

How to soothe anxious dogs at home and at the veterinarian

Here are six things you can do in and out of your home to help ease your overly frazzled canine.



1. Visit the vet for a few minutes—without an appointment

Bring your dog to the veterinary hospital for five, 10 or 15 minutes just to hang out in the waiting room, step onto the scale and sit in an exam room or on an exam table. Doing so will help your pet get more comfortable in these spaces. Bringing the treats your dog really, really loves or your dog's favorite toys to play with aid in making these visits enjoyable experiences. When it's time for an exam or procedure, the environment may seem less freaky and frightening.

2. Take a ride in the car—when you're not going to scary places

Most pet owners typically take their dogs in the car only for veterinary and grooming appointments. Make the car a fun experience by taking your dog out on for

an adventure or a hike, or a visit to the dog park or a relative or friend's house or apartment. Dogs learn to associate car rides with only the veterinary clinic if that's the only time they go for car rides.

3. Study up on your dog's body language

Learning about canine body language and how dogs communicate can give you a better understanding of why your dog may be displaying certain behaviors. It will also help you understand your dog's unique traits, qualities and emotional state.

4. Write a trigger list

Make a list of the things that cause your dog fear, anxiety and stress on a regular basis. Next, try to figure out how to eliminate some of those stressors in your dog's environment. You

probably won't be able to eliminate all of them, but you might be able to eliminate some of them.

5. Give your dog a hiding place

Create a safe zone in your home where your dog can feel secure. This might mean placing a crate or dog bed in a quiet part of the house and placing a towel or blanket over the crate. This helps make the space a hideaway for your pet.

6. Try training

Training can help build a dog's confidence in a lot of different ways. The use of positive reinforcement training (rewarding a dog for doing the right behavior) is a humane way to approach training. Hiring a positive reinforcement trainer or a behavior professional is a great way to get some help.