



# The WoofGang Wag Rag



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Free

## Home Alone

In the wild, a lone dog has little chance of survival. It is in increased danger from other predators; it has little chance of success at the hunt. It's a wonder that a species as dependent on the pack as the dog can adapt to being alone at all!

It has been observed in wild dogs that the mother dog will periodically move from one den to another. She will move the pups one at a time, choosing a different one each time to be left alone in the new den or in the previous den. In so doing, she is teaching her pups to have a tolerance to being alone.

Good breeders do the same thing, leaving puppies alone for short periods of time after their eyes have opened and they can respond to sounds. This way the pups will learn that they will be alone only for a short period before their human or canine parent returns. Without this early learning, a puppy can become too dependent on the presence of others.

### Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety is a serious emotional state in which a dog becomes anxious and panicked when his owner is absent. The physical manifestations of it have been compared to a panic attack in humans.

Typical symptoms are vocalization, destructive behavior or self-mutilation, physical manifestations (panting, drooling, sweaty paw pads, dilated pupils, trembling), breaking of housetraining, and anorexic behavior. The anxiety begins to build during the owner's departure ritual and the symptoms occur within the first minutes after departure.



Sasha in her crate

Shelter dogs are at an increased risk for developing separation anxiety. They have had bonded relationships with humans in the past which have been severed and so they may likely bond more strongly in subsequent human relationships. In addition, it may have been the animal's separation anxiety that brought about

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## About the Trainer

Dog trainer Laura Garber, CPDT, is a professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) and is certified by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT), the first national certification for dog trainers.

Laura has authored articles about dogs and dog behavior in dog-centric magazines and on-line resources.

Laura believes strongly in strengthening the bond between human and companion animal. For this reason, she regards training as an exercise in building relationship rather than obedience. Such an approach promises greater understanding and symbiosis within our family packs.

Log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).



## \$25 Intro Training Offer

Get a 30-minute introductory basic training session for \$25 or apply it towards a 4-session package and get the 30-minute session FREE! (Offer details based on location.) Call WoofGang at 646.345.5116 to make an appointment.

## Crate Training

Dogs, like their wolf predecessors, like to have a den to call their own. And it's a great training tool for you as well. To attract your dog to her crate, put a Kong stuffed with her favorite food in the crate and close the door, with the dog locked out. It won't take long for her to figure out which side of that door she'd rather be on! Make sure to build up her tolerance to time alone in the crate gradually.

Call **WoofGang** at **646.345.5116** for help acclimating your pooch to her crate and to being alone.

## "Come" at the Run

Does your dog evade your calls when you're ready to leave the dog run? She's probably figured out that it usually means an end to a favorite pastime: dog-play! So, every few minutes call her by name... start easy with near calls and plenty of encouragement. When she comes, grab her collar and give her some love; then release her with "OK, go play!" This way she won't anticipate when you'll be calling to leave.

**WoofGang** can help build a strong recall from your lovin' pooch.

## Main Article (cont.)

her surrender to the shelter in the first place. While any dog can conceivably develop separation anxiety, it occurs more frequently with dogs who are particularly affiliative toward humans – “soft”, bondy dogs.

### **Hyper-Attachment**

Dog fanciers and trainers alike are guilty of over-diagnosing separation anxiety in dogs who express separation sensitivity. Separation anxiety is a clinical term that should be strictly reserved for the serious state of panic.

Instead, I like to use the term *hyper-attachment* to label a constellation of behaviors typified by: constant following in the home, exaggerated excitement upon return after even a short absence, heightened anxiety when separated from the human family in environments away from home, anxious behavior when the dog is positioned so she can able watch departure from the home, etc.

Often such dogs are perfectly fine when their lives are routinized but they get overly anxious with change. So, should there be a need to vary your dog's routine, such as leaving her at another family member's house on occasion, steps should be taken to increase her comfort in this new context. Separation anxiety treatment protocols can be employed to build tolerance to aloneness in different situations.

Be aware that hyper-attachment, left unresolved, can develop into the more serious condition of separation anxiety.

### **Building Separation**

From day one with your dog, it's crucial that you continue her education in tolerating aloneness: Do *not* spend every waking moment with her, as much as you might want to. Here are some ideas for how best to build your pup's tolerance to separation:

❖ Leave your dog in her crate or confinement area with a Kong® stuffed with something yummy, like peanut butter or liverwurst. Start with short absences, just a few seconds. Gradually increase the duration of your absences, making sure that your dog is still happily working away on her toy. Keep everything low-key, drifting in and out of the room.

❖ When you return, pick up her toy. The yummy treats are hers only when you are not present. Pretty soon she'll be looking forward to your absence!

❖ Remember to randomize the duration of your absences, sometimes being away a little longer, sometimes a little shorter. You don't want your pup to think that you'll *always* be gone for long stretches. Sometimes it's only a few seconds, right? Nothing to get upset about!

❖ If your dog begins to get at all anxious, protesting from the crate, you may have increased the duration too quickly or the session may have been too long. Quit long before she's had enough.

❖ Practice low-key departures and arrivals. Emotional histrionics only serve to emotionally charge your comings and goings. When you take a trip out to the kitchen, do you bid a fond, emotional farewell to your dog? Probably not. So make the same sort of departures when you leave home.

For this article in its entirety, log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).



## Ask Woofie...

**Woofie**, we adopted a rescue dog just a week ago and had a question.

*Miley gets very excited at times; she'll pee a little when we come and move toward her or even when we just try to put on her leash to go out.*

*Just wondering how we can address this.*

*Thanks! Christina*

### **Hiya, Christina!**

*This is called excitement urination. I would guess that Miley is a "soft", bondy dog who is lacking in confidence.*

*For starters, make sure to take her outside frequently for potty breaks, giving her treats for going in the right place. And when you're expecting visitors, make sure to take her out to potty before they arrive.*

*Ignore her when Miley's very excited. Wait until she's calm before paying attention to her. Even then, give her soft, low-key attention -- get a little lower either by crouching or by sitting (rather than leaning over her), avert your glance so that you're not giving her direct eye contact, and pet her on her chest rather than over the top of her head. Also, rather than moving towards her, have guests allow her to approach them in her own time and ask them to give her a little treat. Sometimes taking a treat is easier for a sensitive dog to handle than being petted right away. Explain to them how to greet her in a low-key, non-threatening way.*

*Do relationship/obedience training with her, as it will help to build her confidence.*

If you have a question for **Woofie**, email [info@myWoofGang.com](mailto:info@myWoofGang.com), and put “Dear Woofie!” in the subject line.

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