

Be Right Back! Podcast with Julie Naismith

Episode 051 Transcript – Why You Don't Need To Worry About Your Dog Sleeping On Your Bed

<https://julienaismith.com/episode-51>

I've noticed recently a spate of questions asking about dogs sleeping on beds. So is it okay? I've been told my dog shouldn't and so in this episode I want to go through this. It comes up so often and you're obviously very concerned about it because you ask about it all the time. So, time to do a podcast episode about the whys and wherefores, the do's and the don'ts of your dog sleeping on your bed.

I'm Julie Naismith, ex people coach, turn, dog trainer, author and separation anxiety geek. And most importantly of all, I'm mum to recovered separation anxiety dog, Percy. But there was a time that I felt hopeless defeated and trapped by my dog's condition. Fast forward past many failed attempts, lessons learned, research consumed and training sessions done and I now have a happy dog who's over separation anxiety. Not only that, but I've helped hundreds of dogs and their owners achieve the same.

I created the Fixing Separation Anxiety podcast to give you simple actionable, step by step information, to help you get your dog over separation anxiety and to help support you through the tough time. If you have a dog you can't leave and you are so ready to change that so that he can be happy and that you both can get your life back, then you're in the right place. Let's get started.

It seems like it's one of those questions that is super common and it's up there with things like should I use food for training or I've been told to let my dog cry out. There's one of those pieces of advice, don't let your dog sleep on your bed. You're going to create separation anxiety if you let your dog sleep on your bed. It's one of those pieces of advice that just seems to be accepted wisdom. So people tell you it, people say that you're going all wrong because your dog's sleeping on your bed. So no wonder your dog's got separation anxiety.

So all those keyboard warriors and armchair experts who are all separation anxiety experts obviously have a really strong opinion that you letting your dog or your puppy sleep on your bed is a disaster and that's why your dog has separation anxiety. It's all down to your dog sleeping next to you. So is that really the case? Well, here's the thing. No, it's not. It's not. It really isn't. So I don't know whether that's good news for you or not, but if you're someone who enjoys having your dog on your bed, then the short answer is keep doing it because it's absolutely fine, you do not need to worry about it.

But let's go into a bit more detail and unpack that so that you feel even more reassured about your decision to have your little cuddle bug next to you on the bed. So why do dogs like to sleep on beds? The answer is really simple. There's two parts to it. The first is they're social sleepers. It's what they do. Lots of dogs like to sleep huddled with other warm bodies. If you're sleeping out in the wild and it's a cold night, then snuggling up to another warm body is a really good idea.

So dogs develop a pattern of social sleeping. They just like to pile on top of other dogs and cuddle up. Not all dogs. I mean, if you've got a couple of dogs or more than a couple of dogs in your household, you'll notice that some dogs like to snuggle with another dog and some dogs very much like to have their own bed. But by and large, dogs do like to sleep socially.

So guess what? They like to snuggle up to you on your bed. And then the other side to it is your bed is an extremely comfortable spot to sleep on. So we've got two things going on here. We've got dogs liking to snuggle and being very social sleepers, and then we've got the fact that the bed is just a really nice place to sleep.

So no wonder your dog really, really likes to sleep on your bed. You might be told that your dog wanting to sleep with you is your dog trying to be air quotes dominant or your dog trying to be air quotes alpha. It's just nonsense. That's absolutely nonsense. I could do several episodes on why we don't need to even think about the concept of dominance and alpha theory and dog training, but there's plenty of great blogs and plenty of great articles that now completely debunk those myths, the myths of alpha and dominant dogs. So that's not why your dog is on your bed. And your dog sleeping on your bed is not going to turn him into the, quote, leader of the pack in your house.

So don't worry. Just don't worry. Keep telling yourself, my dog sleeps with me because my bed is comfortable. And dogs like to sleep socially. So the puppies as well, let's just cover puppies. Puppies, if you think about a puppy coming into your house, if you've just recently taken in a puppy, or you can remember when your puppy came home, your puppy was very used to social sleeping before it came to you. I'm sure when you first went to see your puppy and its mum at the breeders, you saw a pile of puppies socially sleeping, right?

So then we bring the puppy home and all of a sudden we expect that puppy to go from sleeping in a pile of warm bodies all snuggled up in a familiar environment, to sleeping all alone in a really strange environment. So yes, some puppies will really struggle with that. In fact, most puppies really need a bit of comfort those first few nights, even if they're puppies that grow up to be very, very independent. Dogs that don't give a hoot about sleeping on your bed, they need warmth, they need comfort, they need reassurance, and leaving them to panic those first few nights is definitely not a good idea.

Now, I covered some tips for how to deal with dogs and puppies if you don't want them sleeping on your bed. And check out a previous episode I did on nighttime anxiety that will give you lots of tips if for you sleeping your dog, sleeping on your bed isn't what you want. And I totally understand

that. I'm a really light sleeper. So for me, for a long time, having a dog on the bed was not a good idea. I tell you what, though. These days, as my dogs get older and as I realize I've got less and less time with them left, they're on the bed. And I love it. I absolutely love it. Interestingly, though, Percy is the only dog that's ever had separation anxiety in my household, but they all get to sleep on the bed. And you will hear this time and time again, lots of people let their dog sleep on the bed. But guess what? That dog doesn't develop separation anxiety. Okay? So I hope I'm making you feel better about this decision that if you want your dog to sleep on your bed, just do it. But is there ever a problem with your dog sleeping on your bed? I'm making it out to be joyful and brilliant and a really nice decision. If it's what you want to do, it's all good. But is there ever a problem? Well, there kind of is.

So let me just give you a little bit of a heads up about when it might be a problem if your dog is hyperattached to you, and if you don't know what I mean by that, check out my episode on pro tips for dogs that are super attached to you. If your dog is hyperattached to you in that they are really, really concerned about being with you or being with you and somebody else in your household, and it's not so much about being alone that there's a problem. It's being separated from you or their other significant person that causes them issues.

If you have one of those dogs, then being with you 24/7 can become problematic because they just never learn to cope without you. So lots of dogs just stepping back a second lots of dogs with separation anxiety are fine when they're left with anybody. Just any human will do. But there's a proportion of dogs, and typically it's about one in five dogs, who suffer with home alone issues. One in five of those dogs are not comfortable with just anybody. It has to be their significant people. And where it becomes problematic with those dogs is that they cannot settle if their special people are around. They just don't learn how to be okay with others.

And if your dog is like that, you'll know how difficult that is because it means when you try to go out even if somebody else is there, your dog struggles. So there's no doubt that for these dogs, being with you 24/7, although it's what your dog wants, isn't helping them with coping skills. So I do think that for dogs who are hyperattached, spending all of their time with you isn't helping them learn. However, that doesn't mean to say that you take your hyperattached dog who's sleeping on your bed and decide tonight that.

They're going to sleep in the kitchen on their own because that will throw them into a huge panic. Instead, what you do is you focus on other times of the day where you can create short absences, even just around the house or even with somebody in a room with your dog and you in another room, so that they start to create a sense of being able to cope when you're not there. You're probably still going to let your hyperattached dog sleep on your bed, but at other times in the day, focus on some really gentle training that shows them that the world will not come to an end just because you're not in the same room as them.

And as I said, check out the previous episode I did on that. So yes, for these dogs, maybe the fact that they get 24/7 access to you is contributing to the problem. But as I said, do not think that the solution is suddenly putting your dog somewhere else. That is not the solution because letting a dog panic on its own is a way bigger cause of separation anxiety than letting your dog sleep on a bed with you. Do you see what I'm saying? So continue doing that. Continue allowing your dog to sleep on the bed. That's fine.

Meanwhile, create some independence at other times. And with these anxious dogs in general, if we don't give them coping skills to be okay, whether they're home alone or whether they're not with their significant people, that is more of a concern to me than any worry about your dog sleeping on your bed. So if you're going to put your effort anywhere, you put it into home alone training, you put it into teaching your dog that being home alone is fine. Or if it's your hyperattached dog, you teach them that being away from you is fine. That's where you invest your time, your energy, and your emotional capacity.

Don't focus on, oh, I feel guilty, my dog's sleeping on my bed. Everybody tells me it's wrong when people say that to you. You absolutely are allowed to virtually put your fingers in your ears and ignore them. Instead, focus on the thing that's going to help your dog be alone. And that's on really solid home alone training where they learn that being on their own is fine. And, hey, guess what can happen sometimes? Those dogs who seem like they cannot leave you alone at night, once they learn that they can cope without you, they start to choose different places to sleep. Not every dog, because some dogs love the bed so much that they're going to be there forever. Which is kind of cute, right?

But it's amazing how many dogs, once they learn that if you go out of sight, you're not going to disappear forever, once they learn that, they start to show more independence. Some of them start to choose to sleep in different places. And you'll get to a stage, potentially, where you're saying, oh, I kind of miss the stage where he used to sleep on my bed all the time.

So I hope this episode makes you feel better about having your dog sleep on your bed. It's your choice. It's not a problem if you do it's absolutely not what's causing your dog's separation anxiety, and it's not making your dog's separation anxiety worse. So please don't worry about it. And the next time somebody says that to you, feel free to completely ignore it and keep doing what you know makes a difference, which is really solid home alone training. Well, that's it from me for this week.

Thank you so much for tuning in. I really appreciate it. I know you have a ton of options when it comes to podcasts, so it means a lot to me that you took the time to listen to mine. If you like my podcast, I'd love it if you could head over to Apple Podcasts or Spotify and review it.

Remember that when you review my podcast, more owners of dogs with separation anxiety will find the podcast. Okay, so off you go. Happy training, and I look forward to seeing you on the next episode of the Fixing Separation Anxiety podcast. Bye for now.