chewing as part of his separation distress, offering him a chewing item as a safety cue is a good idea. Very hard rubber
toys that can be stuffed with treats and Nylabone-like products are good choices.

Desensitization Techniques For More Severe Cases Of Separation Anxiety

The primary treatment for more severe cases of separation anxiety is a systematic process of getting your dog used to being
alone. You must teach your dog to remain calm during "practice" departures and short absences. We recommend the
following procedure:

- Begin by engaging in your normal departure activities (such as picking up your keys, purse or backpack), then sit back
down. Repeat this step until your dog shows no distress in response to your activities.
- Next, engage in your normal departure activities and go to the door and open it, then sit back down.
- Next, step outside the door, leaving the door open, then return.
- Finally, step outside, close the door, then immediately return. Slowly get your dog accustomed to being alone with
the door closed between you for several seconds.
- Proceed very gradually from step to step, repeating each step until your dog shows no signs of distress (the number of
repetitions will vary depending on the severity of the problem). If at any time in this process your actions produce an
anxiety response in your dog, you've proceeded too fast. Return to an earlier step in the process and practice this
step until the dog shows no distress response, then proceed to the next step.

When your dog is tolerating your being on the other side of the door for several seconds, begin short-duration
absences. This step involves giving the dog a verbal cue (for example, "I'll be back.'), leaving and then returning
within a minute. Your return must be low-key: either ignore your dog or greet him quietly and calmly. If he shows no
signs of distress, repeat the exercise. If he appears anxious, wait until he relaxes to repeat the exercise. Gradually
increase the length of time you're gone.

- Practice as many absences as possible that last less than ten minutes. You can do many departures within one session
if your dog relaxes sufficiently between departures. You should also scatter practice departures and short-duration
absences throughout the day.

Once your dog can handle short absences (30 to 90 minutes), he'll usually be able to handle longer intervals alone and
you won't have to work up to all-day absences minute by minute. The hard part is at the beginning, but the job gets
easier as you go along. Nevertheless, you must go slowly at first. How long it takes to condition your dog to being
alone depends on the severity of his problem.

Teaching The Sit-Stay And Down-Stay

Practice sit-stay or down-stay exercises using positive reinforcement. Never punish your dog during these training sessions.
Gradually increase the distance you move away from your dog. Your goal is to be able to move briefly out of your dog's
sight while he remains in the "stay" position. The point is to teach him that he can remain calmly and happily in one place
while you go to another. As you progress, you can do this during the course of your normal daily activities. For example, if
you're watching television with your dog by your side and you get up for a snack, tell him to stay, and leave the room.
When you come back, give him a treat or quietly praise him.

Interim Solutions

Because the above-described treatments can take a while, and because a dog with separation anxiety can do serious
damage to himself or your home, some of the following suggestions may be helpful in dealing with the problems in the
short term:

- Consult your veterinarian about the possibility of drug
  therapy. A good anti-anxiety drug should not sedate your
dog, but simply reduce his anxiety while you're gone. Such
medication is a temporary measure and should be used in
conjunction with behavior modification techniques.

Take your dog to a dog day care facility or boarding kennel.

Leave your dog with a friend, family member or neighbor.

Take your dog to work with you, even for half a day, if
possible.

What Won't Help A Separation Anxiety Problem

- Punishment is not an effective way to treat separation anxiety. In fact, if you punish your dog after you return home it
may actually increase his separation anxiety.
- Getting another pet. This usually doesn't help an anxious dog as his anxiety is the result of his separation from you, his
person, not merely the result of being alone.
- Crating your dog. Your dog will still engage in anxiety responses in the crate. He may urinate, defecate, howl or even
injure himself in an attempt to escape from the crate.
- Leave the radio on (unless the radio is used as a "safety cue" - see above).

Obedience school. While obedience training is always a good idea, it won't directly help a separation anxiety problem.
Separation anxiety is not the result of disobedience or lack of training, it's a panic response.