

## Be Right Back! Podcast with Julie Naismith

### Episode 088 Transcript – Know Better Do Better\_ Trainer Tips for Forgiving the Innocent Mistakes We All Made in the Past

<https://julienaismith.com/episode-088/>

This episode is inspired by my amazing certified essay, pro Trainers. It was based on a discussion that was in the graduate group for the trainers, and one of them had posted how she was feeling really bad for one of her clients because her client was being really hard on herself. So her client was going through something that many of us have been through. When we have a dog with separation anxiety, where when we find out, when we realize what our dog was going through, we feel terrible.

We feel so bad about how our dog was feeling, even though we're now doing the right thing, it just really hurts to think that we didn't spot the signs and we just didn't know. And so my trainer was reaching out to the community, to our community of trainers to say, what do you say in this situation? And I just loved the answers that came back. So today I want to share those with you, the things that trainers want you to know if you're feeling bad about what happened to your dog before you started working on their separation anxiety. And the key thing is, when we know better, we do better.

So some of these come from my trainers, some of them come from me, but they all come from the heart. So number one, we want you to know that your dog forgives you. Even if you don't forgive yourself just yet, your dog absolutely forgives you. And also your dog is so grateful to everything that you're now doing, okay? So your dog isn't dwelling in the past and hating you and blaming you and telling you what a terrible pet parent you were. Your dog's forgiven you. I mean, isn't that one of the things we absolutely adore about our dogs, is that they have this unbelievable ability to forgive us?

It's also one of the reasons why, sadly, so many people take advantage of dogs, because we can do horrible, terrible things intentionally to dogs and they will still forgive us. Now, the key thing here is if you didn't know your dog had separation anxiety and you're now feeling bad because you didn't know, then you really do need to be kind to yourself because you didn't know you didn't do this intentionally. And your dog absolutely does forgive you.

And your dog is going to be so thankful because you're now committed to turning things around. You've got the knowledge now, and that's what matters. It's what you do from here on that counts. The second thing we want you to know is that we want you to give yourself kudos for committing, committing to do the best you can for your dog. Plenty of people know their dog has got separation anxiety and don't do anything about it. Plenty of people don't even want to know that

their dog has separation anxiety. They rather would keep their head buried in the sand and just pretend that their dog barking all day or chewing or destroying. It's something.

It's just a dog thing, and the dog's all right. I just don't want to know. So you need to give yourself a huge amount of kudos for trying to find out what was going on, for seeking help, and for committing to do the best you can going forward. Right? It's all about what you do from right here, right now, and not about what you did in the past. So kudos to you for everything that you've committed to do for your dog. And number three, we want you to keep reminding yourself that you're doing something, you're taking action, and you need to give yourself some reward for that. You need to recognize how important that is for your dog and for you. You're doing something.

You need to know that a lot of people aren't. So even when they find out that their dog has separation anxiety, even when they find out how to overcome their dog separation anxiety, they aren't taking action like you are. So you need to give yourself some recognition for being an action taker, for looking to the future, and for doing something about this. The fourth thing we want you to know is that learning is critical. Learning is such a vital part of helping dogs overcome anything, but it's especially vital when it comes to helping dogs overcome separation anxiety. So, yes, okay, you might have missed some of the really big signs of separation anxiety. It can happen. Maybe you missed some of the more subtle signs.

Okay, so maybe the big signs you read, but then you thought your dog was okay because your dog wasn't barking the whole time. Your dog wasn't destroying the whole time. But now you're listening to my podcast or you're reading books about this, or you're working with a trainer, you start to realize that sometimes these dogs are actually pretty subtle in the way they tell us that they're unhappy. But that's learning. So you know way more about your dog and their condition than you did back when back when you had no idea what on earth was going on. And in order to get your dog over separation anxiety, you really do need to become an expert in your own dog. So let's not be hard on ourselves, because way back when, we had no clue and now we know stuff, we suddenly feel crushed by the weight of that knowing. Rather, think of it like this.

Say to yourself, well, actually, let's use a Nelson Mandela quote, because there are so many brilliant Nelson Mandela quotes. This is absolutely one of my favorites. Nelson Mandela said, I'm either winning or I'm learning. I'm either winning or I'm learning. So if you missed the signs that your dog was struggling if you missed the signs that your dog wasn't coping with being alone and if you see those now, if because of your own thirst for knowledge and your own desire to get education.

If, because you're now working with a trainer, you know what was going on in the past and you know what's going on now, instead of saying, I feel so bad about that, say, okay, but that knowledge is helpful because, yes, you learned, and that learning is going to help you going forwards. Because if you can't start to spot these subtle signs and in fact if you were here now

saying well I can't still, I just can't see there's a problem. I'm looking at this video, I can't see anything, this dog looks perfectly fine to me, that would be more worrying.

So yeah, it is going to feel awful when you first realize, oh my goodness, all those times I thought my dog was okay and my dog wasn't. It feels awful. I remember that. I remember all too well. But it's okay because you're learning and the learning is such an important part of helping your dog get over this. Next. What we want you to know is that as easy as it is to feel guilty and as normal as it is to feel guilty about stuff that's happened to your dog in the past I mean, I was when? I joined in the post that the trainers were where the trainers were discussing this. One of the things I said was, I still feel horrible and I shudder about some of the things that happened to Percy.

And in fact, it can make me well up. So hopefully I don't well up right now. But it does, it makes me, I look back on things that happened to him that we did. I mean things like we did the classic thing of he'd be okay for 2 hours. So we'd think brilliant, that's it, he's fine all over. Yeah, brilliant. He's over it. And so then we go out and an hour in he's howling, he's crying his head off.

He's howling, howling, howling. And we get back because we're obsessed and we're watching the video but there's a big chunk of time where he's really struggling because back then I didn't realize how important consistency was. Now if you're working with a dog with separation anxiety, you'll know what I mean, your dog can have a really good session and then you think, oh this is it and you want to celebrate. And then from nowhere they have a terrible session. And I often get people saying to me, I just don't get it. I don't get why one day he can do 3 hours and the next day he can only do three minutes. And side note, there are reason why that happens is because your dog isn't consistent yet. So it sounds obvious, but we tend to focus on the longer time.

And if a dog is ping-ponging around between those longer times and those shorter times, actually what your dog's saying to you is I really can't handle those longer times. Really? Because I can't do them all every single time you go out mum. And the way you build up the consistency is you build up from the shorter time. Because if your dog can do 3 hours and then three minutes the next day actually its consistent time is much lower than the 3 hours. But we get so excited we focus on the 3 hours. Of course we do. I remember that all too well. That's one of the things I look back at.

I made huge mistakes there and this was twelve years ago and I was really quite clueless about this stuff. But now I know different. And now I've seen so many dogs and I understand that just because your dog gets to 2 hours you can't then go out to dinner the next day for 2 hours and think that he's going to be okay. And so I look back on that and think oh my little boy, my little boy was just so upset just having a terrible time because I thought he was okay. And now I would say to you, no. Okay, if you've got 2 hours you can only use those 2 hours if we see a consistent pattern. And otherwise you're going to be really cautious and you're definitely going to just be just around the corner. You're probably still sitting in your car because you need to know your dog can nail 2 hours every time before you go off and go too far and don't get back.

So I'm like you. There are things that I wish I could change. There are moments that I think I could have made better decisions. I wish I hadn't put Percy through stuff that I put him through, but because I didn't know what I know now. And yeah, maybe this miss, maybe this whole episode is also a bit of therapy for me because I need to forgive myself for some of the things that I did. And I know that because of the information I have now it's easy for me to say to you, please forgive yourself because yeah, I want to forgive myself I guess. So what else do we want you to know? I also want you to know that if you're feeling any of this it's totally legitimate, totally normal to feel bad about stuff you've done in the past with your dog. And I think anybody who's had a dog with behaviors that are problematic for the dog and problematic for us and then you start to work on them.

Anybody who's got a dog like that, we've all done stuff. So whether it's the dog who hates going to the vets, but we kind of ignored the signs that our dog was stressed and we thought they were when they froze, we thought they were just being good dogs or the dog where we just wanted them to play with every single dog and we didn't spot that. Actually our smaller dog hated the bigger dogs and they were actually quite timid and quite scared, and we just thought they were being a bit boring. So there's a million examples. If you've ever worked with a dog, with anything, any issue where you've helped that dog overcome that, there's always going to be stuff. Because until you know more, you can't change what you do. But now you do. So it's okay to feel bad about the past, but it's really important to let that go too.

And so I want to end by saying I really, really implore you to forgive yourself. I really want you to do that. I can promise you, if you're working with a trainer, your trainer is not judging you. Not one bit. Well, certainly if you're not, certainly if you're working with one of my trainers, because they're all amazing empathetic and they really understand what you're going through and they will not judge you. If you are being judged for what you did with your dog in the past, then you're working with the wrong trainer. If you've got friends and family who are judging you for what you did with your dog in the past, then I suggest you just ignore them because you are not at fault here. And self forgiveness is hard.

I know that it's easy to say, it's easy for me to sit on this podcast and say you must forgive yourself, but I know it doesn't come easy, but let's try it. Maybe I'll try it too. Let's remember that our dog has forgiven us. We're focused on the future. And what matters now is how amazing you are for committing to turn your dog's life around so that your dog's happier and that you're happier too. I hope this little mini episode has helped. I think it's really helped me actually, as well. And if you find that you want one to one support from a trainer and you don't already have that, I'm going to link to the page on my website where you can find one of my certified trainers.

That's it from me for today. I'll catch you on the next episode. Bye for now.