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I'll Be Home Soon!

How to Prevent and Treat
Separation Anxiety

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Separation Anxiety

By Patricia B. McConnell, Ph.D.

*If you worry about leaving your dog home alone,
both because you love your dog and your house,
-this little book is for you.*

There he is, sitting at the window, looking for all the world like his heart will break if you drive away without him. And there you are, outside, on the other side of the window, feeling guilty about leaving, and praying that your house will be in one piece when you get home.

If you worry about leaving your dog home alone, both because you love your dog and your house, this little book is for you. Most dogs can be left home alone during the day and lead happy, fulfilled doggy lives without destroying your house. Some dogs get into trouble at home when you're gone because there's so much fun stuff to do without you to stop them. These dogs don't have a serious behavioral problem. Heck, they're not serious at all. They are too busy gleefully chewing on the couch to be serious, and after all, you're not there to stop them. Or they leave a deposit on the carpet because they're not house trained yet, or they bark all day because it's just something to do. (Sort of like watching the soaps, where nothing really happens but it's hard to stop anyway).

But a small number of dogs suffer from a serious problem, called Separation Anxiety, in which they panic at your departure and stay panicked until you return. They may soil the house, eat the window molding, howl in misery all day and/or pant, shake and drool entire lakes of scared doggy saliva. An actual case of full-blown Separation Anxiety is truly heart-rending, because the dog is in a

panic when you leave. This book is designed to help those of you whose dog really suffers from Separation Anxiety, to help any dog owner to prevent it from developing and to help you raise a dog with good “house manners”. It can be tricky to determine if your dog has Separation Anxiety or just bad house manners, so read carefully to be sure which category describes your dog. What follows will help you to determine why your dog gets in trouble when you’re gone and how to prevent trouble from happening again. Included is a discussion of how to handle both bad house manners and how to treat serious Separation Anxiety when it occurs.

SEPARATION ANXIETY - WHAT IT IS

Separation anxiety has gotten a lot of press lately, much of it associated with a medication that was recently approved for use in veterinary medicine to treat it. Regrettably, this attention to Separation Anxiety has not always been helpful. I read a newspaper article that defined Separation Anxiety as having a dog who chewed, barked or house soiled when you were gone. That would include about half the dogs in the United States. Don’t get me wrong, it’s not ok to have your dog chew or potty in the house, but just because they do doesn’t mean that they have Separation Anxiety. They might be thrilled that you’re gone so that they can finally get into the garbage. Many problems that owners have with leaving their dog home alone can be solved by knowing how to teach a dog to be polite while you’re gone. This booklet has many tips for those of you whose dog doesn’t have Separation Anxiety, but could use some coaching in good manners. It’s important to first determine what’s causing the problem.

Separation Anxiety in dogs is a serious emotional problem, where the dog becomes panicked when his owner leaves. Dogs with full-blown Separation Anxiety act as though they are in terror about your departure, and about being alone in the house while you’re gone. There are many ways that dogs can express their panic at being left home alone, so the symptoms are highly variable. The most common are: