**Relaxed Isolation (Avoiding Separation Anxiety)**

* Your dog having the ability to become separated from yourself and other people and remain calm and relaxed is crucial to avoid stress, as it will happen at some point (at the vets, groomers, holiday, waiting outside a shop etc.)
* Some breeds are more prone to separation anxiety than others (e.g. husky breeds) but all dogs are dogs and have the adaptability to be calm and happy when separated, when it is approached correctly.
* This is something you have to teach from an early age to prevent problems. The reason for this is that dogs are social creatures and are born to be able to live in a group. They are not used to spending time on their own. If you don’t get your puppy accustomed to spending time on its own, it will get distressed.

**Setting the perfect conditions**

* Creating the perfect conditions before leaving your dog at home is the first and most influential step in avoiding separation anxiety. Ideally, you want your dog to settle and go to sleep (at least in the beginning) as this gives them the best way to feel calm and relaxed.
* Reasons to go to sleep:
  1. Making them tired: both physically and mentally. Taking them for a long walk or jog, followed by a training session or some other mentally stimulating task is ideal.
  2. Creating the ideal den: their favourite bed, in a crate (if already crate trained) or small room, and in darkness (curtains closed or covered with a blanket if in a crate)
  3. Removing stress creating distractions: leaving them will a full view through the window to the busy main street is going to cause frustration along with anxiety and stress. Don’t leave noisy/squeaky toys with your dog that they are likely to get hyped up by.
  4. Diverting their attention: if your dog is not going to settle and sleep straight away, provide long lasting bones or a stuffed and frozen Kong to keep them occupied. Chewing also naturally helps relieve stress.
* Getting your dog used to being left as soon as possible (even better if they are a puppy) will only help it in the long run. So even if you don’t need to leave him alone, it is best to still practice it.
* As with all training, consistency is key. Never reward or punish your dog for being destructive/howling/messing when left – it is not a positive behaviour to reward, but punishment will only intensify the anxiety and even if that particular behaviour stops, it will reappear somewhere else.
* Start off in small sessions, leaving the house for 10 minutes, but still putting all of the important prep into place.
* When the dog is coping well, slowly increase the time being left