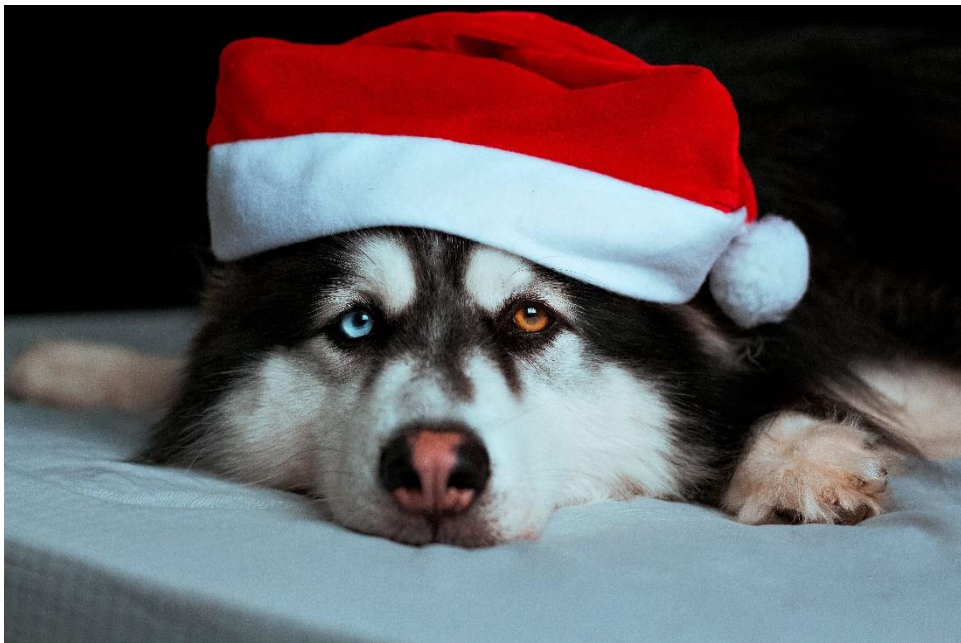




Lights and Sounds and People, Oh My! Managing your Anxious Dog During the Holiday Season

By Katie Bedrossian – Pet Behaviour Consultant

The holiday season can be a magical and special time where we come together with family and friends to celebrate. It can also be very busy, and for dogs that are anxious this can be very overwhelming.



There are many ways you can help your anxious dog including:

1. **Understanding your dog's triggers** and at what point they cause your dog to react. A reaction could be as mild as not being able to concentrate on a known cue (such as not responding to 'Sit'), up to more intense reactions such as wanting to move away from the environment or barking incessantly. Any reaction that is out of the ordinary for your dog.
2. **Avoid the triggers** as much as possible. All dogs, but to a greater extent anxious dogs, trigger stack. This is where multiple things in the environment (that on their own don't cause a reaction) cause a reaction when added together or are occurring within a close time frame together (within 72 hours).
3. **Create a Safe Zone.** For dogs concerned about people entering the home, creating a Safe Zone that also acts as an enrichment zone is a great idea. This may be a room with a baby gate, a playpen out of the action or a safe enclosed space outside. It should have a rotation of toys, chews and lickable items as well as something that smells of



you. The safe space is generally a space away from where people are gathering, however some dogs cope better with a space of their own that they can choose to retreat to (such as a crate, pen or room with the door open) and all visitors being aware not to enter that space.

4. **Music or white noise.** For dogs concerned about sound, placing a speaker next to the wall, window or door where sound is coming in can provide a blocker for certain sound frequencies. If your dog is in a safe space as above, this speaker should be placed right at the door or gate that enters the safe space. Through the speaker, play calming music or white noise at a background noise volume.
5. **Avoid having visitors give your anxious dog treats directly**, as this can be a negative experience for them if the visitor is coming too close for comfort to give the treat. Instead, give the treat yourself when a visitor arrives so that there is a positive association with the arrival of new people.

Many anxious dogs need additional assistance during this time of year. This may be in the form of a personalised behaviour plan after a consultation with our **Pet Behaviour Consultant**, Katie Bedrossian, combined with using over-the-counter anti-anxiety supplements. Some more severe cases may require a veterinary behaviour consultation for a health assessment and an anti-anxiety medication review. Please contact us today to find out what may be the best solution for your dog. We're here to help!