

10. Mekuti Solutions for Coping with Anxiety

Benefits

- ✓ Drug Free
- ✓ Simple to use
- ✓ Effects can be immediate
- ✓ No Velcro
- ✓ Durable - great value for money!

Useful for:

- ✓ Fear of thunder / fireworks
- ✓ Separation anxiety
- ✓ Travel issues
- ✓ General or social anxiety
- ✓ Over excitement

How do they work?

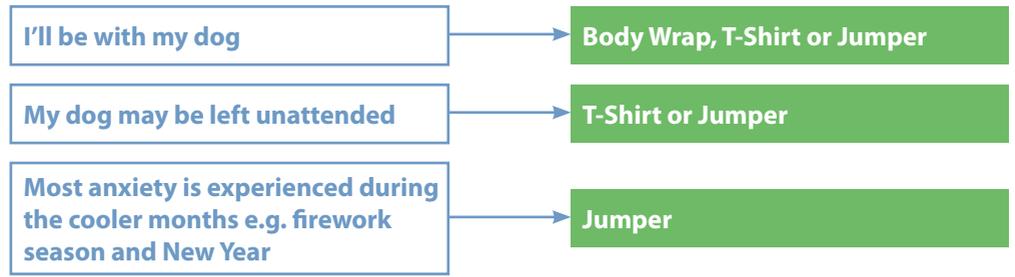
A gentle maintained contact around the body acts like a portable hug and creates a calming effect.

However, just hugging your dog is counter productive as it inhibits your dog's natural urge to either hide or run away when it is anxious, which can in turn increase the dog's discomfort.

The Body Wrap, T-Shirt or Jumper provide the contact and ability to move around, (although the majority of dogs just settle down and go to sleep when wearing the calming equipment).

Research shows that specific physical contact changes the body chemistry from that of stress to one of calm.

How do I decide what to use?



Animal Centred Behaviour Solutions

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Coping with your dog's Anxiety and Sound Sensitivity

incorporating Tellington TTouch



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The following information contains ways of dealing with anxiety at all levels, from mild concern through to outright fear. Gentle persistence and consistent, sympathetic handling can go a long way to support a fearful dog.

1. Body Wrap / T-Shirt

The Body Wrap / T-Shirt is used as part of the Tellington TTouch Method, working well on its own, but even better when combined with TTouch.

Both give the dog a sense of security that comes with body contact. The Wrap is easy to put on and take off and can be either worn under a harness or a coat.

The Wrap / T-Shirt can have an immediate effect, but also appears to have a cumulative effect too. The more your dog wears it, the more relaxed they can become. If your dog is afraid of fireworks, for example, you may find it helpful to start putting it on in the evenings during September. Don't worry if you haven't started early. As soon as you get the Wrap, put it onto your dog just for a couple of minutes, remove it, then replace it after a short break. This gives them an opportunity to adapt to the new feedback they are getting from their bodies. When your dog is used to it, the Wrap or T-Shirt may be worn for short or long periods.

When you are putting the Wrap or T-Shirt on, remember to breathe! It will help the dog as well as you.

Throughout firework season, put the Wrap onto your dog while it is getting dark.

DO NOT LEAVE YOUR DOG UNATTENDED IN A WRAP. If you need to leave them, the T-Shirt may be used as a safer option.

For visits to the vet or groomer, place the Wrap / T-Shirt on before leaving home.

At any other time that you feel your companion may be anxious or is showing signs of anxiety, try the Wrap. It can do no harm to try.

Some guardians report that their dogs come to them when they want the Wrap on.

The choice between Wrap or T-Shirt is entirely personal as both can support the dog at times of need but there is a guide on the back page of this leaflet.

2. Avoid eye contact

When your dog is unsure about something, they will look to you to see how you are responding. If you make eye contact with them at this time, you may confirm that there is something to be anxious about. Avoiding eye-contact will be reassuring and enables your dog to settle down. Not making eye-contact is different to ignoring them. You can still talk in a soothing voice, stroke them or, even better, use TTouch to calm them.

3. Create a safe haven

Place comfortable bedding somewhere safe, warm and dark away from the main household traffic - most animals instinctively go behind a chair or sofa. When they are there, don't pester them - you may be adding to their anxiety. Some people have found that putting a DAP diffuser close to the dog's bed can also help.

4. Supplements

At times of stress, I have found that Skullcap & Valerian tablets (from Dorwest Herbs) invaluable for my own dog. We varied the dosage and timing to find the best ones for Meg, but it's best to start with a half dose and build up. We also supplement with Vitamin B complex (the stress vitamin).

5. Diet

Avoid any foods or treats that have any additives, preservatives or colourants as these can really add to an animal's stress levels. If you can, feed 3 times a day during firework season or at times of stress/anxiety to maintain their blood-sugar levels and ensure that any dried food is well soaked.

6. Tellington TTouch

TTouch is an easily learnt technique that can have a dramatic effect on your animal's wellbeing. Go to www.ttouchteam.co.uk to find your nearest practitioner or to find a workshop. Tension within your dog's body can cause them to react in a fearful or anxious way to situations (such as loud noises or trips to the vet); removing this tension using light circular TTouches and reconnecting their brains with their bodies allows them to think and cope better in potentially frightening situations.

7. Exercise

Ensure that your dog gets appropriate exercise during times of stress / firework season. Their adrenalin levels will be increased, so avoid all kinds of rushing around, for instance chasing balls, and find ways to stimulate their senses of smell, hearing and sight etc.

If you have to take your dog out after dark, ensure that they have ID tags on their collar, that the collar is adjusted so it doesn't slip over their head, and consider using a harness or head halter with a double-ended lead attached to both harness and collar, so if they do have a fright and try to wriggle out, you have a second means of holding them. You may consider using a second collar which is only used for the ID tags just in case they do slip free. Don't let your dog loose in the garden unless you're 100%

certain that they can't get out. A frightened dog won't think about what they're doing and can travel a long way to get away from the source of their fear.

8. Breathe!!

Anxiety is infectious and you may start to breathe shallowly when you anticipate your dog's anxiety. By ensuring that your breathing is relaxed and steady, you can signal to them that there really is every reason to feel calm too.

I hope that you are able to enjoy potentially challenging situations without the usual anxiety about your companion.

9. Helpful Resources

All items are available from Mekuti where you can order online at www.mekuti.co.uk or telephone 0113 2590 589.

Body Wraps come in 3 standard sizes: 2", 3" and 4" to suit the size of your dog.

T-shirts are supposed to be a fairly loose fit, so when measuring your dog around the ribs you must allow enough room to comfortably fit two fingers underneath the tape measure.

Jumpers are equally effective as the T-shirts for reducing anxiety but as they are made from a fleecy material are ideal for winter and outdoor use. Jumpers are also excellent for helping to wick away moisture after exercise in damp conditions or swimming and help your dog maintain body temperature.

Getting Into TTouch With Your Dog, by Linda Tellington-Jones, and **Unlocking Your Dog's Potential**, by Sarah Fisher, are excellent books where you can find out more about TTouch. Both these books and others which may be helpful are available from Mekuti.