Could your dog have separation anxiety?

The state of NH as well as many other states has a stay at home order in place. Many people are dealing with many challenges during this uncertain time. We hope that everyone stays safe and takes the proper precautions. During this time your dog has probably spent much more time with you due to the fact that people can’t go to work and do activities that used to leave your dog home alone. Something to consider when everything gets back to normal, how will your dog feel? Will your dog start to feel anxious being left alone? Your dog may be just fine with it, or…your dog may experience separation anxiety. Separation anxiety can range from mild reactions to severe reactions for dogs. This anxiety is triggered when dogs become upset because of separation from people they are attached to. If there is an abrupt change in schedule in terms of when or how long a dog is left alone, it can trigger the development of separation anxiety. For instance, if the dog’s favorite people currently work from home or children stay home from school all day then return back to a routine of leaving the dog alone for 6 or more hours at a time, the dog might develop separation anxiety because of the change.

We will discuss some training tips the next few weeks on how to minimize and plan for a good transition for your dog when things “get back to normal”. First, it is important to understand some behaviors seen when a dog exhibits separation anxiety.

1. Your dog may urinate or defecate when left alone

2. Barking or howling that is persistent and doesn’t seem to be triggered by anything except being left alone

3. Some dogs may chew on objects, door frames, window sills, destroy household items.

4. Your dog may try to escape from an area that he is confined in. The dog may attempt to dig and chew through doors or windows.

5. Pacing along a specific path in a fixed pattern when left alone is another example.

6. Your dog may excessively lick himself, creating hot spots on any part of his body.

Some people may think their dog is doing this to “get back at them” for leaving. This is not true! Your dog may be experiencing anxiety when any of these may happen. Do not scold or punish your dog. Anxious behaviors are not the result of disobedience or spite. They are distress responses. Your dog is upset and trying to cope with a great deal of stress. If you punish him, it may make matters worse.

So what can we do as good dog parents, to minimize their anxiety when we return to our normal day activities? Next Training Tip Tuesday will go over some training tips.

Happy Training!