

# 5 SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR YOUR DOG DURING COVID-19



Are you worried that your dog will struggle when you go back to work? COVID-19 for some means spending most of your time at home and your dog has access to you 24/7.

Some dogs won't be getting enough rest, and therefore might be displaying some unwanted behaviours. If you have a busy household perhaps with children at home, some dogs will be really struggling not having time on their own.

Your dog might be clingier and following you around the house; or become more bitey (puppies) as they are overtired, or appearing to be 'naughty' like chewing the furniture or stealing clothes off the drier.

For some dogs, having you around is pure bliss, and it's just what they have always wanted. However, these dogs are certainly going to find you going back to work very difficult.

There are things we can do to help our dogs NOW



# DOG SLEEP

I recommend that your dog gets several opportunities during the day to have some quiet time. You could give them a lovely stuffed Kong or bone and put them in another room and leave them alone.

Another idea is to put your dog in the car for a rest. If your car is in a safe place on your driveway, then this is a great quiet place to use. Please be aware of the temperature and leave the windows open.

You could sit in your garden and leave your dog in the house. Enjoy your cup of tea whilst your dog is allowed to relax in their safe place.

With the above suggestions, it's important your dog is comfortable being alone - don't let them become distressed during this time. If your dog struggles, then please do get in touch so I can help you solve this problem



Give your dog a focused 10 minutes where you are engaging in doing something together. Play a game, learn a trick, or try the weekly Paws4teaching challenge on the Facebook page. It doesn't matter what you are doing but give your dog your total attention - not watching TV or playing on your phone.

After this time, give your dog something to entertain themselves and leave them to it. You are not going to engage with them at all.

The idea is that you have given them an appropriate outlet for their energy which doesn't involve you.





# DOG SETTLE

Settle on mat. One of my favourite things to teach as it's useful in so many scenarios. Get your dog to think lying on their mat is amazing. Have a pot of food treats ready (lots of very small pieces) and when your dog has 4 paws on the mat, say "mat" (or what word you like) and then place 1 treat onto the mat so your dog eats treat, then add another one. Keep feeding frequently enough that your dog doesn't move off the mat, so every few seconds initially.

Then say "ok" as a release word and drop a treat off the mat so your dog gets off the mat to get food. Wait and see if your dog chooses to go back onto the mat - if they do - amazing! Say "mat" and start dropping treats on the mat again. If they don't choose to go back, not a problem,

just guide them back with a food treat in your hand and when 4 paws on the mat say "mat" and start placing treats onto the mat again. We want your dog to think this mat is amazing as free food turns up - why would I not want to stay here?



It's really important you give the release cue "ok" to give them permission to get off the mat, don't let them choose to get off. If they do get off the mat before you have released, it shows you aren't feeding often enough.

Your progression is to slowly reduce the frequency of food rewards being given and then you will slowly move away from the mat; your dog has to stay on the mat and you have to keep returning back to give food rewards.

Again, make sure you progress at a pace they are succeeding - if they keep getting off the mat, you are progressing too quickly!

Gradually build the distraction of what is going on around them e.g. you eating your dinner or leaving the room etc.

Use this skill so that your dog can settle on their own and doesn't have to be attached to you all the time.



# DOG FOOD

Get rid of your dog's food bowl. The best way to keep your dog entertained is to stop putting their food allowance in their bowl.

Scatter feeding (throwing kibble in your garden) is a great way to get your dog using their nose. Use wet food (or soak your dried kibble) and stuff a Kong - you can freeze Kongs to make them harder.

Use some kibble and put in an old cereal box so they have to rip up the cardboard to find the treats or just get training and teach your dog some new skills so that they can earn their food.

What do you want your dog to be better at? Write a list and work through the skills you want your dog to be good at.



# DOG EXERCISE

Use your daily exercise allowance to include your dog. Don't worry if you cannot get them to your usual off lead location, on lead exercise is great to improve general fitness.

Think about mixing up what your walks involve. For example, one walk could involve finding the hidden toy in the long grass or behind the trees. So, walk along and drop/throw the toy without your dog noticing, and then go back and say "find it" and help your dog find the toy.

Take out with you some prepared loo roll cardboard tubes with some smelly food treats in, scrunch the ends to make a cracker, then you can hide these in the hedge rows and get your dog to 'find it'. Same idea as above; try and be sneaky so your dog doesn't see you hiding the item.

Do some training; work on your lead skills or practise leaving the cat poo!



# AND FINALLY

Finally, watch their waistlines! All of these activities are meant to give you ideas to use up their daily food allowance,

These aren't meant to be extra. You can mix up what you are feeding your dog in terms of value of treats but be aware if you have reduced their physical exercise you may also need to reduce their daily food intake.

Enjoy this time with your dogs. accept that they are having to deal with changes as we all are.

They will pick up on our own stress and anxiety, so be willing to help them through this period of time.

Get in touch if you want any help.

*Stay safe , Jo x*