



Separation Anxiety

Helping your dog be calm when you leave.

Great Danes are a sensitive breed which are people orientated so they can be somewhat susceptible to Separation Anxiety and separation related behaviours. ***It is important to note*** that not all Separation related behaviours are classed as 'Separation Anxiety' which is a dog that panics when you leave.

Separation Anxiety in adult dogs is a condition that is commonly brought on by the humans without them even knowing and therefore can typically be fixed by the human.

Separation related behaviours in puppies are very common in all breeds. It is very scary to be taken away from your Mum and your littermates and then shut out in the back yard or in the laundry/bathroom all by yourself!

Separation behaviours can also be seen in dogs you adopt if they are used to having someone home a lot or living with another dog or even because they are just scared and don't know what is going on. The dog will have to learn to adjust to your environment. Dealing with cases like this should be dealt with empathy and a structured program.

When you bring your new puppy home

Do not fawn all over the puppy, as you need the puppy to develop independence. Fawning all over the puppy is also not applying the NILIF principles and therefore the puppy can end up confused about its position in your pack.

Rules and boundaries from the moment the puppy enters the house will help you later on.

It is not recommended to isolate the puppy from you at night such as in a laundry/bathroom. Packs sleep together – although this does not necessarily mean in the same bedroom or even in the human's bed.

Look into crate training and have the puppy in the room with you until it is older, then you can start to move the crate closer to the door then out of the bedroom door.

But the Great Dane is an outside dog?

Great Danes really aren't suitable outside dogs because they have been bred to be very people orientated which makes them perfect house dogs however because of this they do not like to be isolated. If you insist on keeping this arrangement then you'll need to be prepared for separation anxiety and behavioural problems from the get go.

Give your neighbours the heads up

Drop a letter in your surrounding neighbours' letter boxes to let them know you have a new puppy, it will be getting used to being by itself when you're not home. Ask if they can bear with you whilst the puppy / new dog is settling in, but also let you know about the noise levels.

When you bring home a new dog ideally you'll take some time off work to settle the dog in, including doing separation training.

Each day work on separation training. If the dog is going to be outside when you're not home, spend time outside with the dog showing the dog outside is fun-play with toys, give the dog a bone etc.

To start separation training you would place the dog outside and close the door and then immediately open it again. You need to do this before the dog has the opportunity to jump on the door or vocalise.

As soon as you open the door give the dog a treat and then shut the door again. Repeat x 5.

Next time, shut the door for 2 seconds. Repeat x 5.

Slowly increase the time. If you can do 3 of these sessions per day, this would be beneficial.

NEVER open the door if the dog is protesting or making any sound and **NEVER** let the dog barge past you to get in when you open the door. Just close the door on the dog and then try again. It will understand shortly not to try and push in.

Your puppy / dog will possibly make a huge amount of noise and you may be worried that your neighbours will complain, however this is why it is recommended that you pop letters in their letter boxes explaining the situation and they'll usually give you more breathing space.

If you tell the puppy / dog to "Shhh" / "Shut up" etc. or let it in when it is protesting, then you've taught the dog you have a weakness and now it will make a racket every time you put it outside.

Remember:

- ✓ Short term pain for long term gain.
- ✓ Dogs only do what is reinforcing.

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Exercise

Tire your dog out before you leave it alone, whether than be physical (walks/runs/play) or mental (training) exercise. Be careful to only give age appropriate exercise i.e. puppies should not be over exercised.

If your dog currently has separation anxiety

Contact Great Dane Rescue & Re-homing (GDRR) sacha@greatdanerescue.com.au and they can send you a program to work through and recommend a Behaviourist in your area.

Recommended reading

Practical Dog Listener by Jan Fennell, *a guide to removing anxiety from dogs so they can relax when you're home and when you're not.*