

## Be Right Back! Podcast with Julie Naismith

### Episode 085 Transcript – What to Do When Your Dog Can't Be Alone but Can't Be Around Strange Dogs or People Either - with Jennifer Pratt

<https://julienaismith.com/episode-085/>

Speaker A:

If you've got a dog, you can't leave. But your dog can't be around strange people either. They can't go to a daycare. They can't go to a dog sitter. And what about if they can't be around other dogs or other people? How on earth do you manage absences then? Well, if this is you, and this sounds like your dog, I don't want you to lose hope, because in this episode, I'm talking to Jennifer Pratt. Jennifer's an expert in separation anxiety and in dogs who are fearful or aggressive when they're out and about. And Jennifer and I have a fantastic conversation about how you can help a dog who hates being alone but can't be out in the world either. If you're feeling at all hopeless about this situation, do tune in.

Speaker A:

I think you're going to love what Jennifer has to say. 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.

Speaker B:

Teach your dog how to be happy.

Speaker A:

At home alone, too.

Speaker B:

Jen, I'm so excited about today's podcast. And the reason I'm so excited is because, well, it's always fabulous talking to you. So very selfishly, I'm really going to enjoy this, but I get asked about this topic so often. In fact, it came up as recently as a couple of days ago in my group, and I got really excited and said, well, just wait, we've got a podcast coming out about this. So we're going to talk about dogs who have this dual challenge of on the one hand, they can't be left because they've got separation anxiety, but on the other hand, they really struggle out in the world because they react to tons of things. And so that's what we're going to talk about today, right?

Speaker C:

Yes, absolutely.

Speaker B:

The word reactivity gets banded around all the time, and it can mean different things to different people. So shall we just talk about what we mean by reactivity for the purpose of today's conversation on this podcast?

Speaker C:

Yeah, I honestly rarely use it with my clients because it is sort of such a muddy kind of word. But if I was asked, what exactly does it mean? I would say that it's a dog that when you're out and about or in your normal daily world, overreacts to a typical situation that most other dogs, they might notice them, they might be like, oh, what was that? Taking a back. But they can bounce back from it quite easily and just take it in stride. Our dogs that are reactive, it doesn't necessarily mean that they have any aggressive tendencies. It's just that they are kind of tighter wound, shall I say?

Speaker B:

Yeah, that's a good question.

Speaker C:

Yeah. And they just have a harder time coping. So a reactive dog could be a dog that does enjoy other dogs or people, but they get frustrated that they can't get to them as soon as they would like. But we could also have a dog that's being reactive because they are asking for space, and they're like, please don't come any closer. And this is what I've learned, helps to keep that distance.

Speaker B:

Yeah. And that could be distance from dogs, people, skateboards, anything, really. Right.

Speaker C:

That's what we're talking about.

Speaker B:

And I'm really glad you defined that word because I'm like you, I struggle with it. I struggle with it because it doesn't really describe anything. We can't use that word and then all describe the same thing. To use that term, different people mean different things by it. So I'm really glad that you operationalize that for us and described what it means when we call use this very general term. So thank you for doing that. But we come across this a lot, don't we? Because you work in separation anxiety all the time, and you work with dogs with. I love what you said, highly wound.

Speaker B:

Tightly wound.

Speaker C:

That. Tightly wound.

Speaker B:

Yeah, tightly wound. So you work with these dogs all the time, and every now and again, you get a dog that is so tightly wound that they really can't cope with any dogs or any people, and basically, at the same time, can't be left. So let's talk about those challenges. When you're presented with that dog. How do you deal with that? How do you approach that?

Speaker C:

With guardians. Yeah. So I was in this situation myself. So I found that when my dog was fearful of unfamiliar people, she loved dogs, but fearful of unfamiliar people. And we had just moved to a new city that was over an hour and a half away from our old one. And for me, she developed separation anxiety. And the most difficult thing to do is that absence suspension. It wasn't because I couldn't rearrange my schedule, which I could do some of that, but I could never leave the house because we didn't know anybody.

Speaker C:

So she didn't have familiarity built up with anybody that she felt comfortable with, and I didn't feel comfortable leaving her with just anybody either. So I found that for that, that was the most difficult part for me. But if you have a dog who's reactive, maybe to dogs, but is dog social, you might have a hard time finding somebody who can competently take your dog for walks or outings. I might be not really comfortable taking them to doggy daycare. I mean, it's so hard because there's so many people who mean well, but just don't have the skills to help our dogs. Even in the management scenario aspect.

Speaker B:

Oh, yeah, it's so tough. I've got one of each. Well, Percy used to have separation anxiety, but I was lucky because he was okay with other people. He's great with other dogs, but my other dog, Tex, has got all the other things. And I often think, oh, my goodness, if Tex had separation anxiety and I had to get people to come into the house, maybe pick dog walker to pick him up, or he has to go into, I mean, he couldn't do daycare. He just couldn't do daycare. I just think, oh, my goodness, I got lucky because I had the different problems than the different dogs. But, you know, you had both going know, and we see this, it's not uncommon.

Speaker B:

So I just want to explain to people who maybe don't always follow the podcast and maybe tuning in because Jen's talking about this topic of reactivity and people are getting very excited about that. I want to explain absence, and do you know what? Why don't I get you to explain what absence suspension is? Because you're the separation anxiety expert, too.

Speaker C:

Yeah. So absent suspension is very important part of working with our dogs with separation anxiety related behaviors, because that is the thing that is making them panic. So that means that

we have to stop leaving them alone for longer than they can handle. And for most people, when they reach out to a separation anxiety specialist, it's usually pretty zero. Right? Some dogs have worked up to a certain amount of duration, maybe like two minutes or something like that, but not very long, usually before they start to panic. So really, you have to stop putting your dog in that situation that's causing them to panic if you want them to start feeling safe about it.

Speaker B:

Yeah, I'm glad that you did that explanation, because people are used to the way I explain it. It's always nice to hear the same concept explained in a slightly different way. So thank you for that. Yeah. So, of course, when we start working with dog with separation anxiety, we're all about. Yes. Okay, so now you need to stop leaving your dog. And here's how you might do it.

Speaker B:

And I know it's going to be awful, but we go try and encourage people and make them feel like it's doable. And then we're suggesting all these things that when you have a dog that doesn't get on with dogs or people, people are looking at us going, how am I going to do that with my dog?

Speaker C:

You're crazy.

Speaker B:

That's not happening. So I'm really curious. What did you do with your dog? Because you had to do this, you had to leave the house at some point. So how did you eventually manage to get her to be okay with at least some other situation?

Speaker C:

Yeah, so I did a lot of things wrong. It was before I'd read a book and I was trying things.

Speaker B:

Jan, we're either winning or we're learning. You didn't get it wrong. You were.

Speaker C:

You know, I tried situational meds for her, and on the third time, she's like, I know what this means. And she would immediately start to panic as soon as she started to feel kind of ugly.

Speaker B:

So basically.

Speaker C:

I was lucky in that I could go down to basically working almost not at all in order to suspend absences while my partner was working full time. And then I would wait for him to get home

before I would go out and take clients. So I was very fortunate. It still was not easy. Absolutely. But, yeah, that's how I got through. It was sheer luck, honestly.

Speaker B:

Well, and it's interesting because I know that sometimes people will say a dog with separation anxiety would be so much better with this family setup or this household setup. But as I remind people, even though in your situation you were able to flex things, you still have medical appointments, you still want to go out to dinner every now and again with your other half, not do it in shifts. You go to dinner, they go to dinner. So there's always times where it just comes to the point where you want to do stuff together. You can't 24/7 manage one being at home and the other being out all the time. Right, right.

Speaker C:

And for us, being in a new city, we wanted to try and make friends, but we couldn't have friends over and we couldn't leave. It was like that huge double edged sword. It was tough.

Speaker B:

But then presumably, I know you said you did a lot of things wrong. Well, actually, yeah. Share some of those, because I always think it's helpful for people to know that even brilliant trainers like you sometimes, way back when you didn't know, when you weren't necessarily the brilliant trainers that you are now, because we all start somewhere, right? I think it's comforting for people to know that we're not perfect. Either we definitely make mistakes or not mistakes. We're learning, learning experiences.

Speaker C:

Absolutely. And it doesn't feel like that at the time.

Speaker B:

What were a couple of things you looked back on and go, wish I'd done that differently.

Speaker C:

Well, I tried the whole music thing, so I tried turning on music and then leaving, and it was really nice, soothing through the dog's ear. I read the book and I was like, okay, this is going to help. No. It became a departure cue. She learned that that meant I was leaving. So then I tried the meds, which didn't help. Then I started trying to work on crating her with me doing small, tiny, tiny, tiny absences out into the other. The hallway or whatnot.

Speaker C:

And I had to start there because we had four dogs at the time and one of them had seizures. So it was very complicated how we had to have them all separated just in case. So I didn't have the option of not having her confined in some way that didn't work. As soon as I would close the door, she would start to get upset. And this is a dog who got so upset by the crate that on the day we

were moving from our former home to our new one, she broke three of her teeth getting out of the crate. So I knew that I could not push that at all because she is definitely a dog that would do anything, including severely harming herself. So then I tried a gate across the door that didn't work. And then I almost gave up.

Speaker C:

I was like, I don't know what to do. And this was in the age where working from home was really not a thing. Just not a thing.

Speaker B:

No, exactly.

Speaker C:

Absolutely.

Speaker B:

I remember.

Speaker C:

Yeah.

Speaker B:

No, I was just going to say that you were reeling off all the things and I was there, too. All the things. And I look back now and I'm horrified at all the things I tried. Why did I ever think they would work? Well, because people would tell us that they worked 1012 years ago. This is what. Well, people still recommend some of these things, but, yeah, we didn't know any different. Right. So we tried all the things because some things got to work eventually, surely.

Speaker C:

Yeah. And before she had separation anxiety, when she just had the. I say, just like it's little. Had the fear and aggression responses towards unfamiliar people. I was really resistant to meds, any sort of formal meds. So I tried every herbal supplement thing possible, like things that would take, like, a month of you sprinkling on their food. And I finally broke down, was like, all right, apparently this is my problem thing. I need to get over it and get my dog some help.

Speaker B:

Right?

Speaker C:

So that helped me in the long run with the separation anxiety, because we did get to a point where she was good for about, like, an hour, and then she couldn't get past that stage. So we had to kind of start experimenting with medications to add to her current. Her daily dosage of antianxiety

meds to help us get past that hump. And that would have been much longer if I hadn't already been open to meds and seen what a benefit they were.

Speaker B:

Yeah. Like me, we get there eventually, just kind of, in hindsight, wish it hadn't taken so long. And now we're both massive advocates because we've been through that process. We want to save people the time. One of the things that comes up, well, it does come up all the time with people I work with is when they have a dog who finding someone to be with them or daycare is no longer an option. When they have a dog like that, they want to work on those issues. I mean, they want to work on those issues regardless of whether their dog's got separation anxiety. They want a dog who can be sociable with other people and other dogs, but now they've got.

Speaker B:

So they've got this big bucket of problems of a dog who doesn't like a bunch of stuff and then also doesn't like being alone, and there's only limited time and limited headspace. I always say in any week to do this kind of training, especially when you've got all the other things going on with your dog. So how do you think people should prioritize their training time? They've got all these things that they potentially would want to work on, separation anxiety, but a dog who can't be left with anybody else. So how do they decide where to invest their training hours? Yeah.

Speaker C:

So I always have a conversation with my clients to say, where are they now? Do they have anybody that their dog does feel comfortable with? Many people have a friend or family members. They're like, oh, yeah, my dog frequently goes to my mom's house, or my dog loves my friend so and so because she met her when I first adopted her. So some people do have some avenues there. So I'll say, okay, how close are they? Would you be able and comfortable approaching them about this with the caveat that this is not forever? And I say pay them in wine or chocolate. Do something as a thank you. Trying to figure out where, basically, how their village is set up. Do they have enough resources there to start separation anxiety training? If they do, then I say, okay, now you've got the option of starting with your separation anxiety training, or if you want to grow that village or you feel that it is something that is impacting your lives daily, the fear, aggression or reactivity, then we could start there, too.

Speaker B:

Yeah.

Speaker C:

So I'll say you've got options here, but you have to figure out management for one of them.

Speaker B:

Yes, exactly. Because both of them require management and depending. Yeah, one of the things I say to people is, well, you know, what's, what's affecting your life most? And I. I do try to talk

people back from trying to do all the things because I don't know about you, but I just find that gets completely overwhelming. Then if they're trying to work on all of the issues all of the time.

Speaker C:

Yeah, absolutely. I'm big into prioritizing and saying, hey, I know you want to do it all, but let's do this for x amount of duration, like a month. And then if you're starting to feel like, hey, I've got my head wrapped around how to help my dog feel better about this person I'm adding to our village now I'm feeling confident, like I can take on the separation anxiety training on top of while I'm continuing to get my dog comfortable with this person. I really encourage them to do that just because it is a lot for anybody. Your separation anxiety training is daily. We do encourage, of course, days off, but it doesn't seem like it's going to be that much until you start doing it. You're like, oh, my God, I have to do my session.

Speaker B:

And I always say, you know what? It's fine not to love doing separation anxiety training. And then somebody will always pop up and say, actually, I really do like it, but I remind people it's fine. Rarely do we get up in the morning and say, I can't wait to do my debudget training today. It's not like tricks. It's not like going to agility with your dog, it's worthy. But it's not necessarily the most fun training we will ever do with our dogs. And that's okay. It's okay that people don't love it, but just do it because they know it's the right thing to do.

Speaker B:

And so I'm always conscious of not overwhelming them with more stuff. Although, can we talk a little bit about, we could do a whole other podcast series, quite frankly, on how we help fearful dogs overcome other issues. But when you're talking about, say, for example, we're trying to get a dog to love more people or love that person that they're kind of okay with a bit more. We use food, right? So it's not like separation anxiety training where we're like, no food, no food. You are going to suggest that people use food, aren't you?

Speaker C:

Yes, absolutely. And really fabulous food. So no storebought treat is going to be enough. I was thinking my first one, spam. I use spam all the time.

Speaker B:

I didn't know that.

Speaker C:

I love spam. So much easier to cut up than hot dogs, of course.

Speaker B:

Yes.



Speaker C:

So that usually people are like, whoa, really? And I was like, yeah, and we want to keep it special. So most people have already used peanut butter or something like that with their dog, but we want to really up the ante so that when they first see this person, he's like, I get spam. Spam rains from the sky. When I see this people I'm not familiar with, I kind of want to see them more. So that's what we're looking for, is to change how our dogs feel. But just like with separation anxiety, we have to go with their pace, so we most definitely will use food. You're not going to change how a dog feels about something with pats on the head or happy talk, and it's.

Speaker B:

Not rushing up to people and, hey, this person's great. You're going to get spam. So there's still the same element of desensitization in there as well, which is the going at the dog's pace, isn't it taking.

Speaker C:

Exactly, yeah. And there's so many things to take in consideration with a person that people might not think about at first because they will commonly reach out to me and say, hey, my dog's randomly reactive. I have no idea what they're responding to. Why do they like some people and not others? Why can we walk past one person and we're on the same side of the sidewalk and like a foot away where there's a person across the street and my dog is barking and lunging at them? So we really have to break it down so that they can start to understand the different things that our dogs are noticing, our body language, how fast that person is coming towards them. What exactly are they doing? Angle of approach, are they coming head on versus from the side? There's so many different things there that our dogs are observing and saying, hey, is this person going to try and say hi to me or not? Am I going to be put in this situation again or not? So really helping them to learn body language, it's such a good point as.

Speaker B:

Well, because even when we spot those trends and we discover that person across the road, for whatever reason, is more threatening than person just passing by could happen. And people I don't understand. Don't understand why that is. I mean, it seems to be the case. There's definitely a trend here. But why is that? You know what? Sometimes it's just because dog. Because your dog has decided it doesn't like that thing, but it likes this thing. And so what we're going to do, we're going to work on the thing.

Speaker B:

It doesn't like. It doesn't always add up to us when we work these things out. We go, oh, wow. It seems to be when he. Oh, wow. Why would he be like that? He's decided that's scary for him.

Speaker C:

Exactly. Yes. Scary for them. And that's all that matters. Yes.

Speaker B:

We can tie ourselves in knots because it doesn't seem logical. I mean, the example that we often talk about is when people change garments. Right. So they put hats on or they'll put a different coat on. Same person with a hat, to us, is the same person, but to some dogs, completely different. Beast man with a hat, completely different to the man without a hat. And they just look at the world differently from us.

Speaker C:

Yeah. And they're so smart. I had one client whose dog would know when people were looking at their phone. So if they were looking at their phone and walking past was totally fine. If they didn't have their phone, that was a bit more of, I hope they don't make eye contact. We have to get distance ASAP, like all kinds of things. But if that phone was up, the dog was like, cool, I got it.

Speaker B:

Oh, wow. That is so fascinating, because the dog presumably is assuming or has learned that when people have a phone, they don't interact with the dog. The strange dog.

Speaker C:

Yeah.

Speaker B:

When they have the phone, they're not bothered, but when they don't have the phone, they're more likely to come over and say, I'm great with dogs. I'm so good with dogs. In fact, it's funny you say that, because one of my dogs reacts to people who say things like that. They react to that. I'm good with dogs. People.

Speaker C:

Oh, no.

Speaker B:

In their face. The people are right in the dog's face. Yeah. I'm really good with dogs. Okay. Yeah. So prioritizing. Yeah, I love that you say that.

Speaker B:

So prioritize because you want to think through how is this going to impact, most impact my life? And sometimes there's a practical thing, isn't there? Maybe I'm not ready to do separation anxiety training yet because, I don't know, my other half is not on board, but he is on board for doing some of the fear training. So maybe we'll start there, too. So there's logistics, there's practicality, but prioritizing is the key. Right. Rather than trying to do all the things.

Speaker C:

Yeah, absolutely.

Speaker B:

Can we just talk a bit more about your concept of building a village? We talk about it quite a bit with separation anxiety, but it's interesting that you also talk about that for dogs who are kind of a bit scared of the world. So tell me a bit more about building a Village for these dogs.

Speaker C:

So I always think of it like our dogs that are fearful of people, or, heck, even other dogs. I mean, we build their village, too, is that they don't have a whole lot of associations or in their good bucket, I guess, with people. And if we're trying to introduce lots of new people constantly to our dog, I can feel like it just gets to be too much, even if they're doing the exact same thing on the protocol that I've given them. Like, do this, do that, have your helper do this. There's so many other potential things that could be going on that that person could be doing or that your dog's not comfortable with that. I'm just like, hey, let's start with one person. We're going to focus on that person. And I always encourage people, find somebody who takes direction well, is going to be comfortable with your dog that is willing to do this more than once.

Speaker C:

So we really get kind of picky with who we pick so that it can be the easiest possible set up for our dog. Because for most people, the goal is to be able to get somebody inside their house that they can hang out with and that they can relax with. So if we can say, hey, we're going to add Victoria to your village. She's a great one. She's my training partner, and she knows all the stuff that people do that could possibly make a dog uncomfortable. So she is really great at being, like, the second stranger that we added to the village of a dog. Because I will have given clients a lot of guidance on body language, how and why I'm making decisions with. If I'm going to push on to another step or not.

Speaker C:

And then I'll say, okay, now Victoria is going to be. You guys going to practice your skill set? Because it's weird asking a friend to, hey, can you stand up for 3 seconds and then sit down again? Can you do this? And blah, blah. So they get good at coaching their helpers by being able to coach somebody who, if the scenario was maybe like, I don't think their dog's ready for that, she'll say. She'll tell them, brilliant. Hey, why would you make that decision? And maybe we should do this, or maybe we should do that. And she also is very good at keeping an eye on the dog's body language at the same time and coaching them. And that takes practice because the dog can't feel like you're staring at them and being all weird.

Speaker B:

I tell you what, hats off to. I say this a lot because I only work with separation anxiety. We've got the luxury, as you know, when you're working separation anxiety cases. We've got the luxury of video, got the luxury of replays. We've got the luxury of coaching while not being in the room with the person and the dog. And I always think, how do you guys do it when you've got dog and person

and you're trying to coach and watch body language and you're not watching it on video? It's all live and like, whoa, it's amazing how you do it.

Speaker C:

Yeah. Well, honestly, if I could take one positive thing out of the pandemic, which obviously was horrible, was that it got people more familiar with technology, and I now no longer have to walk into a house clueless. People would fill out their intake forms. And I can read a lot from the intake forms, but I don't have to do as much training on the fly while watching body language and talking to people and explaining things, I can do all of that set up initially online where we go over what's going on, what have they observed? Things like going over body language, watching videos together, letting them know what exactly to expect when I get there and what to do. So I love it. It's just so much easier on me and on the guardians because they're able to start practicing some stuff right away and they can feel more confident and not so nervous having someone come into their home.

Speaker B:

And also, we say this all the time when people ask us why we do separation anxiety remotely. Well, we don't need to be an added unnatural factor, unnatural parameter in the room with the dog. And for a dog who's scared of people. That can be a big deal when the trainer comes around too. So I guess what you're saying is you can manage that much more effectively because you can have a conversation beforehand and then maybe you can chat about whether now is even the right time for you to come round. Maybe they do some work first and then you come round. Or I guess at least when you come round, everybody knows what to expect. You've got a drill, you go into that.

Speaker B:

So I love that. Do you find that you're doing more of that kind of setting up beforehand before you go round?

Speaker C:

Yeah, I actually made it mandatory. I loved it so much. This is just the way it is now. I like it. I just feel much better about this situation too, because I have, knock on wood, always been safe and nothing bad has happened. But there are some circumstances where you feel little unnerved and, yeah, I prefer just to not have those happen in my life.

Speaker B:

And it's really old school as well, isn't it? To think that we can't help a fearful dog without seeing it panicking.

Speaker C:

Absolutely.

Speaker B:

Seeing, going over threshold. We don't want to be part of the problem, so we don't need to go into a house and prompt a dog into a fearful reaction so that we work with that dog. We don't need that information, do we?

Speaker C:

Yes. And I also feel that using technology straight off the bat, common technology that most people are used to using by now, it also opens up so that they are also more willing to do things such as take videos and send them to me between our sessions. Yeah, that used to be a little difficult, even though we all have phones that we're constantly using to take photos and videos. But taking photos or videos of them training with their dogs seemed to be difficult, but it's not anymore. And it's so wonderful being able to see them in action because there's so many times where I can just watch the video, take ten minutes and record another little video that says, hey, this is what I'm observing with your dog's body language. Your timing mechanics were a little bit too fast there. Let's do this and change it up. And boom.

Speaker C:

Rather than them having to invest in another full hour session with me, it was ten minutes of follow up for me. So I want to help people help themselves as much as I can, which probably is not a good business model, but I want them to succeed.

Speaker B:

It is like separation anxiety in that there's a lot of repetition required, a lot of repeat, repeat, repeat. So you can't do that you can't be the one because no dog would ever get enough of the right exposure over the frequency of. So I just have to throw into the mix as well that the method that Jen's talking about. And we both went to the academy for dog trainers, so we both learnt from the best at how to deal with fearful and aggressive dogs. And I've been using this counter conditioning for years with my dog techs. And many years ago, he was a dog that wasn't comfortable with strangers, wasn't comfortable with people coming around. He's now a dog that I happily and readily leave with house sitters who he's met once. In fact, a couple of years ago we had a house sitter, she was a trainer friend, so I felt really secure with that.

Speaker B:

But he'd never met her, but I still felt really comfortable with her opening the door, calling his name and him going, yay. I love it when strange people come into the house because it always rains amazing treats, because the first thing I say to anybody coming to the house is just give him it all. He doesn't have to do anything. You're just going to be the person, you're going to be the treat dispenser, just go for it. And people always give like, tiny, tiny little bits. I'm like, no, go crazy.

Speaker C:

I want this bag empty.

Speaker B:

Come back to a slightly fatter dog. And then we get these treats that come in sort of like beef sticks, like ten centimeter sticks. And some people literally take my word and I come back and he's had like a bag of those a day. I'm like, okay, fine, no wonder he loves you. But that's okay. Rather that, but it's transformational. It's transformational. And now when he sees strange people in the street, the first thing he does is he looks at me and goes, hang on a minute, hang on.

Speaker B:

I get a treat when I see these people. What are you doing, lady? It's magical when it works. It's so magical, isn't?

Speaker C:

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I was just going to say it's one of the reasons why I focus on what, you know, my Mary Lou, who was the one who had separation anxiety and had the fear of know, it was such a struggle. But once I found the academy for dog trainers and truly learned how dogs learn, it was a game changer, absolute game changer. And I was just, you know, we can help these people like me and Mary Lou, and I just couldn't wait to start helping other people. And it just so important actually understanding how dogs learn and not know. There's so much stuff out there that it's just opinion based off of myth after myth after myth. But if you don't know how they learn and are able to apply it, you're not going to get anywhere and.

Speaker B:

Apply it correctly as well. Because again, as with separation anxiety training, we often hear, well, I tried that. Didn't work. Trainers might say, no, that doesn't work because I've tried that. I've tried that with my clients and it doesn't work well. Yeah, but have you? So that's one of the things that I know that when people, hopefully when they start working with us, we can say, yeah, you know what, you gave it your best shot, but here's what you could do differently. That's going to be the thing that's going to help you. So there's doing it and there's doing it right.

Speaker B:

And I'm not trying to sound like, oh, we're so wise and we know it, but there is that factor of you have to do these things right. That process we talk about where a dog sees something and then amazing spam happens, there's more to it than I've just described. And so your coaching is just invaluable in that situation.

Speaker C:

Absolutely. Things, you can't get them close enough. It has to be done properly. Yeah, like you said, we're not trying to say, hey, we know it all, but we know our foundations rock solid, man. Those were drilled into us and there's a reason for it. We use them every.

Speaker B:

Yeah, yeah. It becomes such a. So Mary Lou and my dog Tex, who didn't have separation anxiety, but I say he's pretty much got all the other things. Dogs with multiple issues. One thing that comes

up a lot my clients ask me frequently is, do you think these are correlated? So do you think that Mary Lou had separation anxiety because she was anxious about other things, so one triggered the other. And I'm not expecting you to answer just for Mary Lou, but I just wonder if you had any thoughts, know, are these things correlated or is it, know, dogs get separation anxiety and they might be fearful of men with hats, but it doesn't necessarily mean if your dog's scared of men with hats, they'll get separation anxiety. So what are your thoughts on that?

Speaker C:

Yeah, not for 1 second thought that it was related for her. And I guess part of me was the reason why right away, being a younger in school trainer at that time was I knew how kind of sensitive or tightly wound she was in general. About life. So it wasn't just strangers. It'd be like the smoke detector battery would beep and she would become upset. A hot mess, hiding in the bathroom. So I don't think that they were related at all. And I was managing her stress like a helicopter mom, like crazy.

Speaker C:

So she wasn't going through stressful situations on the regular. Once I figured it out, there are commonalities with our dogs that have separation anxiety. Routine changes are a big one. We also seem to be finding that a lot of it seems to be genetically related, but it's not a slippery slope that if your dog is uncomfortable with one thing, then they're uncomfortable with another. You're just waiting for the shoe to drop on the next one. I don't believe that they're connected like that. I think the main thing is making sure that our dogs aren't daily being put into stressful or anxious situations. I feel like that can lead because kind of compound itself onto increased behavior issues as well as health issues.

Speaker B:

Yeah, well, that's a real biggie, isn't it? The impact of ongoing stress on health is really well documented for people now. So I think it's pretty reasonable conclusion to say that dogs must be affected in a very similar way. So, yeah, that whole thing about let's do what we can to reduce the fear and the stress and anxiety in their world, that's going to be good for whatever behavior problem you're dealing with. It just makes sense.

Speaker C:

Yeah.

Speaker B:

And I do wonder about my dog Tex and all his things. I think, like you say, some of them have some commonalities, like maybe a startle thing or a surprise thing, and then some of them are just like, yeah, I think you just got unlucky. And he doesn't like this and he doesn't like that, but they're not necessarily related. And then also, even if they were, we're not going to do anything differently.

Speaker C:

Yes, exactly. We're still going to address the same.

Speaker B:

Yeah, exactly. We can spend a lot of time trying, thinking about the whys and the wherefores. If that changes how we do things, that matters. But if it doesn't change how we do things, let's just get on with what we know and help these dogs.

Speaker C:

Yeah. Start helping them with relief, and the guardians with relief, obviously, as soon as possible.

Speaker B:

Yeah, absolutely. And so loving this conversation, but, yeah, let's finish with some, if that's okay, some final tips and advice for guardians dealing with this kind of duality of problems.

Speaker C:

So my final advice would be to really as we were talking earlier, create that priority list. What is going to give me the most relief right now so that I can continue to help my dog. It's very easy to feel overwhelmed, and if you try and do it all at once, your head's going to be spinning, and then you're going to feel like you're not making progress anywhere. So prioritize. Heck, make a checklist. I'm a big list person, as I'm sure many people who know me well would tell you that. I'm like, okay, I'm going to do this first. And then once I do this and I get that done to my satisfaction, I'm going to move on to the next thing.

Speaker C:

So really prioritizing so that you can have the energy to continue to help your dog.

Speaker B:

That's fantastic. Yeah, that's a really good, positive note to end on. And so, Donna, if people want to reach out to you, to work with you, either for separation anxiety or for fear based issues that we might umbrella call reactivity, but we know much more, how can they get in touch with you.

Speaker C:

Yeah. So our website is wagthedog and company all spelled out, and we'll work with anybody on any different type of case, but we do specifically specialize in fear, anxiety, and aggression. And to that, I know that not everybody is able to afford private, one on one training and something that both Victoria and I feel deeply about. So we created a membership that's actually a monthly membership called the introverted dog. We felt that that most encompassed all the possible issues that dogs that are fearful, reactive, or aggressive towards people. And it could be unfamiliar and familiar people. It's just a monthly membership where we take on different topics every week, or we build on topics so you can learn how to help your dog slowly.

Speaker B:



Yeah, I love it. That sounds great. And particularly if people from my membership are listening, they'll be so on board for that, because I think people recognize that you just need that ongoing support. It's really hard to do this on your own, and you don't have to do it on your own.

Speaker C:  
Right.

Speaker B:  
What I'm going to do is I will link to your website, and we'll link to the introverted dog as well in the show. Pretty. You do some pretty cool stuff on Instagram. So we'll link to your Instagram and other social accounts. So if people want to reach out to Jen and team, then feel free to check her out in the show. Notes.

Speaker C:  
Super. Thank you.

Speaker B:  
Yeah. Thank you so much for your time today. This has just been, I've loved it, and I know it's going to be so invaluable to listeners. So thank you. Thank you, thank you.

Speaker C:  
Thank you for reaching out, and I hope that your listeners find this helpful for next steps on how they can help their fearful dog.

Speaker B:  
They absolutely will. Thank you again, thank you so much.

Speaker A:  
For listening to this episode of the be right back Separation Anxiety podcast. If you want to find out more.

Speaker B:  
About how I can help you further.

Speaker A:  
Head over to [julianismith.com](http://julianismith.com). Meanwhile, if you enjoyed listening today, I would love it if you would head over to wherever you listen to your podcasts and consider rating my show. Thanks so much. Good luck with that training and bye for now.