

19 PROVEN WAYS

to Calm

YOUR

ANXIOUS

Dog

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PREFACE

Anxiety in dogs can get worse over time.

But, this could be prevented by taking early actions.

What are those?

Keep reading to find out:

- What calming food there is for canines.
- How to calm dog anxiety naturally (*proven by science*).
- Over-the-counter anxiety medications you can give to canines.
- The answers to “*How to calm an anxious dog at night*” & “*How to treat anxiety in dogs?*”
- And many more...

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Why is my dog anxious all of a sudden?

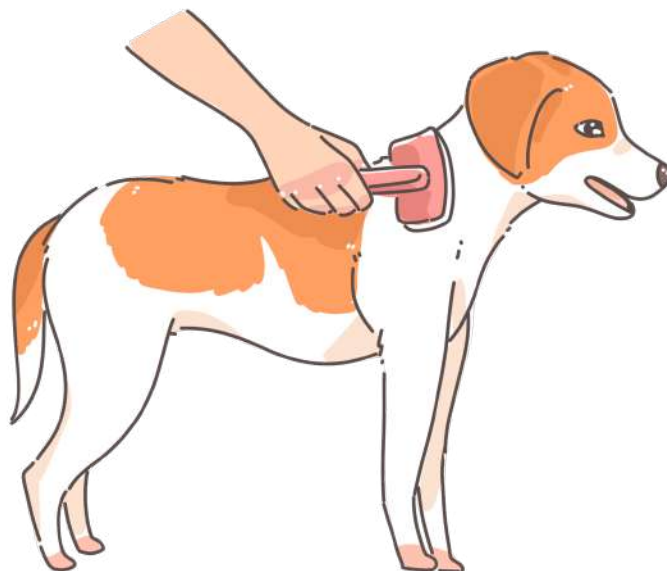
Your dog is anxious all of a sudden because of loud noises, the presence of unfamiliar people or animals, a change in routine or environment, or a recent bad experience. It could also be due to separation issues, loneliness, lack of stimulation, pain, heat cycle (in female dogs), aging, or dementia.

How to calm down an anxious dog?

You can calm down an anxious dog by using physical touch, staying with them, giving a safe place, playing music, using an anxiety wrap, keeping calm, or sticking to a routine. Also, giving them exercise, toys, treats, aromatherapy, calming pheromones, probiotics, and valerian may help them to relax.

19 proven ways to calm an anxious dog (naturally)

#1: Grooming



Do you know how powerful a simple touch is?

According to Saul Schanberg, a famous neuroscientist:

"Touch is far more essential than our other senses... It's 10 times stronger than verbal or emotional contact."

This is why a hug or pat on the back is so comforting. But only if it came from a person who's important to us.

So, your touch can also be a natural cure for your anxious furry pal.

"How come?"

When nervous, our heart beats faster, right?

But one study found that grooming slows down a dog's heart rate. Which is a sign that they're relaxed.^[1]

8 out of 16 Greyhounds in the research were stroked for 8 minutes. And their heart rates were remarkably lower than those who didn't receive any.

What to do?

Every day, allot at least 10 to 15 minutes of grooming time to your pooch.

You can brush or stroke them slowly using your hands.

But dogs may not like being touched in some areas. So vets recommend these spots:^[2]

- Under the chin.
- Back of the neck.
- The base of the tail.



Note: You know your pooch best. So if they like being petted in parts not listed above, do so.

For fearful dogs, especially rescue ones, read their body language.

If they're licking their lips or showing the whites of their eyes, it means that they're uncomfortable.

They may not like where you're touching them.

Or they're still not used to affection.

So, reduce the time or lessen the pressure in your hands.



Warning: If they growl, stop at once. Build more trust instead by feeding and respecting their space. Then try again next time.

#2: Canine massage

Speaking of the power of touch...

Dogs can also enjoy a nice massage. (*Only if done properly!*)

For a nervous pooch, stroking is healing. This is because anxiety often results in tensed muscles.

Dr. Brandenburg says that dogs will benefit from a full-body massage.^[3]

Aside from reducing stress, it could also help in improving blood flow.

As well as illnesses like arthritis and injuries. But, you'll need an expert for this.

However, she shared some basic ones you can do at home.

Backstroke

She says that this reduces anxiety. Especially in rescue dogs who aren't used to human touch.

But here are few reminders:

1. Don't do this abruptly.
2. Let them know your presence first before starting.
3. Gently stroke either side of their spine (*not on the bone*) up and down.

Forehead rub

There are also soothing points on a dog's head. They could be found on the:

- Top of the nose.
- Middle of the forehead.

To do this:

1. Apply light pressure on the points using your thumb.
2. Start from the top. Then gently run your finger down.
3. Repeat this for a minute or more. Until you see them calm down.

Ear rub

1. Put your thumb on the base of their ear flap (inner side).
2. Apply a bit of pressure.
3. Then softly stroke your way out of their ears.



Note: Do this for about 10 minutes every session. And check your dog's reaction while massaging. Because not every pooch may like being caressed at first.

- If they're moving around, pause for a while or reduce the pressure.
- If they settle down or fall asleep, it means they like it. So continue doing so.

#3: Dog acupressure

Wanna go traditional?

Acupressure is said to be a more ancient form of massage.^[4]

It started as a part of Chinese Medicine, along with acupuncture. Which is dated over 3,000 years ago.

Apart from anxiety, specialists say that this could also help with:^[5]

- Pain.
- Cancer.
- Arthritis.
- Allergies.
- Digestive problems.

So some therapists may use this as well before surgery to lessen the dog's tension.

This would help too if your pooch has generalized anxiety. Or one that's recurring for days.

"What does it do?"

Same with normal massage, this also targets specific points in the body.

But, it's believed that putting pressure on them allows better flow of *qi/chi*, a.k.a 'life energy.'

"Can I do this on my own?"

Sure. But this will only be safe and effective if you learn how to do it.

If you're interested, there are available charts, [books](#), and classes about this online.^{[6][7]}

Or, you may seek a massage veterinary therapist near you:

- Tallgrass Animal Acupressure Resources.^[8]
- National Board of Certification for Animal Acupressure and Massage.^[9]



Note: This isn't a replacement for medications. Massage and acupressure are only part of your dog's treatment plan.

#4: TTouch therapy

Another calming massage for animals is called '*TTouch*.'

This is often used in horses and dogs.

And it was made by Linda Tellington-Jones in 1978.

Research shows that this is helpful in 3 areas:^[10]

- Stress.
- Focus.
- Confidence.

"How does it work?"

The therapy has 2 parts:

Bodywork: Using body wraps and certain touches to calm scared or excited dogs.

These relax their mind.

And raise awareness of their surroundings. Making them ready for learning.

Groundwork: Doing obstacle courses or balance exercises.

This improves their focus and confidence.

And will help maintain their calm state.

"What other behavioral problems can this be used for?"

Based on VCA Hospitals, TTouch is also useful in treating:^[11]

- Phobias.
- Fear aggression.
- Sensitivity to touch.

And they also claim that this has no side effects.



Note: You can visit their website. Or find a practitioner in your area.^{[12][13]}

#5: Companionship



Sometimes, all your pooch needs is company.

This is because anxiety is also caused by:

- Loneliness.
- Discomfort.
- Being alone for long hours.
- Sudden change in the environment.

So a female in heat requires emotional support as well. Due to the changes that are happening in their body.

Also, as social animals, canines tend to seek comfort with their pack or family. And in this case, it's you.

Because of this, stay by their side as much as you can. Talk to them softly. And gently stroke their fave spots.



Did you know: Dog parents have a '*safe-haven effect*' on their pooches.

A study shows that humans serve as a 'buffer' to stressful situations in their Fidos. Like what parents are to their child.^[14]

There's one more piece of evidence that dogs feel more secure when they're with their parents. ^[15]

In the experiment, canines were asked to do a task.

Those who are with their humans investigated the object more. Compared to others with absent handlers.

#6: Set up a 'safe place'

There are also times when petting is not the answer.

This can be true for dogs who have separation anxiety, are aloof in nature, or are spooked by certain noises.

Say, the bangs of fireworks or the disturbing sounds from a vacuum.

For this, you might need to resist the urge to comfort them.

"But why?"

- Some dogs might not like it.
- They could be dependent on you.
- Too much affection may only reinforce the behavior.

- If they have serious noise phobia, they're not in the right state to receive cuddles.

Well, unless you can do the TTouch therapy or massage to calm their nerves.

"So what should I do?"

If they have a hiding spot already, let them go there whenever they're anxious.

May it be inside a closet or under the stairs. Put a soft mat in the spot to make it comfier.

But if they don't, set up one.

It can be a crate covered in a blanket or a cave dog bed.

Since most pups love to burrow and find peace in dark and cramped spaces.

Two examples of burrower breeds are the fluffy Pomeranians and the tiny Chihuahuas.

#7: Music therapy

You might have seen dogs howling (singing) to songs.

Or you have one musical Fido yourself.

Either way, this shows that music has an impact on our furry pals.

But do you know that they can also calm them?

Yup. Certain songs have a soothing effect on dogs.

And this is an easy way to lessen their stress.

"What kind of music should I play?"

Here are the genres that were proven effective according to experts:

- Harp music.^[16]
- Classical music.^[17]
- Soft rock and reggae.^[18]



Note: Like humans, dogs might also get tired of the same songs. So add some variety to your Spotify playlist every now and then.

#8: White noise

Do you have a pooch who's highly sensitive to certain sounds?

Aside from background music...

An anxious dog might also benefit from white noise. This is one of the simplest ways to dampen sounds.

So leave the TV or radio on when you notice that a certain sound is bothering them.

But remember, a canine's hearing is way better than ours.

So this won't completely block any unwanted sounds.



Warning: Specialists also found that fear of loud noises might signify pain. It's because sudden reactions (e.g., jumping, tensing) may cause affected areas to ache more.^[19]

#9: Exercise



A nervous pooch will also have so much tension in their body.

And what's an easy but healthy way to release it?

Exercising.

The lack of this could also be the reason for their anxiety in the first place. Plus, a study proves that they can improve a dog's mood as well.^[20]

"Why's that?"

Because their body produces *endorphins* or feel-good hormones when they exercise.

So they won't just be tired, as they'll be worn out in a good way. Which is also the key to calmness.

What to do?

Walk your dog more often. Play fetch or make them catch frisbees outside.

Other canines might also like hiking, swimming, or jogging. But do this according to their needs.

Based on PDSA, toy breeds require at least 30 minutes of exercise per day. And pups need 5 times their age (e.g., 5 months = 25 minutes).^[21]

While it's 1 hour for small and giant dogs. And it's 2 hours for working Fidos (e.g., Huskies, Retrievers).

Senior dogs may also have anxiety due to poorer vision or hearing. As well as memory loss.

So if you have one, take them for short walks with plenty of rest. And check their condition from time to time.

#10: Mental stimulation

Besides physical exercise...

Every dog also needs to work out their brain.

And if they're anxious, this is a great distraction. Plus an effective stress reliever.

Scent walks

There are many things you can do. But you might have noticed that Fidos love smelling things.

And their noses aren't the only ones working during this. Because their brains are also busy analyzing.

So for this, let your dog have a daily 'scent walk.'^[22]

"What's that?"

While strolling outside, let them sniff how much they want. So if they stop in an area, watch them and pay close attention.

However, here are some reminders:

- Always walk them on a leash.
- Avoid being dragged by your dog.
- Steer away from grasses if they have allergies.
- Be alert. Look if there are hazards nearby (e.g., chicken bones).

Scent games

You can also make them find treasures hidden inside your house. Say, their favorite plush toys or treats.

Or to start off, simply let them sniff a piece of treat. Then hide it in one of your hands. And make them guess which one has it.

Dog enrichment toys

Independent plays could also be more exciting through these:

- [Dog brick](#).
- [Wobble bowl](#).
- [Plush puzzle toy](#).

Teach them tricks

Lastly, all dogs will benefit from training. And it's also a chance to bond more with your dog.

This can:

- Boost their confidence.
- Increase *oxytocin* or ‘love hormone.’
- Activate the pleasure center of their brain.

So teach your dog new tricks. Like shake hands, roll over, spin, or play dead.

You can make each session as short as 5 minutes. And do it twice (*or thrice depending on your dog*) per day.

Also, prepare yummy treats and say praises as rewards.

Because keeping each session positive can help dogs learn new things faster based on a study.^[23]

#11: Chewy and licking toys

Want another trick to keep their mind off worrying?

Give them something to chew or lick on.

In babies, pacifiers are given when they're in distress. And also if they need to be distracted.^[24]

For canines, chewing and licking are satisfying as well. And these could be used as coping methods too.

So you may find them grabbing your shoes. Or even licking furniture and blankies when bored or anxious.

“What should I do?”

To prevent these destructive behaviors...

Provide non-toxic toys that'll keep them entertained. And reduce their anxiety, such as:

- [Kongs](#).
- [Lick mats](#).
- [Kong tires](#).
- [Rubber ball toy](#) (cleans and dispenses treats).



Note: Buy various items and give them in rotation. Dogs get easily bored by playing with the same items repeatedly. Also for safety, pick out toys that are made of soft natural rubber.

#12: Long-lasting treats

Aside from toys, dogs will also love treats they can chew until they get tired. And they're also a good outlet for stress.

Bully sticks are one example of these. As well as dental chews.

By giving these, you're going to hit more than 2 birds with 1 stone.

"Why?"

Because you'll:

- Clean their teeth.
- Calm their nerves.
- Keep their breath fresh.

Bones and antlers could also last long. But they pose some risks like choking.

They might be too hard as well and damage your dog's teeth.

 **Note:** Also, supervise your pooch if you give them these.

#13: Vet-approved aromatherapy



Essential oils are often suggested nowadays.

But the question is...

Are they safe for dogs?

PetMD says that it could be - if it's the right kind of oil and dose. And also, if you have the consent of a vet.^[25]

But, most of them are toxic - like tea tree oil. Especially in their concentrated form.

Some common side effects are:

- Lethargy.

- Agitation.
- Vomiting.

And there could also be some products that claim they're safe. Even though they're not.

However...

Given these risks, we can't still deny the fact that some of them can calm dogs.

Diluted lavender oil is said to be the safest. As long as it's used properly and with caution.

One research found that aromatherapy using it has a relaxing effect on canines.^[26]

The dogs were said to be so worked up during travel. But during the therapy, they slept more. And they also moved and barked less.



Note: If you'd like to give this a try, it's best to consult your vet. There are also flower essences (Bach flower) that are safer options. But the studies about them are still limited.^[27]

#14: Dog appeasing pheromones (DAP)

You might already know how pheromones work.

These are unique chemicals produced by each human and animal.

They don't have any color and odor. But, they can convey messages.

To calm dogs, pheromones from a nursing mother dog are used. Because these remind them of their puppyhood.

And they're recreated in products like:

- Wipes.
- Sprays.
- Collars.
- [Diffusers](#).

"How about their effectiveness?"

A study on 43 dog patients shows that these could lessen signs of:^[28]

- Fear.
- Distress.
- Separation anxiety.

While other researchers observed that DAP collars help dogs with noise sensitivity.^[29]

"Are they safe?"

No worries. Experts say that these are completely harmless. And they're effective too.^[30]

But, anxiety and other conditions can't be cured by only using these.

"How do you use them?"

For indoors: Put the diffuser in the room where your dog usually stays.

For traveling: Use wipes or spray a little amount on their bedding or blankies. Do this while they're not using it.

#15: Probiotics

"Wait, aren't these used in tummy issues?"

This is the kind of reaction I'm expecting.

But, a recent study shows that they also have a calming power in animals.^[31]

Based on it, they could lessen anxiety. And they may prevent the negative effects of long-term stress too.

"How can I give these to my dog?"

According to vets, these are in many forms:^[32]

- Chews.
- Powders.
- Capsules.

But when it comes to food, choose plain ones with no sweeteners or 'xylitol' in the ingredients. Because it's poison for dogs.

You may give your pooch some:

- Unsweetened kefir.
- Plain Greek yogurt.
- Traditionally fermented veggies (e.g., carrots, sauerkraut).



Note: Talk to your vet about this first. This is to know how much probiotics your dog needs per day. And also to avoid problems about adding new food in their diet.

#16: Valerian root

For humans, this is mainly used in cases of insomnia and anxiety. As well as menstrual cramps.

"But what about dogs?"

There's research conducted on 15 rescue canines.^[33]

Each was then asked to sniff pieces of cloth with 6 different odors. And one of them has a valerian scent.

According to the researchers, dogs calmed down when they smelled valerian. As well as ginger and coconut.

However...

Although it's all-natural, experts still warn people of its possible side effects. Like lethargy and tiredness.^[34]

So consult an expert first. To know the right dosage and if it's suitable for your dog's condition.

#17: Anxiety wrap



This can give dogs a sense of security. Especially if they're afraid of thunderstorms and fireworks.

"But how?"

Specialists say that the pressure causes a feeling that's close to being embraced. Which makes it soothing for canines.^[35]

It could be store-bought, like [this one](#). Or you may also do this at home using a bandage or an old blanket.

Studies were made about its efficacy.^[36]

There were 3 groups of canines. The first one wore anxiety vests properly.

While the second group put them loosely. And the third one didn't have anything at all.

And the results?

Group 1 had the lowest heart rate increase. As well as reduced anxious behaviors such as yawning and tongue-flicking.

#18: Be consistent

Dogs' anxiety may also come from an irregular routine.

This is because they don't know what will happen every day.

So, create a schedule that'll work best for you and your pooch. And stick to it.

There could still be some slight changes. As unexpected things might happen.

But, ensure that these times are all predictable:

- Playing.
- Walking.
- Feeding.
- Sleeping.

#19: Stay calm as well

Lastly, do you know that canines are capable of knowing our emotions?

Experts say so. And they can do it by reading our facial expressions and body language.^[37]

As well as by sniffing the odor we give off.

But what's more interesting is that it could also affect their mood.

So, whenever they're anxious:

- Use a calming voice.
- Act neutral (*try to don't panic*).
- Avoid speaking in a high-pitched tone.
- Control your reactions as much as you can.

How to calm an anxious dog in specific situations

There are many causes of anxiety in dogs. And every canine may have different reactions. So there's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all treatment.

For this, I'll discuss 6 common situations. And share what things work best for each of them.

How to calm an anxious dog at night

You can calm an anxious dog at night by massaging them, playing relaxing music, and diffusing a soothing scent. Also, make sure that their sleeping spot is comfy enough.

For this, you may find tips #1, #2, #3, #7, #13, #14 and #16 effective. Along with enough stimulation in the day.

How to calm an anxious dog during a thunderstorm

You can calm an anxious dog during a thunderstorm by putting an anxiety wrap on them or letting them hide in their safe place. Having a background noise or showing their favorite toy may distract them as well.

Also, at times like this, I strongly recommend tip #19. This is to avoid causing more tension to your dog.

How to calm an anxious dog in the car

You can calm an anxious dog in the car by spraying calming pheromones, playing soothing music, or putting them in a comfy travel carrier. Exercising and taking them on short trips before the actual ride may also help.

But to keep them at ease during the trip, follow tips #11, #12, and #13.

How to calm an anxious dog when you leave

You can calm an anxious dog when you leave by exercising them first. Take them out for walks and play with them before you go.

Also, tips #10, #11, #12, and #14 are proven to be helpful in this problem. As well as playing calming music or white noise while you're away.

How to calm an anxious dog when walking

You can calm an anxious dog when walking by finding their triggers first. Say, other people, animals, or objects. Then avoid them if you can. And make their walks short in the meantime.

Your dog needs a sense of security as well. So tips #18 and #19 will surely help. Along with #11 while you're strolling.

But if there's no improvement, bring them to the clinic immediately. As they could be hiding an illness.

How to calm an anxious dog in a crate

You can calm an anxious dog in a crate by diffusing dog pheromones or diluted lavender oil. Changing the location and putting them in a spot where they can see you.

But, exercising them before going inside could also work. As well as tips #11 and #12.

If they're not chewing on things, you may leave an old shirt of yours. This is to give them a familiar and calming odor.

How to treat anxiety in dogs?

You can treat anxiety in dogs by having them checked by a vet. This is to know what treatment plan works best for them. And if they have other medical conditions.

But, medications alone won't be enough. You'll need to replace their negative associations with positive ones. So modifying their behavior is a must.

There are 2 effective methods for this...

Desensitization

This means slowly exposing your dog to the cause of their anxiety.

Starting at a level where your dog won't have any reaction to it. Like barking, pacing, or hiding. Then gradually increase it until they get used to it.

For example, if they're scared of vacuum sound, make them listen to it at the lowest volume possible. And keep them away from the speakers.

While you're desensitizing them you can also add...

Counterconditioning

Distract them with toys. And feed them with high-value treats. Or ones they don't usually get such as boiled chicken.

Only reward them if the trigger is present.

Because the goal is to make them change their mind. And associate the 'scary thing' with a positive experience.



Note: Do these 2 methods hand in hand. But don't rush the process. With patience and consistency, their anxiety will be reduced or removed for good.

But if the case is severe, it's best to do it under the guidance of a dog behaviorist or trainer.

Dog anxiety medication over the counter

Here are medicines you can buy over the counter based on PetMD:^[38]

- **L-Theanine supplements:** VetriScience Composure chews, Virbac Anxitane tablets.
- **S-Adenosylmethionine (SAME):** Virbac Novifit, Nutramax Denosyl tablets.

“Can I give my dog Benadryl to calm him down”

According to vets, it only has a mild effect on dogs.^[39]

It may reduce some of the signs. But its efficacy isn't enough. So it might not work even for mild motion sickness.

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