

Be Right Back! Podcast with Julie Naismith

Episode 097 Transcript – Separation Anxiety_Revealing the Truth Behind Social Media Misinformation

<https://julienaismith.com/episode-097/>

Have you ever stumbled across a miracle cure for separation anxiety while you've been scrolling, scrolling, scrolling on social media? Guaranteed, guaranteed you have. And have you ever thought, is it true? Could it possibly be the case? There are plenty of those posts out there on every platform that you use. And this week, we've got a new platform. We've got threads as if we don't have enough social media in our lives, we've now got another platform. And the same thing is going to happen on this new platform. It just will. We'll start to see a ton of bad advice and mythical ideas about how to deal with separation anxiety.

And so, in this week's episode, with that theme in mind, thinking about social media and how much time we spend on it, I want to talk about how you can when you're on social media, how can you spot good advice? How can you trust good advice? And where do you go to for advice that you know is really solid? 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. Now, I love social media as a way of connecting people, as a way of getting out good advice about separation anxiety. I mean, I try to do that all the time. I try to disseminate good advice. I try to bring people together with my free Facebook groups, my communities. If you haven't joined my free groups, make sure you do, because they are definitely sources of good advice.

And I'll link to those in the comments. But it can be really hard. It can be really hard to find that good advice and to know when you're in a group or when you're scrolling, when you're on a platform, do people really know what they're talking about? Are they reposting myths? Are they propagating bad information? Or are they actually really knowledgeable about the subject of separation anxiety? I mean, I find it interesting because I see so much bad advice about separation anxiety on social media that when I'm investigating another topic, say something health related. So nothing to do with separation anxiety, but something health related. I'm really, really suspicious of the advice. Even in newspapers, even in trusted media outlets, I am really suspicious of the advice and not because I am a generally suspicious person, not because I'm a conspiracy theorist? Far from it. I believe in information. I believe in facts.

I believe in science. But because I think there is so little reference to good, solid science and fact that when I am looking at other topics that have a grounding in science. So that might be health, that might be fitness, because I see so much bad information about separation anxiety when I'm just screaming at the screen, all you had to do was go on Google Scholar and look up the research. So I see so much of that that it just scares me what information has been given out about other aspects of our life where the science is quite clear but seems to be totally ignored when it comes to writing an article. So it does make me really question the grounding and the sources and where people are getting their information from. Because if they can get it that wrong about dogs with separation anxiety, when there's so much information and so much science around it, journalists or posters or influencers can get it wrong about anything if they're not looking at the science. Really easy to just keep pushing out myths that then gets reposted and retweeted. And what are the big myths when it comes to separation anxiety that I see over and over again on social media.

Well, how long have you got? But I think there are some biggies. The first one I see is lots of people talking about how it's the fault of the person who has the dog with separation anxiety. Sound familiar? Yeah. You've probably had an article forwarded to you or read comments about the fact that it's really all about you. It's your demeanor, it's how you act with your dog. It's what you do because, oh, you're so bad. You let your dog sleep on the bed, you're not enough of a leader, blah, blah, blah. It's all nonsense.

Just the other day, I read a comment from somebody who has had seven Dobermans throughout their life, and they've now got a Doberman that has separation anxiety, and it's really flawed them. It's really caught them off guard because they haven't done anything different with this dog, they haven't taken a different approach, and that dog has got separation anxiety. So those people pushing out the myth that it's all your fault, that it's something you did, that you behaved in the wrong way with your dog, what do they say about the people who've had multiple dogs and only end up with one or two with separation anxiety? How does that work when the person is still the person, the owner is still the owner and not doing anything different. I think it's especially easy to feel that this must be true if you've never had a dog before. So if this is your first dog and people are telling you it's something you did, you've got no benchmark. You can't say, hang on a minute. I've had five dogs in my life, and none of them had separation anxiety. So what did I do different this time? You haven't got that anchor point, but it doesn't matter if this is your first dog or your 50th dog.

You didn't cause your dog separation anxiety. You can let your dog sleep on the bed. Dogs like sleeping on beds. They're social sleepers. They like sleeping with us. Beds are comfy and beds are high up, so it kind of meets all the needs of a dog when they're looking for somewhere to sleep. Letting your dog go out of the door first, letting your dog eat first, all of those nonsensical pieces of advice, if you do any of those, they are not causing your dog's separation anxiety. So whenever you see anything around that myth being posted online or people commenting about it, please ignore it.

It's probably the, it's maybe not the biggest, but it seems to get a lot of airtime and it's really not the case. A second myth I see is that you'll hear some trainers in particular saying that your dog is guilty and spiteful, and your dog knows that you're going out. So it gets mad at you, it gets angry with you. Your dog is just trying to get at you because you decided not to take them. But separation anxiety is an anxiety disorder. It's a phobia. It's a fear based response to being left. Dogs have a really different way of looking at the world from us.

And we have to be cautious when we take human way of thinking, a human way of looking at things, and impose it on dogs, because dogs are much more straightforward than us. They don't manipulate like we do. So that whole thing about dogs trying to get back at you, that suggests that dogs understand how what they do affects how we think. And that's a really complex way of thinking that as far as we know, and there's been plenty of tests on this, dogs don't have. So dogs don't think about thinking right. You might need to just pause and think about that. But if I do something expecting that it will make you feel or think differently. I'm thinking about your thoughts.

I'm thinking about your emotions. I'm not thinking about your behavior. I'm thinking, how will this make you think and feel? And dogs don't do that. They're really simple. Dogs just do what works for them. So dogs say, does this make my life better or does it make my life worse? And a dog who is in a panic is simply trying to in some way, get you to come back so that the panic stops. That's all it's about. It's not some machiavellian plot to try to get back at you by chewing your shoes.

Chewing feels good. One of the reasons dogs chew is because it makes them feel better. And if you're stressed and you're panicky, what are you going to do? You're going to do things that make you feel better. So, no, your dog isn't being spiteful. No, your dog isn't trying to get at you. Okay. Third biggie that I see all the time and drives me bonkers is that you just need to let your dog get on with it. I mean, for goodness sake, what is this crazy thing you're doing? Not leaving your dog and making sure that your dog never has a scary experience on their own? For goodness sake, just go out and forget about your dog.

This especially comes from people who say, we never had a problem. We never had a problem with our dog. Our dog was fine. And you know what I want to say to those people? Yeah. Until you have a dog who isn't, because lots of people have dogs who are fine. Lots of people have dogs who you can just get up and go. You don't have to train them to be left. They just get on with it.

I mean, the truth is, the vast majority of dogs are okay with being left. It's about, I don't know, 80%. And we get lucky. We don't have to worry about them being home alone. They just get on with it. It's not natural and it's not normal for dogs to be completely socially isolated. But dogs are so forgiving and so flexible that some dogs, we just get lucky with them. And all those people who say, oh, well, I didn't have to do anything with my dog.

He's like, yeah, you got lucky. I didn't get lucky. I can't leave my dog. And those people will tell you that you're making it worse. You're making it worse by not just letting your dog bark it out. It's not true. You make it worse when you do let your dog bark it out. And if you've got a dog with separation anxiety, the chances are even just once you've probably tried to take on board their advice and you might have got to about five minutes and gone, no, this isn't right.

My dog is not okay. So dogs don't just get over it. Leaving them to bark it out isn't going to make them feel better about their anxiety at being left. They don't get to an age where they suddenly feel fine. Dogs with true separation anxiety need help at learning that it's okay to being left with training with gradual exposure to alone time. Okay, my final social media bugbear myth is that it's more about the products that get pushed. So as soon as you've got a dog with separation anxiety and you start commenting on threads or on posts where there's a reference to separation anxiety or dog anxiety, get ready for the tsunami of posts and adverts that will tell you there are miracle cures for this. I mean, I use the term miracle cures and I use the term miracle cures because that's really what these products promise.

They promise to take a dog with a pathological extreme response to being left a phobia of being home alone. And they say if you pop onto Amazon or click the buy now button in the ad next week, your dog's going to be fine. And by the way, they're going to be fine by using a product that doesn't have to be tested, that doesn't have any rigor behind it and which you can just buy with one click. That doesn't make sense, right? Because think about a human with anxiety. Do people with extreme anxiety or extreme depression or extreme ptsd, can they just go on Amazon and buy a solution that next week will make them feel okay? I mean, if you've ever been depressed or you've ever had a period where you've suffered with anxiety, was there a miracle cure out there? Could you find that answer in your feed? No, of course not. But the trouble is, as soon as the algorithm works out that you've got a dog with separation anxiety, that's what's going to be pushed to you. And the reason that's going to be pushed with you is because that's where the money is. These products are cheap to produce.

They are cheap to get to market because they don't require testing. So not like prescription drugs, they don't need testing. And they know that people with dogs are desperate, people with anxious dogs in particular. We're desperate. We're desperate for hope. We're desperate for something that will change our dog's anxiety. So of course we're going to give them a go. And then you might say to me, well, yeah, but I looked at the reviews on Amazon.

Yeah, don't trust them. First off, there are places online, basically review factories where people can sign up and get paid for reviews. Right? So reviews do matter. I'm not saying that. I mean, if you see a product and it's only got one, one star review, then, yeah, you definitely don't want to go with that. But you've got to think beyond the reviews with a product such as an antianxiety cure cure. I've got my inverted commas going here and air quotes going here, but you can't see them. But you've got to think beyond that, because what if there are a ton of five star reviews? What if the first 50 reviews were five star reviews, but they came from a review factory? Because remember what I said, these companies have a lot of money behind them on top of that.

So people read the reviews and they start to think, oh, this could be great. And there's a concept in veterinary medicine called the caregiver placebo effect. And that's where when we invest in a solution, in a treatment, and we really think it's going to work. So we've read about this online, it's got 55 star reviews, and we think this could be it. When that happens, we're really invested in this product working. It's not like we are overt about this. It's not like we know our brain is doing this. But whenever that happens, there's a chance that we will start to see the results that we expect to see, and that's the caregiver placebo effect.

So you know about the placebo effect? The placebo effect is where we see in ourselves. We feel an improvement. Even though we haven't taken or haven't been administered an actual treatment, we've been given a placebo. And that's okay in a way, because if we feel better, even though we've been given the placebo, we still feel better. Problem is with the caregiver effect is we, as caregivers, see the benefit, but it's only us that see the benefit. The dogs aren't feeling the benefit. We might see an improvement, we might think we see an improvement. So we go back online and we type away our review, and that's how these products get their sales, and that's how they stay out there, and that's how they make their money.

So be really skeptical of anything. An anxiety wrap, a calming spray, an elixir anything that's promising, a quick, easy resolution to separation anxiety. Now, one final thing I want to mention is when you're online and when you're interacting with people online, how can you be sure that when people are offering you direct advice, they're doing it from a position of knowledge and they're doing it from a position of integrity? So let me give you an example. In our free Facebook groups, I'm very passionate that when people give advice, they give advice which is in line with the evidence and in line with everything we know about separation anxiety, about the treatment, about the products that help and so on. And when people don't follow that rule, when they give advice about something that's unproven, when they give advice about a treatment method that is outdated, then we'll remove that comment because we don't want people getting bad advice. So if somebody dms you or says they'll dm you, they don't want to put the advice in the comments. So you're on a page or you're in a thread or you're in a group, and somebody says, I'll dm you that, but they don't want to put the information out there. Be really wary.

First of all, they're probably trying to sell you something, maybe. And if not, even if they're just well meaning and want to share information with you, why not just put it in the group that you're in or on the page that you're on, why do they need to dm you? So be really cautious about that. And definitely, if somebody's talking about a product and they want to dm you, that's most likely because they're on an account or on a page or in a group where there are rules against spamming and spamming when you've got a product that you're on an affiliate commission to sell, that can mean that somebody is just trying to hide and not do the right thing. So they don't want to put the link, so they dm it to you. So watch out for that one, too. All right, so all in all, I am not saying that you can't get fantastic advice about separation anxiety in social media. You absolutely can. But you have to be really, really wary of your sources.

And if in doubt, trust your senses and know that you need to search out different advice. If you ever, ever have any concerns about any advice that people are giving you, listen, thank you so much for tuning in today. I know you have a ton of options when it comes to podcasts, so I appreciate you taking the time to listen to mine. That's it from me for today. I'll catch you online soon. Bye for now. 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 julianismith.com.

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