

Dog Mom's Guide to Going Back to Work: Easing Boredom & Separation Anxiety after the Covid-19 Quarantine

After weeks of uninterrupted time together, a sudden change in routine could be upsetting for your dog. Here's how to help her get ready. Remember that this might take time, so be patient and compassionate with your dog. Boredom and separation anxiety are stressful for both of you, but it can be treated, reduced or avoided with calm, consistent and compassionate care.

Encourage Independent Behaviors

- Start now to introduce short absences. Ask your dog to sit/stay, then leave the room, check the mail, or even drive around the neighborhood for a few minutes before calmly returning. Gradually increase the time away.
- If your dog uses a crate, start now to get back into the habit for a short time every day or every other day. Gradually increase the time as long as your dog is comfortable and feeling safe.
- Take occasional family walks without the dog, especially if you take multiple walks per day.
- Get your dog used to interactive feeding toys and let him eat his breakfast portion from one after you leave. Practice hiding treats throughout the house so your dog has something to do when you're gone. Freeze peanut butter in a Kong as a long-lasting treat.
- Meet your dog's physical and emotional needs before you leave for the day. Consider walking or playing first thing in the morning to tire her out, and make sure to give her some love and calm presence before you leave.

Return to Routine

- Start now to shift back to your regular sleep schedule. Set an alarm in the morning to reintroduce your dog to your routine, so that when you do go back to work it feels like a normal day to your dog.
- Start now to get back to a regular potty schedule outside. Dogs that have been used to being let outside all day could have more accidents than those who know exactly when to expect a potty break.
- If you're the primary caregiver for your dog, write out a schedule or a checklist for the dog during the day so that kids or remaining family members know what to do when you're gone.
- Create a leaving and coming home ritual so your dog knows exactly what is happening and that you will return.
- Really dog-proof the house before you go back to work. Look at your house from a dog's-eye view. If a dog was missing you terribly or afraid that they weren't going to get fed, what would appeal to them?

Enlist Additional Help

- Try a calming collar with dog-appeasing pheromone (Adaptil), ThunderShirts, CBD oil, or Rescue Remedy if your dog needs extra stress reduction. (Always check with your vet first.)
- Try some lavender and vanilla essential oil. Studies have shown that these scents reduce stress response in dogs.
- Play soothing music for your dog, such as the Calm my Dog app on Alexa, Dog Music Radio on Pandora, or DogTV.
- Monitor your dog using a video camera like Wyze or Furbo, and have a neighbor on standby in case your dog starts to panic.
- Hire a dog walker or consider a doggy day care. Ask your dog walker to bring their own leash or provide one for them to reduce the chance of coronavirus infection.
- If you suspect separation anxiety, hire a certified trainer or speak to your vet right away. A video of your dog's behavior will help them know where to start.

