



Introducing your dog to a PetzPodz by holistic dog behavioursit, Dr Isla Fishburn.

Does your dog suffer with Separation anxiety? Does she mess in the home when you are out or even when you are in a different room? Does she bark, whine or howl from the time you leave until the time you get back? The first thing to realise is that you are not alone and have not done anything wrong. In fact, you are one of the many thousands of dog owners in the UK whose dog suffers with separation anxiety, or, an incomprehensible feeling of fear, little safety and concern of intruders (or more importantly large predators) when left in the home alone.

Being left alone, an unnatural phenomenon

For a dog, being left alone is a rather unnatural concept to understand. Whilst this does not affect some dogs, most dogs actually show changes in their behaviour when left alone; they become anxious, fearful, nervous or scared and can do anything from heavy panting, chewing owner's belongings to scenting (toileting) in the home. The situation is not always improved by having two or more dogs in the home as it depends on the character of your dogs as well as environmental conditions that influence the ability for your dogs to feel comfortable when you are away from your home. In fact, if two or more dogs are uncomfortable when left without their owner they can feed off one another's anxiety and can sometimes escalate the anxiety they display. This is because dogs are social group animals that are made up of dependent and independent individuals. It is the independent individuals that are content when being left alone, knowing that their home and environment is a safe place. However, for some dogs that have been incorrectly socialised within their environment, have suffered a trauma or for those who are naturally dependent on others, they are unable to feel secure and safe when left alone – they would expect a more confident and independent individual to support them.

A natural area of safety.

One cause of separation anxiety in dogs occurs through a common mistake that is implemented by the owner. For instance, a couple decide to get a young dog and, knowing this, they arrange with their employer to have some time off work. This allows the dog to become familiar with its environment and to begin basic training with the dog. However, for the whole time the couple are off work they are with the dog. This means that when it is time for the couple to go back to work the dog then

begins to show signs of anxiety, fear and worry when in the home on its own; the couple have inadvertently highlighted themselves to the dog as them being the safety rather than showing the dog an area within the home as a safe place for the dog.

However, another important cause of dogs having separation anxiety is the home environment itself. To us, the room we leave our dog(s) in has no impact on the dog's level of separation anxiety. But for some dogs the very room they are left in can result in mild to extreme cases of distress and uncertainty.

For further detail you may be interested to read "Among Wolves" by Dr Gordon Haber and Marybeth Holleman whose book contains illustrations of a wild canines natural shape of a den site. Take note of the curve in these den sites.

In short, most dogs show some sign of separation anxiety when we leave them, as being left alone is not a natural occurrence for dogs. The extent of the behaviour they show will depend on the dog's character and its environment but can be exacerbated by how and where a dog is left. By thinking of how a canine mother would create trust and safety in a natal den site we can help our dog's(s) feeling of safety when left alone. Whilst the dog may always display some element of unease when left, by creating an area in the dog's home environment the dog can associate this with calm, trust and safety – the PetzPodz is ideal for this and it is explained why below!

PetzPodz – a natural area of safety.

By introducing your dog to a PetzPodz correctly you can help reduce the stress and uncertainty that your dog feels when it is left home alone. PetzPodz is one of the best ways you will make your dog feel at ease in its home. By recognising this you are on your first step towards helping your dog and yourself; no number of treats, training aids or music will help your dog feel relaxed when you are not there if the area for the dog is not considered first; it is vital that your dog recognises an area within the home that it can go to that will provide it with safety and calm.

"c"-shapes and the reason for this has been discussed above. The "c" shape will be reminiscent of a time when your dog was young and received calm and safety from its mother. In addition, the curve or "c" shape in a den site is displayed by wild social canines when creating a natural den site and this area is used not only to raise the pups but when any individual feels threatened or unsure about its safety.

1. Go to the supermarket and buy lots of Primula Original Cheese spread. Alternatively, make your own by mixing soft cheese spread with yogurt until it forms a thick consistency that you can squeeze out of a tube. Buy an American style ketchup bottle (or lambing bottle) and empty the contents of this out. Give it a good wash and fill the bottle with the cheese and yogurt mix that you have created. The reason you will be using dairy food is that your dog should associate the PetzPodz with a natal den. When your dog was

young and in a natal den it would have received milk from suckling from its mother. By using the Primula cheese or your homemade cheese & yogurt mix, you are giving your dog dairy product that is reminiscent of a time when your dog was suckling. Your dog should associate this with a time when it was in a safe and calm environment. When you give this to your dog you are not using it to make your dog full, but rather as a small reward. Do not squeeze large amounts of the cheese – the dog is having to lick the tube to even get a little bit of it. If your dog has a dairy allergy I would use something that the dog can lick rather than eat so something similar that is in a tube form, perhaps a fish pate or chicken paste. Not being able to use the cheese may mean your dog takes longer to accept the PetzPodz but this is not always the case and can't be helped if the dog is not able to eat dairy. If you want further information on this contact Kachina Canine Communication directly.

2. Select the room you will be leaving the dog in with the PetzPodz when you are not in the home. Ideally, this needs to be a room with few doorways and relatively little noise from the outside (e.g. neighbours walking past a window).
3. Depending on the size you have bought, PetzPodz can be rather large and heavy. As we do not want the dog to have any negative connection with their PetzPodz, it is best to remove the dog from the room whilst you put the PetzPodz in place.
4. The positioning of the PetzPodz is just as important as the PetzPodz itself. As best as you can place the PetzPodz in the room so that the door opening is not directly facing a doorway. If possible, it is best to place the PetzPodz in an area in the corner of the room that is further away from a door entrance.
5. As the PetzPodz is going to be used as an area of safety, you want your dog to associate a PetzPodz as somewhere the dog can go if it wants its own space and that is a trusting and safe environment. For reasons explained above, a PetzPodz replicates a natal den site that your dog should associate with calm, maternal interaction and trust. If you can, lie next to the PetzPodz in a "c-shape or sit next to the PetzPodz with your dog and allow your dog to lick from the tube of cheese. Remember, you are only allowing a very small amount of the cheese to appear. Whilst you are giving the cheese to your dog, begin to very softly stroke your dog's ears, from base to tip.
6. Repeat this process next to the entrance of the door of the PetzPodz and assess your dog's progress with this; is he relaxed, anxious, unsure? If you are seeing any signs of distress in your dog, either stop what you are doing and go back a step or two or take a break from the exercise completely. It is important that you do this for any step when introducing your dog to the PetzPodz.
7. Next, place your arm inside the PetzPodz as far as it will go with the Primula cheese. You can even place a squirt of it on the inside wall of the PetzPodz. See how comfortable your dog is in entering and licking the cheese from inside the PetzPodz. Repeat this process up to the point your dog is happy to lie in and accept the cheese. Again, do not push your dog in to the PetzPodz and always end on a positive. If your dog has gone in the PetzPodz and taken the cheese happily, end it there and begin the exercise again after a break.

You are teaching your dog something new so she will also become tired through this exercise.

8. When your dog is comfortably entering and exiting the PetzPodz, begin to add distance and time away from the PetzPodz whilst your dog is there. At this point, your dog should make the connection between the cheese and the PetzPodz being calm, particularly so as you have gradually worked through the steps at a pace that is comfortable for your dog. However, for the distance work it is now best to add a treat that will last a while. For the PetzPodz I would stick with the cheese and place this inside a toy that can be stuffed such as a 'Kong', these are excellent rubber toys for puppies and dogs and can be purchased at all good quality pet stores. I have also cut a tennis ball open slightly less than half and placed it inside here – you can use anything that you can fill with the cheese (or paste if you have a dog that has a dairy allergy) and that will not harm the dog if it chews. Whilst the dog is licking the cheese from the toy, move away a little, count to five and return. Depending on how well your dog responds means you can begin to increase the length of time you are not next to the PetzPodz but not yet the distance. It is important that you go back to your dog a few times whilst it is licking the food and that you do not return when the dog has finished. What you don't want is for your dog to start whining and whimpering and you go back to her as she will make the association that whimpering/whining gets you back. You will need to time how quickly it takes for your dog to finish licking the cheese from the toy so that you know how long you have before you need to return to your dog. When your dog has finished, use a very high and positive tone of voice and tell your dog that it is the best thing in the world. You can even begin to interact with the dog by throwing a ball in the house or using a tug toy, once again 'Kong' offer an excellent range – your dog will make the association that the PetzPodz is a safe place and the end result is fun with their owner.
9. Repeat step 8 but now close the door. For my dogs I never use the door – the idea of the den site is that the dog should feel protected enough to stay in there if and when s/he needs to (although my dogs do not suffer with separation anxiety so they do not shred or scent in the home). However, you can also add distance and time away from the PetzPodz when your dog is in there and with the door closed. If you do not want the door on, you may also wish to consider the option of the PetzPodz being in a room where the dog is unable to destroy much – remember this is usually due to the dog trying to get some sort of scent she recognises about you and to lay this down to protect itself. Each dog is different and the duration she can tolerate you being away will vary so be accepting of this.
10. Repeat step 9 but now you will be leaving the room. Whilst the dog is happily licking the cheese, begin to leave the room. Again, build this up, perhaps for 30 seconds to one minute to ten minutes for example. Again, you want to return to your dog a few times whilst she is still licking the food rather than turning up when the dog has finished. The dog is learning that you being away is not going to put the dog at risk. You can now add times where you wait a little longer so that your dog has finished licking the cheese before you

return. Again, create fun interaction with your dog when you go back to the PetzPodz. So some times you are back before the dog has finished and other times the dog has finished before your return.

11. Finally, when your dog appears accepting of the PetzPodz and is content with you being in a different room you can begin to repeat the step 9 but now leave the house. Again, build this up gradually as your dog will know the difference of when you are at home but in a different room and when you are away from the home. Whilst the dog is licking the cheese, leave the home for a very short time and return before the dog has finished. Again repeat this process until you are confident your dog is showing little distress and then begin to increase the length of time you are away. This will include times where you return when the dog hasn't finished licking its cheese treat and other times when she has.

Feel calm, be calm, create calm

I have had many clients who feel guilty, worried and upset at knowing they have to leave their dog knowing they will return to her in such a state. What they and many others don't realise is that you are putting that worry in to your dog even before you leave the home! You are creating and emitting an energy that confirms to your dog that she has every reason to worry when you are not there because you are already worried and haven't even left yet! Dog's are social family animals so they have to be and are very good at understanding body language and emotion. They will quickly make the connection of the difference in your energy from when you are in the home to when ever you are leaving and make the association that they have reason to worry because you are!

You need to be realistic and also fully aware of what you are making your dog associate the PetzPodz with. If you are trying to do this through times of stress, frustration or where there are disturbances (e.g. a group of friends calling around) then these are all things that could make your dog feel the PetzPodz is not a safe place.

Never force your dog in to a PetzPodz or use force in any way when with your dog. Dr Isla Fishburn and Kachina Canine Communication only use methods that work on creating mutual trust and respect between dog and owner. Dr Isla Fishburn supports others that use non-confrontational and holistic techniques to help owners to communicate, understand and work with dogs. It is not advised to educate your dog using forceful, controlling techniques or methods that cause pain, uncertainty and fear.

Time teaching your dog should be fun, enjoyable and rewarding for both you and your dog. Your dog may not understand that the home is safe so you are creating this safe area for your dog to improve its wellbeing and not making it stressed. Bare this in mind in any activity and when interacting with your dog and be sure to always end a lesson on a positive by not pushing the dog too far too soon!

In some cases it is not as simple as introducing your dog to a PetzPodz and all of its separation issues will disappear in time. Sometimes a dog has received so many traumas or there are other environmental constraints that are affecting your dog's progress. If you feel that you have correctly introduced your dog to its PetzPodz and given your dog considerable time to progress through the stages but have seen no to little progress then there may be other techniques that your dog needs alongside using the PetzPodz that will help your dog's wellbeing. If you are experiencing this, you may wish to consider contacting Kachina Canine Communication and arrange for a visit, consultation or specific course.

Dr Isla Fishburn owns Kachina Canine Communication in Northumberland. She travels nationwide to where there is a dog in need. Working holistically, Isla considers a dog as an individual and teaches you how to understand and communicate with your dog by considering how a dog's innate character as well as environmental conditions such as surrounding family, environment, diet, trauma influences the wellbeing and life choices of our dog. Isla works on creating mutual trust and respect between dog and owner and gives one to one consultations, seminars and teaches courses. If you would like more information please visit her website at www.kachinacaninecommunication.co.uk.