, and she said that just hadn't worked. Now, if you follow what I teach, you'll know that the way we fix separation anxiety is actually to leave your dog, to leave your dog for small, increasing increments. So what's going on when people think they've tried to do this, the departures, the small departures, and it hasn't worked? What's going on? Well, today I'm going to explain what separation anxiety training really is, and I'm going to give you three tips on how to make it work.

Okay, so back to the I tried going out of the door and it didn't work statement. Let's unpack it and see what could be going on. Well, separation anxiety training is all about showing your dog that being on its own is okay. And it's a process that we call Desensitization, fancy term, but it just means we take a really small amount of what the dog is frightened of, because we use desensitization not just for separation anxiety. We use it for lots of other fears. We take a really tiny amount of the thing that the dog is frightened of, and we expose the dog to it at a level, an intensity that the dog can handle. So if your dog is frightened of strangers that might be seeing a stranger at 100 meters, that might be what your dog can currently handle without getting upset. And with separation anxiety, we're talking in terms of duration, how long can you be on the other side of the door before your dog gets upset? So it isn't going in and out of the door, because we need to work out what intensity, what level of the scary thing ie you being on the other side of the door. What amount of that can your dog currently handle without getting upset? So can you see how if you go online and you find a training plan that says go out for 3 minutes, go out for 5 minutes, that's not going to work for your dog because your dog might not be able to handle 2 seconds. I work with some dogs who can't even cope with you going out of the door without getting upset. And we have to take a whole different approach to start off with.

So the key is precision. The key is customized to your dog and the key is not taking a generic plan from the internet and trying to make it work. So what are my top three tips? Well, first off, I

mentioned customized. So my first tip is your training has to be customized to what your dog can handle. So you first need to work out what that is. Is it 3 seconds? Is it 3 minutes? You need to make an assessment of how long your dog can be on his own without any training. So right now, without getting upset, going over threshold. And then you are going to craft your training around that, around what your dog can handle. And you're going to make decisions about progression through training based on how your dog is dealing with the departures. So maybe what was going on with the poster, the 3 minutes was too much for the dog to start off with. And maybe the 3 minutes, even if the dog could handle it, the dog then couldn't handle 5 minutes or 10 minutes. So we really need to be careful about what can the dog currently do and how much progression can the dog handle.

Now that I know probably sounds a bit complex. And I develop custom plans for my clients because that gets dogs through the training in the most efficient and effective way. And that's why people work with me. And I know it's hard and I know it can be difficult to do. Now, when Jackie started working with me, she too had tried the departure exercise. The 3 minutes. It wasn't 3 minutes for Jackie, but she tried the kind of standard I'll go out and I'll come back and she wasn't getting anywhere. Her dog wasn't improving. She felt really stuck. And then when she started working with me, she saw my plans and how my plans differed from what she'd been previously using. She said to me, I get it. I get it now. And now a few months on Boots can be left for over 2 hours. Yay. So Jackie and Boots went from no progress trying to do this training to amazing progress by sticking to a plan. Yeah, I know you're thinking how the heck do I do that? And I know that writing a training plan like a pro is going to be a big ass. You don't spend your entire week immersed in separation anxiety training like I do. You haven't spent a ton of time learning how to do this stuff. You haven't worked with hundreds of dogs getting them through separation anxiety, so how do you know what a good plan looks like?

Well, here's the thing. I've made it easier for people by developing an app. So I have an app which creates the custom plans for you. It takes out all of the hard work out and it's kind of like having me on your phone while you train. That's kind of a bit spooky, isn't it? But, yeah, I'm there with you because you've got your custom plans. How can you get hold of the app? Well, from July 1, you can get the app free when you join my Separation Anxiety Heroes club, my monthly membership. More to come on that later. So let's get back to those top tips, though. Number two, you need to be prepared to make exercises easier. Sometimes it's not always a case of pushing the dog, what my mentor Gene Donaldson calls pushitis. We want to push and push our dogs and sometimes that means we push them when they're not capable of progressing when they're not ready. A really good analogy is to think about a track and field athlete, maybe a sprinter or a high jumper. If you think about how they train and how they compete, they will have a progression in terms of their performance, which will sometimes mean they get a personal best. So they get their best ever time, they get their best ever height, but they don't expect to get a personal best every time they train or every time they compete. They know that progress is about getting personal best or pushing their personal best up over time, but accepting that not every single jump, not every single sprint is going to be a personal best.

So think about that with your dog. If your dog is progressing and you can leave them for increasing amounts, don't think that every single time they're going to be able to increase the time that they can be left. They just won't. Dogs will sometimes get a personal best and then you'll go and train the next day and they're nowhere near. But just remember that progress isn't about smashing your personal best every single time. It's about slow, steady progress that trends upwards. And how you'll know that progress is trending upwards is you're going to keep records. So make sure you keep a record of your training and then over time, keep looking back. And even if your dog's having dips, even if the duration goes up and down, you should see a steady increase. Just like the high jumper who doesn't set a personal best every single time, but who might be pushing that personal best on occasion. You're going to see that with your dog. So don't expect a personal best every single time. Just look for progression over time. All right.

So, three, you have to become an expert in your dog's anxiety threshold, and the more you train, the better you're going to get at this. What I encourage my owner clients to do, though, is not so much know when your dog is over threshold, because, remember, we're always trying to keep our dogs under threshold. So it's not so much about that. What it is, and this is when you become a real expert in your dog, is spotting the things that your dog does when they are just starting to feel a teeny bit uncomfortable. So they're not over threshold, but, you know, when they do that thing, it's time to end that exercise. And that could be a poor raise. It might be an ear twitch. It might be a bit more movement around the house. Julie, who's working with Reba, and Julie is an absolute rock star and a real expert in Reba's body language. Julie's in one of my online programs, too, Julie and I spotted that Reba does a head flick before she gets upset. And she does this thing, Reba, because she's a bouncy, energetic Brittany Spaniel. She does this thing where she does jump up at the door a lot. But Julie was able to decipher the difference between a normal Reba just checking things out, jump at the door and an anxious jump at the door. So Julie became a complete expert in Reba's anxiety behavior and Reba's threshold, and it makes all the difference.

Okay, so those are my three top tips just to recap. Number one, your training has to be customized to your dog. Number two, you need to be prepared to make training exercises easier. Sometimes it's not always about push, push, push. Number three, you have to become an expert in your dog's threshold and their anxiety behavior. Now, I know because I know that separation anxiety training can seem overwhelming when you're new to it. And let's face it, it can be hard even if you're not new to it. And so for those of you who are ready to start training or if you've already trained and you feel like you're not getting anywhere, I've got my brand new five day challenge coming up now. Thousands of people, thousands of dogs have been through my five day challenge. And if you haven't been through it, you got to sign up. The next one starts on June 17, and you can register by going to this link [subthresholdtraining.com/freechallenge](https://subthresholdtraining.com/freechallenge). So you have to sign up before it starts. It starts on June 17. So what you're waiting for?

Anyway, thank you so, so much for joining me again today. And I hope to see you again next week when we're going to be talking about habits and how habits can help you ace your

separation anxiety training. Now, before you go, I'd just like to ask a huge, huge favor if you like this show. If you found this episode useful, please, please go to iTunes and rate and review it. I'd be so grateful if you could do that. All right, thanks again for listening and bye for now.