

Are We Passing our Mental Disorders On To Our Dogs?

Humans are not the only ones that can suffer from anxiety. Unfortunately our beloved pets can also suffer from this. The most common disorder for our dogs is separation anxiety. Dogs are basically a pack animal and so when we leave them even for a short time they are being separated from the pack. Even in the wild this too would be upsetting for animals in a pack environment. The show Meerkat Manor, although about meerkats and not dogs, is a prime example of animals living in a pack environment. Certain episodes shows what can happen when the dominant meerkat kicks out one of the subordinates and they are left to fend for themselves, They need their family support to survive. Now our dogs are not into any survival issues so to speak when we leave them alone for awhile, but some dogs will become very upset and engage in unacceptable behaviour. Signs of a dog suffering from separation anxiety may include continuous barking and howling while the person is gone. The dog may chew anything in sight - yes even your couch. They may mess in the house even though they are normally housebroken. They may even break through a door or a window. Some dogs are more predisposed to suffer from separation anxiety than others. These would include dogs previously neglected, dogs used in lab research, dogs rescued from the street, dogs who have spent a lot of time being crated and dogs in a home where the person is home-bound. In other words dogs that have not been properly socialized. Adult dogs who have never suffered from separation anxiety may suddenly start to show signs of the disorder. There could be several factors for this. One may be that the home situation changes and somebody who was always around is not there anymore(death in the family). Maybe someone who was previously unemployed has now returned to work. In an elderly dog it could be a sign of illness. A trip to the vet's would be in order. So what do we do for a dog suffering from separation anxiety? This really depends on whether or not you get your dog as a puppy or as an older more mature dog. With a puppy you have the chance to raise a healthy well adjusted puppy into a healthy well adjusted dog. As always training is the key. Training starts before you even bring your puppy home. By this I mean the purchase of the proper tools needed to raise your puppy. Every new dog owner needs to have a crate. Crates when used properly are a key tool in raising your puppy or helping your older dog adjust to his new environment. Your puppy needs to learn early on that you are going to be gone sometimes and they have to become adjusted to being left alone. You can leave your puppy alone even when you are home by putting him in his crate. Make this an enjoyable time by giving them their favourite toys to play with and maybe giving them a Kong stuffed with their favourite treats. Another good idea is before you even put them in the crate take them for a walk or engage in some form of exercise with your puppy. A tired puppy is less likely to get upset when left alone. If you have adopted an older dog and they suffer from separation anxiety, the training you undertake will be more of a desensitizing program. Hopefully you are going to have a lot of time at first to spend with your new dog. Obedience training, although necessary, may not help with this issue directly. You should start by crating him when you are home and as you did for the puppy give him his favourite toys(avoid toys that can be chewed, ripped and eaten) and a treat stuffed Kong. Also exercise him before crating. This exercise could be done by some form of obedience training. As with all training make sure he ends his obedience on a happy note. We do not want an upset dog being put into a crate. Your older dog will also know all the signs that indicate you are going out, so again, try to do these things and do not go out. Also just try stepping out the door for a minute and do not make a big fuss when you do this. When you actually do go out do not make a big fuss or try to calm your dog. This will just upset him more. Your dog needs to understand that you going out is a natural routine thing. This will take quite some time so you are going to have to practice patience. Remember be consistent, be happy, and be patient. There is a drug that your vet may prescribe if your dog is really bad. It is called Clomicalm. It is not the answer to your problem but it will definitely help while you try desensitizing your dog. Your newly adopted older dog deserves a second chance so please take the necessary steps to help him with his disorder.

About the Author

As an owner of dobermans for the last 25 years Maureen recognizes the need of properly training your dog. She offers useful hints and tips on training your dog. You can find these simple techniques for your dog and you at <http://www.traineddogsrule.com>

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