

# Calming Your Anxious Dog

Observe your dog's behavior carefully to determine what stimuli create an anxious response. If you know what triggers your dog's reactions, you can avoid those triggers or work on desensitizing the reaction to the trigger.

## Signs of Anxiety

- Tail down
- Crouching posture
- Trembling
- Sweaty paws
- Ears back
- Whites of eyes showing
- Tongue flicking
- Yawning
- Panting and /or drooling
- Refusing food
- Turning head away
- Restlessness, pacing – or unusually lethargic
- Freezing, slow movement (body tension)
- Shaking off or scratching, especially after physical contact

## Practice Calm Greetings & Departures

Certain events are particularly stimulating or stressful to most dogs, such as when you're preparing to go out somewhere or have just returned from an absence. You can make these events less stressful by keeping them calm and neutral. When you enter the house, ignore your dog and go about your business until he/she is behaving calmly, then give your dog attention, keeping it low intensity.

## Avoid Rewarding OR Punishing Anxious Behavior

When your dog is showing signs of tension or fear, avoid the automatic response to pet your dog in an attempt to soothe him/her. Petting may inadvertently reinforce anxious behavior and stimulates the dog's nervous system at a time when they're already agitated.

At the same time, whenever you can avoid it, don't force the dog into situations that your dog will find threatening or traumatic, and don't scold or otherwise punish your dog for any fearful behavior – including defensive aggression. When you scold a fearful or defensive dog, you're just adding to the fear and defensiveness.

## Calming Tools

Calming products help take the edge off the dog's anxiety or excitement, making it easier to work through the training and behavior modification routines. These work differently for different dogs, so you'll have to experiment to see if any work well for your dog.

- Anxiety Shirts - These spandex vests can help calm dogs by applying steady pressure (like swaddling a baby). Check them out on [www.thundershirt.com](http://www.thundershirt.com) or [www.anxietywrap.com](http://www.anxietywrap.com)
- Gentle Leader Calming Cap - This product helps to ease a dog's anxiety during high stress situations, such as car rides, handling, or grooming. The cap helps to reduce visual stimuli and helps a dog to be more comfortable. Found at [www.premier.com](http://www.premier.com).
- DAP - Dog Appeasing Pheromone -- marketed as "Comfort Zone" or "Adaptil." This product simulates a pheromone from a nursing mother dog and can help calm your dog. Available at pet stores, online, or through your veterinarian.
- Essential Oils, Herbal Calming Formulas, & Herbal Infusions – A drop can be put on your dog's collar, blanket, toy or place a drop on towel and put in the dryer (the oil will permeate). Before using essential oils, verify with your veterinarian which ones are pet safe, as not all of them are ok to use with pets.
- Homeopathic formula Rescue Remedy - This product can be purchased at health food stores, pet stores or do an online search for - Rescue Remedy for Dogs/Cats.
- Massage - There are different massage techniques to help a dog with behavior, physical ailments and healing. Check out [www.ttouch.com](http://www.ttouch.com) or do an online search for "canine massage" for information and practitioners in your area.
- Music - Through a Dog's Ear. This is music put together by psychoacoustic expert Joshua Leeds and veterinary neurologist Susan Wagner. Check their website at [www.throughadogsear.com](http://www.throughadogsear.com). This is the latest research on the effects of sound on a dog and the music that helps to calm them and a new series that works with helping your dog overcome sensitivity to specific noises or to prevent your dog/puppy becoming sensitive to certain sounds.