

Be Right Back! Podcast with Julie Naismith

Episode 098 Transcript – The Two-Minute Rule Your Secret Weapon Against Training Procrastination

<https://julienaismith.com/episode-098/>

If you're anything like me, like human, then you'll probably reach a point in doing anything, especially anything difficult, where he's just like, I just can't. I just can't do this anymore. Either we just feel completely overwhelmed by it, or frankly, we're just bored by it and we'd just rather do something else. And the thing about separation anxiety training is, let's face it, it is not the most fun thing you're ever going to do with your dog. In fact, it's probably one of the least fun things. Certainly it's the least fun type of training. You know, I mean, it's not agility. It's not going to a tricks class.

It's dull but worthy. I think that's the best we can say. It's dull but worthy. So no wonder then that we have times where we just don't want to do it. We know it's the right thing to do, but it almost just, I don't know, you feel like in your stomach, you just feel that tension and that churning. When you think about doing the training, you think, I know, I just can't take any more of this. It's the last thing that you want to do. But because you know it's the right thing to do, that kind of eats away at you.

And that's why in this podcast, I want to talk to you about something called the two minute rule. It's something that's used by psychologists to help us break through when we feel overwhelmed by a task or we're procrastinating, or we just don't have any motivation. It's something I use all the time, not for separation anxiety training, but for many, many other things in my life. So I want to talk to you about it because I think it might really help you. 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.

Okay, so if this is you, and you feel like you'd rather do anything, anything, rather than do separation anxiety training, just know that you are not alone and know that that's perfectly normal. And it's also okay. But because you want to get your dog over separation anxiety, you know you need to do the training. If there's one thing that people who get their dog over separation anxiety have in common. It's that they do a lot of training. They really do. They're not superhuman. They're no different to you.

They have just done a lot of training. Now, you might be listening to this and thinking, I've done a lot of training, and I still can't get my dog there. The thing about separation anxiety training is lots of repetition, lots of going in and out of the door over and over and over is a necessary condition for getting your dog on the road to recovery. But it's not always the only thing it's necessary. But it's not guaranteed that just by repeating the training or by doing the training and sticking to the plan, your dog will recover. But nobody's ever got a dog who did recover without doing lots of the training. So stick with the training, even if you think it feels unfair, because I am doing it and I'm not seeing progress, you're probably seeing more progress, or you probably have more progress than you might be aware of. But if then you're feeling like, I just can't do this anymore, let's talk about how to get you back on track with the two minute rule, because I want you to be in the camp of those people whose dog has recovered.

So why do we procrastinate? Why do we put stuff off? Well, because it's human nature to want things like immediate rewards. We are tuned. Our brains are wired to respond to things that feel good in the moment. We're really, really bad at delaying gratification. And so there's a reason why we prefer instant hits. And honestly, that's why social media is so popular, because it gives you lots of little instant hits. You get a like, you get a comment, you see something funny in your scroll. It's very immediate, and it's very instant.

And separation anxiety training is like the opposite of that. You're doing something really quite dull, and the payoff is a long way down the line. Now, admittedly, it can feel great. When you have a good training session, that can feel great, but it's still a training session. You're still not at your goal, so you do the training so you can get to your goal. It's not like getting 20 likes on a post, on threads, or on instagram. It's something that we have to put off to the future, and our brains are just not hardwired to do that. It's contrary to how our brains work.

There's a really interesting experiment that you can read about where people are asked if they would like \$10 today or \$50 in a month's time. Or you can play around with the numbers and the duration of the gap between what you get now and what you get in the future, how long that gap will be. But whenever those experiments are run, the vast majority of people will always take the immediate amount, even if it's significantly lower. \$10 today versus \$50 in a month. A month isn't that long to wait, but most of us will say, yes, thank you, I will take that \$10 right away, because it's how we're wired. So when we do activities that aren't intrinsically rewarding, particularly when we're competing, or when that activity is competing for our time with other things that are very rewarding, like watching tv or maybe having a glass of wine, or maybe texting, messaging our friends. Whenever we're competing with something that isn't intrinsically rewarding, the thing that's dull is going to lose out, and that affects your motivation to train. So here's what I want you to do.

When you feel like that, I want you to start thinking about this really simple strategy for overcoming procrastination. This two minute rule. Here's how it works. You have to focus on a

task. So this can work for not just separation anxiety, but it might work for what are the things that you always put off to last. Maybe it's cleaning the house, maybe it's doing your expenses, maybe it's going to the gym, whatever it might be. Think about the task that you're putting off. But you know you need to do.

And the rule is you do that task, but you're only allowed to do it for two minutes. Like, no more than two minutes, right? So you set your stopwatch, you set your timer, and you're only allowed to do the task that you're avoiding for two minutes. And it doesn't matter where you're at, once you get to two minutes, you've got to stop. And so that's kind of weird, isn't it? Because you're just getting into the flow with the separation anxiety training session and you've set the timer for two minutes. And I don't mean two minutes target duration for your dog. I mean, you say to yourself, I'm going to go through some training with my dog, but it's just going to be, I'm not going to spend more than two minutes on this whole training session, right? So just to be clear, it's not a two minute target duration, it's how long you're going to spend on the training session. So your alarm goes off or your stopwatch gets to two minutes, you have to stop. You'll find it really interesting.

If you've never done this before, you'll find it really interesting because human nature is such that we don't like unfinished tasks. So this is like we're trying to harness the way our brains are naturally wired here. So we've got, brains are naturally wired for instant rewards, and we're trying to use another thing that our brains are very wired for, which is I don't like unfinished tasks and get them to compete with each other. So if you're doing your expenses and you only do two minutes, you'll get to the end of the two minutes and think, oh, well, I could do a bit more, but you're not allowed to. The other thing that will happen, particularly when you're doing something like cleaning or a task where you can really get a lot done in a short amount of time, if you're just really focused, is you'll do tons. You'll be amazed how much you can do in those two minutes. Now, I don't want you running in and out of the door when you're doing separation anxiety training, so it kind of doesn't work in that way. But I do want you to stop at two minutes the first time you do it.

So let's talk about why that works and what science says about why doing something for a limited amount of time is actually a really good way to get started with it. There's something called the zygonic rule, the zygonic effect, and let me tell you about how it works. The zygonic effect is all about the fact that people have a tendency to remember and to be affected by unfinished tasks or unfinished activities more than things that are finished. So when we finish something, when it's complete, we kind of forget about it, but when we don't, it gnaws away at, we think, still need to do that thing. So what's going to happen when you use this two minute rule on a task that's going to take much longer is your brain is naturally going to want to say, your brain will scream at you, no, keep going, keep going. Because actually, I need to finish this because now your brain is itching with this unfinished task. And you'll also feel very different by stopping, because you stopped at two minutes than if you spend an hour on a task that could take two minutes. So again, separation anxiety training is a bit more bounded by the rules of how long it will take.

But think about something like cleaning. Maybe you've decided to clean the bathroom, but if you gave yourself two minutes, you could probably do quite a bit. In two minutes, you wouldn't get the bathroom cleaned, but you could probably do quite a bit. Have you ever gone to clean the bathroom and spent 30 minutes on it and really not done very much at all? Yeah, because you do a little bit and then you go and find another product because that's a bit dull and you might try something else. But when you do the two minute rule on a task like that, you always end feeling positive because you cram a ton in. And when you do separation anxiety training, if you just say to yourself, all I'm going to do is two minutes, when you get to the end of that two minutes of training, you'll feel buzzy, you'll feel good because you completed the task and you did it swiftly and you did it efficiently, it's like I did two minutes. Now, you might not get through more than two steps in two minutes, but the point is you will have met your goal, which is, I'm only going to do this for two minutes. So all sorts of good vibes and good thoughts start to kick in when we stick with the two minute rule.

So how are you going to use this in reality for separation anxiety training, which is going to take much longer? Well, generate an exercise. So if you're in my membership, you'll be using my be right back app. So if you're using my be right back app, generate a normal exercise. So you go in, you have your duration, and the app will work out the number of steps that you need to do. But just say to yourself, I'm going to start now and I will just do what I can in two minutes. If that is only one step, that's fine. If it's three steps, whatever, that's fine. You're still going to stop at two minutes.

I will allow you to either stop at, say, 1 minute 51 seconds or two minute 12 seconds. If two minutes means you're stopping in the middle of one of the steps that the app wants you to do, so if the app says do 30 seconds and you're out of the door at 14 seconds, and then your two minute timer comes up, then keep going, keep going for the rest of that step. But that's the only way that you're allowed to set, not do the two minute rule. Okay? So if you don't have the be right back app, remember, I always say train with the plan. So you might have your plan on a worksheet or on a piece of paper, same thing. All you're going to do is you're going to do as many training steps as you can do in two minutes. You're not going to rush anything, but you're going to do it. So only use this rule, though.

So this isn't for everybody. If you're feeling motivated, if you have no problem getting up and doing separation anxiety training, you don't need to use this rule. This rule is for you. If you feel stuck, you don't have any motivation and you keep procrastinating. And I want you to do the two minute rule for a week, right. And absolutely stick with it. So if you do three sessions a week, four sessions a week, whatever it might be, only do two minutes of training. Remember, not two minute target duration, but a two minute total training session, and then see how you feel.

Does it start to feel less overwhelming, less daunting? Oh, because by the way, one of the best ways to tackle overwhelm and procrastination is just doing one tiny, small thing and a two minute task is everybody can do it, right? We can all find two minutes to do something. So you're going to do this for a week and then you can go back to your normal training. That means you can get

through a full training set. You can get through all the steps that the app generated or all the steps on your notepad, if that's what you're working to. But that's what I want you to do for a week and then get back to it. Now, if you find that you get stuck again, what are you going to do? Just keep coming back to this two minute rule. It will always, always dig you out of a motivation dip. It will always break through procrastination for you.

And who doesn't have two minutes to do something, even if it's something that we hate doing? So give it a go. If you're in my separation anxiety heroes membership, pop in the group and tell me how it went. If you're not in my paid membership and you're in one of my free groups, do the same thing. Tell me, did you try it and how did it work for you? Meanwhile, thank you so much for listening today. Good luck with your training and I'll catch you online soon. 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. 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.