

## Be Right Back! Podcast with Julie Naismith

### Episode 102 Transcript – Navigating Your Dog's Separation Anxiety Through the Holiday Season

<https://julienaismith.com/episode-102/>

I'm diving in today to talk to you about the most common questions that I get asked every single year about separation anxiety at this time of year, how's it going to affect my dog, how's he going to respond, how's she going to be if we don't train how's she going to be if we train in a different place. So we've got all those questions covered for you. Alright, so let's start by talking about the questions that I get asked every year at this time of year about separation anxiety and your dog.

So let me go in and we will tackle the first big question. Generally, this comes up every December. Is this whole crazy time of year going to affect my dog's separation anxiety? Well, this is a really big and broad question, but it does get asked an awful lot. And here's what I can say to you is having seen so many dogs over so many years, I can tell you that there definitely can be things that can affect, possibly even make your dog seem clingier over the holidays, that's for sure. Let's talk about what those things could be.

And I don't want to worry you, I just want to prepare you. Okay, so will the holidays affect my dog's separation anxiety? Well, the things that can affect a dog's separation anxiety generally can include things like routine changes, people being around for different times, different changes in the pattern in the household. So when we look at what's going to go on in the next few weeks, for many of you, you're immediately probably thinking, oh yeah, all of that, all of that. You know, you may be taking extra time off work, you may have visitors, you may have more people coming and going, the kids might be off school and so on. So anything like that can definitely start to affect your dog's separation anxiety because they just go, oh, this is different, right? But don't worry, that's okay, we've got that covered. So what can you do about that? Well, first of all, I'm just going to say don't worry, enjoy the next few weeks. The next couple of weeks. If you have got a very big shift in your routine, then we'll deal with it.

We'll deal with it. I'm going to come on to in a second what you're going to do in January if things are a bit different. So definite changes in routine, people coming and going, you spending more time with your dog, those things can make your dog seem a little bit clingier when you go back to normality, but it's only a possibility, so don't freak out too much. It might not be an inevitability. All right, question two, should I pause my separation anxiety training because routines are different, people are around more or less or just in a different way? Well, I would say don't immediately assume that you should pause your separation anxiety training. I mean, standing back a second. And not being the separation anxiety trainer, I'm sort of inclined to say as well, make the most of the next couple of weeks because maybe it's just time to have fun with friends and family and not

stress about your dog's separation anxiety. So I don't think you should necessarily be going crazy with separation anxiety training.

But equally, you don't have to completely take your foot off the gas. You can look for ways to fit the separation anxiety training into the next couple of weeks despite them being crazy. And this is really your preference, I think it can help to keep things going. But equally, if you just feel like, I'm just so ready for a break, then I would not be judging you for doing that. If you're thinking, no, I don't want to pause the separation anxiety training. I just want to make sure that I keep it going. Then maybe what you're going to do is instead of training the four or five times a week that you're currently training, maybe what you're going to do now is train maybe two to three times a week, or maybe even once a week. So we're at the middle of December now.

Maybe your goal is you're just going to train twice or three times before the end of the month. Maybe that's all you're going to do. But if you say no, I am so done, I need to completely take a break, I would understand, but don't think that you have to don't think that just because routines are changing, people are coming and going in different patterns, means you have to pause the training. Those of you who use my Be Right Back training app, this is a really good situation to set up a different scenario, because we might expect that training could be different. What I would suggest is that you have a holidays or a Christmas or some other scenario that you set up in your app just to accommodate for the fact that the training might be a little bit different. Next question. Should you train when you're away? I know many of you do travel and take your dog with you. You're staying relatives, houses.

You're staying with friends. Maybe you're even on vacation or on a trip away. And so should you train when you're away? This one I've got a stronger viewpoint on than should you pause your training entirely? I think pausing your training, that's kind of going to be up to you, whether it works for you in the next couple of weeks. But should you train when you're away? For most people, I'm going to say no here. The reason being that confidence and fear in dogs are both very context specific. So what do we mean by that? Well, they're very much affected. Your dog is very much affected by its environment and location in particular is a really big context cue. What we call a context cue for dogs.

And so if you go somewhere else and maybe it's somewhere you only go to once a month, not even once a month, maybe once a year or maybe two or three times a year, you've got to remember that your dog is currently learning to be alone. If you're doing separation anxiety training, your dog is currently learning to be alone in their current location. And so when you go somewhere else, the learning, it doesn't necessarily start again from scratch because your dog has learned to learn. It kind of knows what this crazy thing is you're doing when you come and go. But the new location is a game changer, and it can mean sometimes can mean that your dog might just not pick things up. Now, it's always worth doing training if you've got the energy for it, but you've got to then remember that your dog might find it much harder and that when you come back home, some of

that training or most of that training won't translate into progress back home. So that's a biggie right, that's a big thing to factor in. Now, here's some exceptions.

The exceptions are if it's somewhere you go regularly and go frequently, if it's somewhere you go once a year, every year, I still wouldn't think it's worth your while. But if it's somewhere you go every couple of months, you're going to keep going there regularly. It's just a fixture on your calendar that you go to your relatives, your parents, your sisters, whatever. You go there regularly, then you're starting to think, yeah, that maybe is worth the while. It's worth investing the time, because we want to be able to leave our dog in this location and we go there often. So that's when I say it's worth training when you're away. Now, if you want to keep the training going, but you've been listening to me going, well, Julie said, don't do the training when I'm away. And we don't go there very often, but I feel the need, I feel the need to do some training.

Two things can work really well for you when you're traveling. One is door is a boar, because it never harms to teach a dog that the door is boring. It's never a waste of time. So it can be a completely different door to your door at home, but it's still worth doing all right. So you can always train when you're away. You can always do that training. Sorry. When you're away.

Doris boar. And the other one is magic mat. Magic mat is brilliant for any location because magic mat is about the mat. Magic mat is about teaching your dog that it's really rewarding to be some distance from you. And actually, magic mat is lovely for when you're traveling and you're staying in strange locations or you're staying with friends and family and you just want your dog to have a really nice settle. So settling on the map in a different place. Definitely training. That's worth considering.

So that's the training I would suggest you do if you're going somewhere that you don't go very often. Okay, the next question that comes up all the time, what should I expect from my dog if we do take a break from training? Okay, so you've done the pros and cons. You've worked out whether training in the holiday season is worth it for you, and you've decided that, no, from about this weekend until January, you're going to take a break. What should you expect from your dog? How will your dog respond to separation anxiety training when you get back? Well, we don't know. We honestly don't know. Some dogs surprise us, and it's as if we hadn't taken the break. In fact, they welcome the break. Some dogs, though, do seem to do better with separation anxiety training if they just keep in the groove.

So if when you get back and it's that first week in January and you're determined to get back into separation anxiety training, which I hope you are, then just lower your expectations. Okay? So if your dog is going to do just as well as when you left off, brilliant. You've lowered your expectations and your dog's exceeded your expectations, fantastic. And if you lower your expectations and your dog kind of meets you there, well, then fine. It's what you expected. You expected your dog not to do as well. So what do I mean by lowering your expectations? I mean that when you're working to a certain target duration with your training, just think about making the target duration much

shorter when you get back. If you're on very short target durations anyway, then go for something like door is a boar.

Okay? So whatever you're doing when you get back, just make it that much easier for your dog. Make the target duration shorter, or work on something like door is a boar. Okay, so final question. There's no point starting training in the middle of December, is there? Well, I don't know about you, but I'm not a huge fan of coming back from a break in January, facing all the things, maybe the difficult things that I kicked into the new year and bracing myself to do all those challenging things. I've had a nice break. It's been lovely. And now I've got a long list of all the things I said I was going to do. Now, don't get me wrong, we can feel really motivated in January and watch this space for some things that I'm going to be sharing with you in January to help keep you motivated or make the most of the fact that many of us come back in January.

Go, yes, I'm ready for this. But it also means you can have a lot on your to do list, and I get it. You may be overwhelmed with getting groceries and wrapping presents and going to your niece's nativity and going to the carol service or just meeting up with friends, whatever it might be, I get that all of that can be going on in the next two weeks. So you may have, like, zero bandwidth, but what if you did? What if you did have some bandwidth? What if actually, because you're not at work as much, especially those weird days, was it twixmas between Christmas Day and New Year? What if you made the most of that time and started your New Year's resolution earlier than January? You will feel amazing. You will feel amazing when you get to January if you've started some stuff then. In fact, the reason I'm saying this to you is because I had something like this on my list that I was going to work on in January. And I just thought, no, I have got a little bit of time now. Maybe not in the next couple of weeks, but I'm going to start it.

And I'm feeling great because I've already started on one of my New Year's resolutions, forget me, get me. But it did make me feel motivated, and I think I'll feel more motivated about that goal when I get back in January because it's not looming over me. I've started it. And the research tells us that the biggest block to making progress on a goal is just starting and taking the first step. So when we take that first step, it's a game changer. And of course, there's somebody at the door because it's that time of year. All right, so those are my top tips for you to get you through the next few weeks. And meanwhile, have a wonderful break, and I look forward to catching up with you in January.

We're going to be busy. We're going to be working on the dog separation anxiety because I'm so hopeful for you in 2024. So watch this space for lots of motivating tips and tricks to get you started when we get going again in January. Meanwhile, enjoy the rest of your month and I will see you all soon. Bye for now. Bye.