

How To Get Your Pup Doggone Tired

Q *I love my dog, but she is anxious and stressed, especially during thunderstorms, at veterinary visits and when meeting people. What can I do to help her be calm?*

● Arden Moore ● Steve Brooks

TELLING YOUR DOG TO RELAX OR SPEAKING TO HER IN A BABY TALK TONE – while done with good intentions – will not diminish her fear. In fact, she may become more emotionally crippled.

First, it is important to know the difference between fear and anxiety. Fear is an instinctual mind-set triggered by a clear and visible danger, such as an aggressive dog approaching or in your dog's case, thunderstorms. Anxiety is an apprehensive response to a possible threat that may or may not occur. Your dog may have incurred painful injections for needed vaccinations during her last two veterinary exams and now views the veterinary clinic as anything but paradise.

Dogs can be both fearful and anxious, exhibiting symptoms that range from body shaking, tail tucking, lip licking to more serious symptoms, including destructive behavior that results in injury, such as panicking to escape and breaking through windows or breaking out of dog crates. Instead of baby talking, try speaking in a calm, confident tone to your dog.

Helping anxious and/or fearful dogs often requires the combination of behavior modification overseen by a veterinary behaviorist or a certified professional dog trainer plus anti-anxiety medications prescribed by a veterinarian. Some dogs benefit by wearing anti-anxiety vests or full-body jackets such as the Thundershirt or by listening to classical music. Others calm down when given natural herbal remedies, such as lavender oil or valerian. If you are considering this option, please consult your veterinarian to make sure the chosen supplement is safe and will not counteract any medications your dog is taking.

There is no quick cure, but your dog needs you to practice patience, calmness and to work as a team with your pet professional. Engaging your dog in physical and mental exercise can help reduce levels of stress. For more help, I recommend you check out the Fear Free Pets crusade being led by Dr. Marty Becker at www.fearfreepets.com. Good luck! 🐾

ARDEN MOORE hosts the *Oh Behave* weekly radio show on *Pet Life Radio.com* and is founder of the *Pet First Aid 4U*. Learn more at www.ardenmoore.com.

USE A THUNDER SHIRT OR ANXIETY WRAP TO HELP YOUR DOG RELAX AND FEEL SAFE. Changes in barometric pressure can petrify your dog and act as a trigger to the sound of thunder. When a storm hits ... turn on the lights and turn up the TV to drown out the noise of thunder.

- Slowly desensitize to thunder with a recording of thunder sounds by starting at a low volume and increasing over several weeks, massage your pup with lavender scent in the air to provide a sense of calm and reduce anxiety. Deliver treats if her fear has subsided enough to eat stress-free.
- Spa Music helps canines relax. I find this the most underrated method for calming a dog with anxiety. Go ahead ... sing, dance, and act silly to show that you are not worried.

Canine Calming Tools:

- Defender Cape: decreases static electricity sensitivity of the charge
- Thunder Shirt®
- Anxiety Wrap
- Calming Cap™: cuts down vision (but they can still see)
- Dog-Appeasing Pheromone Collar: relaxes, gives a sense of well-being and reassurance
- Rescue Remedy: helps with panic, terror and the feeling of losing control

Ask to wait in your car and have them call when it is your turn.

At the Vet, use an Elizabethan collar (when they are not injured) and she will concentrate on what is around her neck rather than worrying about other dogs in the waiting room. Fill a squeeze tube or 3/4-inch non-toxic garden hose with healthy, sticky food to re-direct away from distractions or fears.

Take them when they don't have to go... Drive to the clinic, sit in the parking lot, feed them amazing, tasty treats and then drive home. The next day, do the same thing, but get out of the car and treat and love your pooch. On the third day, take them inside, give a treat or meal, have the staff feed A-list treats and give her some love. Now the Vet is a safe, familiar place to visit!

Teach a solid sit; dogs cannot jump if they are sitting.

Keep greetings calm in tone and body language and coach guests to calmly pet only if all four paws are on the floor. When the doorbell rings, put your dog's favorite toy in her mouth or keep her behind a baby gate with a pre-stuffed Kong® when guests enter.

For dogs with high levels of fear or anxiety including shaking, drooling, panting, stiff, urinating, whining, trying to escape, etc. talk to your veterinarian about pharmaceutical intervention as they can do wonders, especially if paired with training and behavior modification. 🐾

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