

Be Right Back! Podcast with Julie Naismith

Episode 045 Transcript – 5 Tips for When You Feel Like Quitting Training

<https://julienaismith.com/episode-45/>

In this episode of the Fixing Separation Anxiety podcast, we're going to get really real, we're going to get gritty, and we're going to get raw.

Why? Because we're talking about what you do when you feel like quitting, when you feel like you cannot do any more of this training without seeing results. The thing is, you will feel like this at some point in your training. You will feel like you just want to give up. And so if you don't feel like that yet, just know that you will. And when you do, make sure you file back to this podcast because I'm going to be talking to you about five tips to help you when you feel like you've just had enough.

Okay, so whether this has happened to you yet, or whether it's about to happen to you or happened to you in the future, just know that nearly everyone, no, everyone who goes through separation anxiety training will at some point feel like they just want to give up. They've had enough. It's frustrating. It's taking too much time. It feels like there's no progress, and you've just reached the point at which you say, I cannot do this anymore. I've had enough. So it might not have happened to you yet, in which case, listen to this episode and just file away the tips I give you.

But if this is you right now or if you've been through this before, listen to these tips and see if they can help you either right now or the next time that it happens. Because as I said, every single person who goes through separation anxiety training will at some point feel like they have had it up to here. Okay, so my five tips.

Tip number one, just take a break. Stop trying to get you and your dog through training. Exercises that aren't working, exercises that are making you frustrated or angry or sad or desperate. Just take a break. It's okay to just say, you know what, I just can't deal with this now. If your dog is having absences that are being managed, it's fine. Just take a break from the training. Your dog is going to be okay. Yeah, okay. So it might feel like that puts the attainment of your goal of being able to leave your dog further off, but actually, that might not be the case. Taking a break might actually improve your chances of progressing again.

So, take a break for your sake. Take a break for your dog's sake. And what does that look like? It could be two days off. It could be a day off, it. Could be a week off. I wouldn't take too long off. The reason being that dogs are learning when they go through separation anxiety training so we don't want them to entirely forget. But when I say take a break, I mean take a break. I mean, go away. Do something lovely. Forget about separation anxiety training and then only come back to it when you are feeling ready. So you have my permission to take a break from training. Be good for you, and it will be good for your dog.

My tip number two, and I want you to say this out loud. Now, you don't have to say it in front of your friends, but I want you to say this phrase out loud. You can say it out loud sitting quietly somewhere in your house where nobody can hear you. This is normal. It's normal to feel like this. It's normal to feel like this. You will inevitably have points during separation anxiety training where you do feel like you cannot do this anymore. You don't care if it feels like the only chance your dog's got of getting over separation anxiety. It is unbearable. It's time consuming and it's dull and it's frustrating and it's heartbreaking. And you will get to a point where all of those emotions take over and you no longer feel hopeful. You no longer see all of the good days your dogs had. You only see the bad days, and you want to give up.

So, when that hits you, I want you to say out loud, it's normal to feel like this. And if you want, you can add Julie says it's normal to feel like this. Because I want to remind you that it is okay that you are not the first person to feel like this. And every owner whose dog can now be left has felt like you feel right now. If you feel like quitting, if you feel like you've had it up to here, you need to know that every owner who's got their dog to a stage where their dog can happily be left, they have felt what you feel now. So my tip number two, when it hits you, when you feel like you've had enough, be kind to yourself and say, it's normal to feel this way.

Then tip number three, find people who are going through the same thing as you and hang out with them. If you feel like giving up on training, you probably don't want to tell every single doubter who told you it was a mistake in the first place, because they will be delighted, and they'll be loving the fact that you might want to quit. Okay, not everybody that's mean. Some people will feel sad for you, even if they don't understand. But there will be some people who will say, I told you so.

Right now, the last thing you need to hear is I told you so. What you need to hear is the stories of people who have either gone through what you're going through or who are in it right now, because they're the ones that truly understand. They're the ones that know how you feel and how to change how you feel about separation anxiety training. If you've never had a dog with separation anxiety, or if you've never done separation anxiety training, you can't understand. No one can understand how we feel in these moments when we have this hope. We want our dog to recover. We know that gradual exposure is the Way to do it, but we can't do it anymore.

So, find people who understand and go hang out with them. I don't mean go and have a coffee with them. Hey, in this day and age, coffee is with strangers. Nate happening. I do mean go online. Online is your best chance to meet people who are going through this right now. So the first place you can go, if you haven't already been there or if you haven't already joined, go to my free Facebook group, dog Separation Anxiety Support. There's 20,000 people in there who know what you're going through. Now, you might not be somebody who likes to tell the world what you're feeling, so you don't have to go into the group and post, but go into the group and just hang out. See what other people are saying. Realize that what you're going through is normal. It's not just Julie saying it's normal. Everybody else is saying, this is normal. And look at

their tips for how they got through it. Don't try and get advice from people who don't understand. Hang out with people who do get it.

Tip number four, realize that even when it feels like you're not winning, you are actually benefiting from the training, and so is your dog. Nelson Mandela had a beautiful quote about this. He said that I am not let me read it out to you. I never lose. I either win or I learn. I'm either winning or I'm learning. And that is separation anxiety training in a nutshell, yes, you'll have days, maybe even weeks, where it feels like you're not progressing. But in those periods where it feels like you're stuck, you're still collecting amazing information about your dog's condition. So you're not progressing, but you're winning. By developing a great insight into what your dog can and can't do, what affects your dog's likelihood to do well. Or not do so well. And so in order to make sure that you are winning even when you feel stuck, I want you to make sure that you go back and look at your data.

Look for trends, look for patterns. And if nothing else, go back and look at how many times you've trained. How many times you've been successful, rather. Than how many times you haven't been successful. I guarantee you, you have had more successful sessions than you have unsuccessful ones. And that, to me, that is winning. So track data as you go along. When you feel stuck, review your data. And remind yourself of all the times that you had winner trials and know that the data you're collecting will help you win in the long run. So you are winning. You're winning through the learning.

My final tip, tip number five, I want you to focus on the process of training. Not the goal, not the number of hours, not how long you want to leave your dog for, not the fact that you want to be able to go to work and then get the dog sitter in a dog walker in at lunchtime. That is all important. And you can definitely have that somewhere, log that somewhere, have that in your brain, but it's not what you're going to focus on. James Clear in his wonderful book Atomic Habits, talks about winners and losers having the same goal. What did he mean by that?

Well, he gave the example of sports teams. Every sports team wants to win the championship that they are in. Yeah, right. Goes without saying. But only one team in the championship gets to win that championship. So they all had the same goal. So it's not the goal that sets them apart, it's the process they used that's what sets winners and losers apart. So focusing on the goal, focusing on 4 hours or 3 hours, that's fine. Have that as something that you put as a sticky on the wall or just write it down somewhere, but you're not going to look at that every single day. Everybody who is going through separation anxiety training wants to be able to leave their dog for X hours. That is not what separates out the people who will get there and the people who won't. Everybody who's not doing separation anxiety training, but who has a dog with separation anxiety, they want 4 hours, 3 hours, whatever as well. That is not what's going to get their dog to that goal.

What will get the dog there is the process that you use. And if you're working with the information in my book or you're following along with the program in the free separation anxiety support group, you're following a method called gradual exposure or Desensitization. It's where

we gradually get a dog used to alone time by exposing it to tiny, tiny amounts of alone time that we increase over time. And that's a method that has been proven to show the most likelihood of a dog overcoming separation anxiety. That's why I want you to focus on the process. You are focusing on the process that is going to give your dog the best chance it's got of overcoming this.

Are there any guarantees? Absolutely not. And never trust a trainer, by the way, who tells you they can guarantee your dog will recover from a behavior condition or a behavior problem. That doesn't happen. There's no guarantees when it comes to behavior change. But what I say about the process that I teach you in my book or in my programs is that it's based on the science. It's based on proven methods. And I would not be telling you to use it if I did not think it was the number one way. The number one chance you have of getting your dog over this. Why? Because I have been in your shoes, and I had a dog who I could not, could not get to be left alone. And I tried everything, and I don't want that to be you. I just want you to focus on the thing that will work, that is gradual exposure to alone time.

So just focus on your exercise. Focus on today's exercise and tomorrow's exercise. Or if you're taking a break, focus on the next exercise you're going to do in two weeks' time. Whatever it might be, don't think about that end goal. It's the process that will get you to the end goal, not just aiming for the goal. You have to have a process, and you have to focus on that process. Every time you have a successful exercise, write it down, enter it into your worksheet, and then go back and look over time at how many successful trials you've had. Just keep focusing on the next exercise. And the next exercise. That is the best chance you can give your dog of becoming a dog who's happy home alone.

Okay, those are my five tips. So whether you use them now, whether you come back to this episode, maybe you listen to this episode, in a few months' time, you come back because you need it. Right now, I want you to stick to these five tips, and probably the most important thing of all is to hang out with people who get it. And lean into them. Whether you're an extrovert and you want to comment, whether you're an introvert and you just want to read the comments, lean in. Because having a community who understands you, around you is one of the biggest factors in achieving long term challenging change which is what separation anxiety training is. We know that.

Okay, thank you so much for listening today. I know you have a lot of options when it comes to listening, so I do appreciate you taking the time to listen to my podcast. Don't forget to join the free Facebook group, and if you get a chance, grab a copy of my book, I'm on Your Side. I'm rooting for you. My goal is to give you and your dog the best chance of getting over this. Okay, that's it from me for now. I will see you on the next one. Bye for now.