

Be Right Back! Podcast with Julie Naismith

Episode 056 Transcript – Can You Ever Really Convince A Skeptical Other Half

<https://julienaismith.com/episode-56>

If you found yourself having tense conversations with your other half about separation anxiety training, just know that you are not alone. I come across this a lot, and it's not surprising. Separation anxiety training, as we know it's difficult, it takes time, it's slow, and the progress isn't always obvious and immediate.

Meanwhile, while you're doing this training, you're suspending lots of your life. Your life is kind of on hold. As much as you try to create freedom with pet sitters and doggy daycare, lots of your life isn't as it used to be. And so I see so frequently that the training that we do can cause problems. We are dealt with a situation where we're convinced that this is the right training to do. Maybe you've tried everything. Maybe you've been through all the things, all the different training techniques, all the different things on Amazon and you've tried the cry out method and you've ended up in a place where you know that gradual exposure to the scary thing, which is the training that we talk about as being the thing that works.

You know, that that's what you need to do. But on the other side, you've got your other half who's still listening to the Internet advice or has friends and family telling them that, oh, my goodness, you're being too soft on the dog. You just need to let the puppy or the dog cry it out. So no wonder that causes tension and pressure. But if this is you, what can you do about it? Can you ever truly convince a skeptical other half that this training is worth doing? Well, I have seen this a lot.

And I've seen what people do, I've seen what people in your shoes do to overcome the struggle of convincing another half, at the very least, just to let you give this training a go. And that's why, in today's episode, I'm going to share my seven top tips for maybe not convincing your other half that this is the right thing to do, but to at least persuade your other half to give you enough space to get on with the training and show that this training can work. All right, let's dive in.

Hello, and welcome to the Be Right Back separation Anxiety Podcast. Hi, I'm Julie Naismith, dog trainer, author, and full-on separation anxiety geek. I've helped thousands of dogs overcome separation anxiety with my books, my online programs, my trainer certification, and my separation anxiety training app. And this podcast is all about sharing my tips and tricks to help you teach your dog how to be happy at home alone, too.

My first tip find some common ground. So this might be thinking through, well, what do we agree about in terms of separation anxiety training? But it might be broader than that. By find common ground, I mean find some common ground about the way that you care for your dog or the way

that you're raising your puppy. So maybe you both agree that, and I hope this is the case, that the force-free approach to training is the way to go. So discuss that and at least come to an agreement that there is commonality. So maybe you'll find agreement on the training methods that you use, whether that's in separation anxiety or beyond.

Maybe what you'll do is find common ground around not wanting to upset or frighten your dog when you go out. Now, I'm pretty sure that even if your other half is thinking we should just let the dog cry out, we should just get on with it, they probably don't want to do any damage to your dog. I'm sure that they don't. So what common ground can you find about the way that you care for your dog, the way that you raise your dog, and how important your dog is in your life?

Whenever there's conflict, whenever we have conflict in relationships, a really good starting point is to sit down and just agree that there is more common ground than there are areas for tension or disagreement. So what common ground can you find about your dog's training and the way you care for your dog?

A second tip look for the positives. At the moment, you might be feeling stressed and frustrated that your other half is potentially being, I don't know, negative and critical of what you're trying to do with your dog and the separation anxiety training. But remember that it's not all about conflict and negativity because they are no doubt doing some really good things when it comes to the care of your dog. So what do they do?

Remind yourself of all the good things that they do with your dog. Do they play with them? Do they do that really cute thing with your dog where they go up to him when he's asleep on the sofa and just give him a really cute belly rub? What does your other half do that puts a smile on your face when it comes to your dog? Are they really goofy at the dog park with them? Maybe they just brim with pride when they show a photo of your extremely cute or handsome dog. So look for the positives. Remember that despite the tension and potential areas for negativity, your other half is really into your dog and shows it, but maybe shows it in different ways to you.

So what are those positives? And then number three, step back and say, well, what are the reasons that my other half feels so strongly about the training or so strongly negatively about the training? So why do they think we shouldn't be doing this training? So in other words, see it from their point of view. What's causing them to think that you're doing this gradual exposure to alone time, going in out of the door over and over again, suspending absences, despite the fact that that training method is tried and trusted and works for the vast majority of dogs and is kind and is effective and it's force free. What's driving your other half to think that you shouldn't be doing that?

Maybe they've had a dog before, like lots of people have been in this situation. Maybe they've had a dog before who was fine when left. Maybe they even had a dog before who, when left, did get upset, but eventually air quotes got over it. So maybe your other half has experience that you

don't need to do this process that you're going through, that there are quicker and easier ways to get a dog to be happy home alone. So maybe experience is driving their point of view.

Perhaps they're looking at different sources. Maybe they've been recommended to read trainers who aren't force free, who aren't keeping up with the latest evidence, because there are plenty of trainers out there who take good money from clients without keeping up to date with the treatment methods that work. And so maybe your other half is being influenced by people who he thinks are reputable. Trainers could be somebody they've worked with previously, it could be somebody online, it could be one of the big name trainers who we know some of them just don't espouse force free science based methods, but they're very convincing and they have very big profiles.

So maybe your other half is looking at their methods and saying, well, they're not saying we do it like this, and they're a big name, so, hey, why are we doing this? When they say there's a quicker way of doing it? So they might well be being influenced by an external reference, but they could also be influenced by friends and family. And this is a really common one. Perhaps they've got friends and family saying to them, why are you doing this? You're being too soft on your dog. Oh, come on, we just want you to come out with us at the weekend. Why are you always saying no? Maybe it's friends, maybe it's family, but there's another external pressure. It's not coming from trainers, but it's coming from people who are key influences in your other half life.

And it's hard for them to say we can't come out because we can't leave the dog. They're struggling with that. Not only do they feel like they're missing out, but they feel the pressure from friends and family. They feel judged and they feel like they should have a better answer than I'm really sorry, but for the moment we can't do anything because we have to do this training and it means we can't leave our dog. So understand why they might feel this way. I'm pretty sure they're not just doing it to be difficult, they're doing it because of other reasons. And what are those reasons? And helping to understand and starting to understand where they're coming from will help you.

My tip number four is agree the nonnegotiables. And this is where you both get to agree when it comes to how you work with your dog and how you deal with your dog separation anxiety. You both get to agree that there are some absolute non negotiables. So you're going to give on some things and your other half is going to give on some things. So maybe for you it's that whatever happens, you will not leave your dog to cry it out. You will not leave your dog to be stressed at home alone. You will not allow your dog to be alone for longer than your dog can cope with.

Maybe for them it's that okay, that's fine, but we have to do at least some things together. You probably both want the latter anyway. So see if you can prioritize. Maybe for them it's that they want to be able to at least do one date night a week. That's going to mean for you that you might need to put the effort, maybe not into training this week, but into finding somebody to have your dog so you can do the date night.

Meanwhile, you get to stick with your non-negotiable of "I'm not going to leave this dog to cry it out." So agree on what the non-negotiables are so that at least you're being seen to give something, and that allows you to stick to your non-negotiable, which will be, "I want to do this training, I want to give it a shot, and I'm not going to let my dog get upset."

Tip number five. Whatever you do, make sure you talk about training decisions when you are calm. I know, easier said than done because when you turn down that latest social invite when you are about to go out, but your dog starts freaking out, even though you thought your dog could do 30 minutes, your dog's decided today that it can only do 2 seconds. So in that moment, talking about training decisions, that's not the time to do it because you're not calm, you're upset. Your other half is upset, your dog is upset.

Talk about the decision to do the training and the absence management when you're calm, not when the training is going badly, not when your other half is really frustrated because it just seems like you say no to every single thing. Set aside some time when, you know, you can both have a really calm and level-headed conversation about the training process, about how it's going, about what you need to do to suspend absences. But make sure you're not having those conversations right in the heat of pressurized training or when either of you is upset about the impact that your dog is having on your life right now.

Don't have the conversations on date night either. Honestly, if you've gone to all the effort to find someone to look after your dog on a Friday night so that you two can go out and have a date night, don't talk about the separation anxiety training. That could be a non-negotiable. Actually, the non-negotiable could be that when you go out on date night, you can talk about your dog. You can talk about all the fun things you do with your dog. But separation anxiety training and suspending absences is not on the table for discussion when you go out for date night. So no discussion of training, separation anxiety training, or managing absences when you're stressed or upset, and no discussing when you are on date night.

Number six, see if you can agree between you that you'll defer to whoever feels strongest about the issue. Now, this is going to be problematic because what we don't want is for your other half to say, "I feel twice as strongly about you that we should just let this dog cry out. I know you think that we shouldn't, but I am just like, I will die on a mountain until we let this dog cry it out."

But go back to your non-negotiables. I'm pretty sure that this is your non-negotiable. I'm pretty sure "I am done. I am not going to let this dog cry out" is your non-negotiable. But there may be other things. There will be other things that you have a strength of feeling about, and there are other aspects of the training and the absence management that your other half has their feelings about. And sometimes you might need to defer to whoever has the strongest feeling on that.

Maybe your other half might say, "Do you know what? For a week, I'm just really, really stressed by the slow progress. I'm really stressed by the fact that we've only got to 30 seconds in three weeks."

This is crazy. I want you to stop this training." You might say, "Okay, what do you want us to do instead? Because I'm not going to let my dog cry it out. I'm not going to let our dog cry it out."

So you might feel really strongly about not letting your dog cry it out, but your other half might say, "I just want to try something different. That's fine, I get it. We won't leave him to be upset. But I do need to try something different. So I want to go and speak to another trainer, and I feel really strongly about that. Now, I don't want you to go to another trainer, but if it's something you need to do, if it's something that your other half needs to go through, a process they need to go through, then do it."

I'm pretty confident that you're going to come back to the process that we've talked about, of gradual exposures to the scary thing. I'm pretty confident you'll come back to that. But if your other half needs to explore different options, as long as they don't involve letting your dog get scared, then go for it. If it's what you need to do to give the training that you know works the best shot, then it's probably something that's worth going through.

Now, another area, along with training that's often hotly disputed between friends, families, and between partners, is, "Should we put our dog on medication?" And if you find yourself in the position where you think that anxiety medication is really going to help your dog but your other half is digging their heels in, that's tricky. That's really tricky.

Again, why do they feel so strongly good? Chances are they're probably heavily influenced by what they read online, by a general perception in society that anxiety medications are just not a good thing, full stop. And they're certainly not a good thing for dogs. But you've probably seen the success that other people have had with their dogs when they put them on anxiety medications. And you've probably bought into the idea yourself because maybe you've done your research and you've realized that anxiety medications really can help.

They help change brain chemistry in the right way. They've been used for years on dogs. And as most vets will tell you, the side effect profile is actually really quite low and certainly for a lot of dogs, a lot less risky than some of the long term effects of toxic stress. So you're bought into it, but your other half is like, no, we are not going there. Maybe they feel so strongly that you're going to have to let them go through the whole process of trying so called natural remedies and the stuff you can buy on Amazon that promises all the quick fixes.

So maybe that's what you need to do. They feel really strongly about this, and until you let them go through the whole try everything process, they aren't going to budge. If you're still undecided about anxiety medications, I will link to the episode that I did on anxiety medications in the show notes.

All right, my tip number seven. There's no better way to convince people than with results. Now obviously this is only going to work if you've managed to convince your other half to let you give

this a go and you've explained to them this isn't about trying it for a week to see whether it works or not, that this is going to take weeks, if not months, to show that this is working. Meanwhile, though, make sure that they're hanging out in the same space that you are online on social media, where you see people achieving results.

So a free option there is my dog Separation Anxiety Support Group, which you must join. If you haven't joined already, go and check the success tab in there. And if you want to work with me directly, there's my Separation Anxiety Heroes Club, and we are brimming with success stories in there. So there's no better way to convince people than by showing them results. If your results are going to take some time, which they will make sure that your other half has access to success stories and wins and the life changing impact that this training can have.

So that they know there was a really good chance that if you stick with this training and you do all the right things, you can have that taste of freedom, too. But do make sure they're not expecting these results to happen in, like, a week. It's not going to happen, and you know that. I know it's not going to be easy. It isn't ever easy when you've got such a fundamentally different position on something.

So I hope these seven tips have helped you in some way. My ideal outcome for you is that you can keep your head down, carry on with the training. Your other half will at least give you the space to try that. That you'll meet them with some common ground and you'll discuss non negotiables and you'll make sure that they also see that success is possible, while at the same time helping them understand that it is going to take time and that while the training goes on, you are going to need to give up on a tiny piece.

Okay? Maybe a big piece of freedom, but that it's short term period of pain for a lifetime of freedom and happiness for you, for your other half, and for your dog. All right, good luck with the training. I'm rooting for you, and I hope that your other half is going to be, too.

Thank you so much for listening to this episode of the Be Right Back Separation Anxiety podcast. If you want to find out more about how I can help you further, head over to Julienasmith.com. Meanwhile, if you enjoyed listening today, I would love it if you would head over to wherever you listen to your podcast and consider rating my show. Thanks so much. Good luck with that training, and bye for now.