

**Michelle Vrolijk &
Daniëlle Dessauvagie**

DOGS & FEAR OF FIREWORKS

7 tips to help your dog!



INTRODUCTION

As a dog guardian, it's difficult to see your dog struggling with anxiety. You may feel powerless because you don't know how to help him. Or the things that you've tried have not worked.

Fortunately, there are a number of things that you can do to reduce fear, so you and your dog can be more relaxed (and learn how) to deal with these situations.

With this e-book, we want to give you some tools to get started with this.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the authors	4
What is fear?	6
The scaredy-cat	8
Pain and sound sensitivity	9
Physical causes of anxiety	10
Seven tips:	12
1. Health and Behaviour	13
2. The sound of music	15
3. A safe haven	19
4. Standing strong	21
5. Dog and healing aids	25
6. It's all about the nose	28
7. Under pressure	29
A tip from The Different Veterinarian	30
There is more	32
About the authors, part 2	34
Summary	36
Do's and don'ts	37
References	38
Finally	39

In this e-book we discuss the fear-signals from your dog, various causes of fear, and possible solutions.

We hope that this e-book will provide you with insights and ideas about how you can help your dog.

Michelle & Daniëlle = **MV & DD**

Attachments:

- Dog body language
- ThunderShirt
- E-book
“Pain in dogs”

Michelle Vrolijk



Michelle Vrolijk is a dog behaviorist and coaches dogs and owners. She helps dogs with 'undesirable behaviours' on a daily basis, in her practice.

“Of all the dogs I see in my practice, I see at least 70% with unnoticed physical and mental pain. That's why the themes of 'Pain' and 'Fear' are so close to my heart.”

Because a dog is largely dependent on its guardian, Michelle is in favour of knowledge expansion. That is why she regularly gives and organises lectures and workshops about dogs.

Michelle is a passionate animal lover, owner of her practice for dogs and humans “MichelleVrolijk.nl, initiator and co-author of this e-book, the e-book 'Pain in dogs' and other e-books.

She is also the organiser of the training courses 'Pain in dogs' and has a network of 'Pain coaches' for dogs!

Daniëlle is an individual dog sitter and Tellington TTouch Practitioner for companion animals. She has a lot of experience with dogs who are afraid of fireworks.

“My own dogs have never been afraid, but in the ten years that I worked in a dog and cat specialty store, I have seen a lot of desperate and sad guardians at the shop counter” .

She emphasizes the importance of helping a dog who is afraid, and not to think that you can't do anything. It's all of those little things together that can make the difference for your dog. What works for one dog, may not work for another. It is often a search for the right resources and measures.

As co-author of this e-book, she hopes to help dog guardians a bit further along the way and let them think ‘out-of-the-box’ to guide a dog with fear (of fireworks).

Daniëlle Dessauvagie



WHAT IS FEAR?

Fear is an emotion that helps you respond to (impending) danger. Your body is getting ready to fight or flee and goes on high alert. The heart beats faster, blood pressure goes up, breathing speeds up and the muscles tense. Normally this state of the body only lasts for a short time and is a healthy response to imminent danger.



“Fact”

Anxiety can be innate or learned. The fear of loud sounds is one of the few innate fears (also with people), because loud noises often signal a danger. This fear can disappear through learning experiences or even get worse.

USEFUL OR USELESS?

HUMAN-RELATED

Just like pain, fear is an important counsellor. Without fear, you might "throw yourself" into any situation, without thinking about possible consequences. So, fear is useful. It is a healthy response to threatening situations. However, it can happen that this healthy fear becomes 'unhealthy'. You can develop anxiety issues or an anxiety disorder that causes you to overreact in situations that do not pose a (major) threat. This also occurs in dogs.

DOG RELATED

Dogs with an anxiety disorder are also afraid of situations that do not pose any immediate danger. When fear takes over, and negatively affects life, a situation can arise in which the dog can no longer function normally.



MV

Practical example of an (over)reaction.

When a person reacts in a way that seems out of proportion to the cause: Someone sees a small spider, immediately runs out of the house and only comes to a stop 3 blocks away, while the same spider is no problem for someone else. The first reaction is a healthy reaction if the spider is life-threatening, but if it is an innocent spider, or perhaps an ant, then the reaction is out of proportion and not useful.

DD

“Concentrate!” I'm afraid of wasps. If there is a wasp in the room, it is very difficult to have a good conversation or read a book. First that wasp has to go. If the wasp is on the other side of the room, I can still sit quietly and follow it with my eyes. If the wasp comes closer, then I am no longer open to reason and all I want to do is increase the distance.

When you experience fear, it is difficult to focus on anything other than the “threat”.

You cannot expect a dog that is anxious to listen to you (well) or be able to learn.

THE SCAREDY-CAT

Many people think that anxious dogs are dogs that whine, crawl away with their tail between their legs, or try to flee. Or a dog that passes urine or faeces out of fear. But there are many more (and subtler) symptoms from which you can recognize anxiety and stress — such as excessive panting or yawning, shaking out, or simply the look in the eyes or the position of the ears.

Consider, for example, a dog that barks at fireworks or seems to want to attack; this can also be an expression of fear.

In a British survey* from 2013, almost half of the 383 respondents' (dog owners) reported that their dogs were afraid of loud noises such as thunder, fireworks and gunshots. Only a third of this group of owners had sought professional help for their dog.



* Fear responses to noises in domestic dogs: Prevalence, risk factors and co-occurrence with other fear related behaviour:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S016815911200367X?via3Dihub>



You will find an overview of various anxiety and stress signals from dogs in appendix 1

EXTRA LOUD

In the e-book 'Pain in dogs, 7 symptoms that can help you recognize that your dog is in pain', you may have already read that a dog with health problems and/or pain may show different behaviours.

For example, reacting aggressively if you touch them, or avoiding other dogs.

But a dog in pain or physical discomfort can also become more fearful of other stimuli such as sound.

In case of chronic pain, you often have to deal with an overstimulated nervous system, which means that loud sounds can be tolerated less well or perhaps not at all because the sound comes across as extra loud.

“Fact”

This research paper* shows the relationship between pain, sound sensitivity and anxiety in dogs. Dogs with joint problems, had developed a fear of noise an average of 4 years later, than the dogs without joint problems.

The cause of the anxiety was most likely related to the pain that occurred later in life.

* Noise sensitivities in Dogs: An Exploration of Signs in Dogs with and without Musculoskeletal pain, using Qualitative Content Analysis- Frontiers in Veterinary Science, Perspective, 13 February 2018. Link: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2018.00017/full>

SCARE RESPONSE

Due to a startle reaction, a dog can make a movement that causes pain, then the (negative) link between the sound and the pain can be made quickly.

MV: Fear (of fireworks) can also be a memory. For example: a dog is foraging in the guardian's garden, and someone throws a firecracker nearby (which lands close to the dog), causing the dog to panic and hurt himself when fleeing. There is a real chance that the dog will panic the next time with a barely audible bang, or e.g. when opening a champagne bottle, triggered by the memory.

DD: The fright makes the dog stiffen, which puts extra pressure on the muscles and joints. It is thought that dogs with joint problems experience pain more intensely and the dog then develops a sensitivity to sound. After all, the dog hears a bang that is followed by pain.

PHYSICAL CAUSES OF ANXIETY

Anneke Schellingerhout is a holistic veterinarian. In her practice she offers many different treatment options. We asked her to briefly explain how physical problems can lead to a fear of loud noises (like fireworks).

The auditory nerve

The auditory nerve experiences sound when a vibration enters through the ear canal. The eardrum transmits this vibration to the inner ear. The vibration is converted into an electrical signal that is sent via the auditory nerve to the brain where it is perceived as sound. A nerve, including the auditory nerve, can become irritated when pressure is placed on it.

[Read more on page 11](#)



Picture: Veterinarian Anneke Schellingerhout from <https://jyoti.nl/> with dog Sardo

Continued from page 10

This can happen, for example, when a dog slips on a wet lawn, causing a restriction in movement of the pelvis and sacrum. These structures are directly connected to the meninges through the spinal cord membranes. The meninges have a connection to the skull bones and nerves in the head. This way, hindquarter problems can lead to an irritated auditory nerve. If this happens around New Year's Eve, the sound of fireworks can possibly not be processed properly by the nerve, causing the brain to provide incorrect information and as a result of this the experience can be traumatic for the dog.

The treatment of the auditory nerve itself can be done with craniosacral therapy. The underlying reason can often be resolved with osteopathy, chiropractic, or another form of manual therapy.

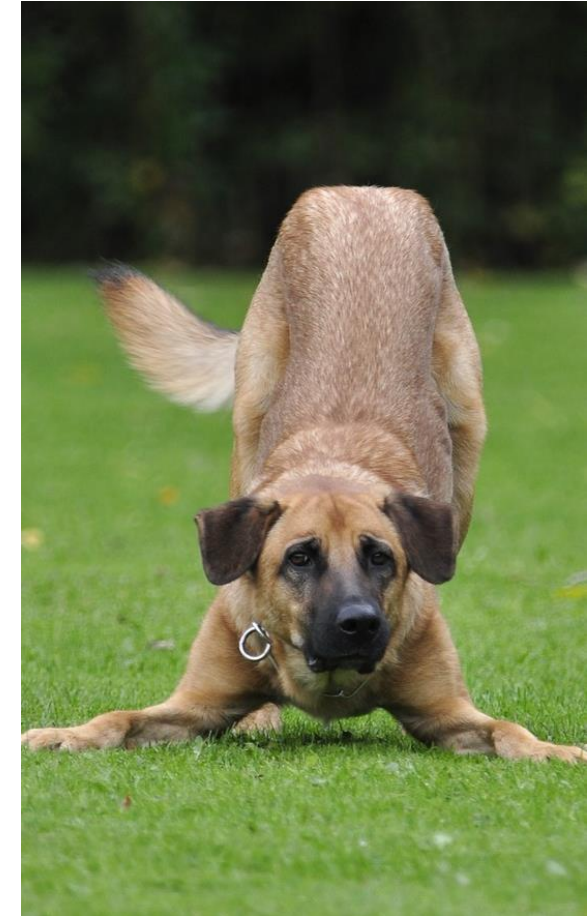
The development and treatment of fear of fireworks is therefore quite complicated and requires a holistic view and treatment.

Fixed fear

Fear is not a behaviour, but an emotion (e-motion = energy in motion). Emotions are stored in the body; e.g. the limbic system, kidneys and fascia (form of connective tissue). An animal that experiences fear due to an unpleasant experience, fixes this in his body, but can sometimes function normally. Until there is a trigger that releases the energy again; the animal experiences the old fear and it becomes chronic.

It is therefore important to treat an animal suffering from fixed anxiety.

However, a treatment that restores the energy and allows the stuck fear to flow, will only be successful when the animal can trust the practitioner and perceives the environment as safe.





7 TIPS TO HELP YOUR DOG

TIP 1: HEALTH AND BEHAVIOUR

As you have read, pain or physical discomfort can be an important cause of anxiety.

Your dog's **H**ealth has a direct influence on its **B**ehaviour. That is why we always recommend to consult a good holistic veterinarian, osteopath or physiotherapist when a dog is afraid of fireworks or other loud noises.

If you find it difficult to make a choice, please contact us or one of the Pain coaches for dogs:
<https://www.michellevrolijk.nl/pijn-coaches.html>

When a dog feels better, he will also respond better to other forms of therapy for his anxiety.

Health check

Give your dog a health check at least twice a year and let him be preventively checked by a good holistic veterinarian, osteopath or physiotherapist. Prevention is better than cure.



DD: A dog whose eyesight or hearing deteriorates (due to old age) can become insecure and scared in situations where he wasn't afraid before.



MV: An (older) dog that suffers from (chronic) health problems is extra vulnerable and sensitive to anxiety and stress.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

A dog suddenly reacts differently to sound. Could pain be the cause of this?

MV: Moon is an Australian shepherd of approximately 8 years old, who is suddenly more afraid than usual of construction noise, gunfire shots and fireworks. He never liked these sounds, but this is unprecedented. He is fearful and shaking, no longer open to contact and doesn't want to go outside. The guardian wonders whether this extreme fear is due to pain → Moon was attacked by another dog 1 to 2 months ago and this resulted with a hole in his ear.

This is why the guardian has Moon checked by veterinarian Iris van Deur. Examination shows that his back and neck are slightly stiff and painful, with multiple abnormal vertebral positions in the back. Pain and abnormal gait are caused by radiating pain from the neck and back. Moon is treated on the spot.



The first 2 to 3 days after treatment Moon is still quite anxious about going for walks.

But after a while, Moon feels like his old self. He is no longer shaking, makes normal contact and he likes to go outside again.

TIP 2: THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Block out unwanted noises from outside as much as possible — close windows, doors and blinds. And make sure the noises inside are well-chosen.

Through a dog's ear

One of the things you can do to make the sound of the fireworks less loud, is to ensure that another a soothing sound is used to drown out the fireworks, for example music. Putting on loud music can help, but it can also make stress worse. Classical music can also be quite intense. The music of 'Through a dog's ear' is piano music composed especially for dogs. This music can help to lower the heart rate (one of the body's responses to fear). You can find this music on Spotify.

Relaxopet

The Relaxopet is a small speaker that, in addition to audible, specially composed sound waves, also produces high-frequency soundwaves and plays subliminal soundtracks. The Relaxopet has a relaxing effect on many dogs. Please try this well before New Year's Eve, to ensure your dog has positively experiences with it *before* the firework erupts. For more information: https://www.relaxopet.com/Manual/2001_EN_V3.pdf



MV: The Relaxopet also creates a calming and relaxing state in humans, thanks to its special developed sound patterns 😊

DD: The Relaxopet is beneficial for dogs, cats, birds and horses. There are different versions on the market, so pay close attention to which one you buy. The species-specific Relaxopet-pro is the most recent version.

Fireworks CD's

There are varied suggestions online, on how to get your dog used to fireworks and other loud noises with the help of firework sound effects CD's. The opinions about the use of these CD's are divided.

MV: In experience it *can* be helpful, but it's use is underestimated as well as overestimated:

- With audio CDs you can never imitate a real situation.
- Applying it correctly is more difficult than one thinks:
 - people often lack to understand a dog's body language
 - the exposure is built up too quickly or not at all.
 - the 'total picture' is not taken into account.
- This can have an adverse effect.
- It is not **the** solution because a CD is different from reality.
- People are disappointed in the process and therefore give up.



Real live fireworks training

Fireworks training requires very precise customization. The intensity and duration of the sound (and other stimuli) must always be adapted to what the dog can handle at that moment and where he does not yet show any anxiety or stress signals.

If you want to use desensitization to work on fear of fireworks, choose private lessons instead of group lessons. If one dog in the group shows fear, this can spread to the entire group, because fear is contagious.

Group training that involves setting off fireworks is strongly discouraged, also for puppies or dogs that are not (yet) afraid of fireworks.

DD: If you want to get started with a CD, you can find various on the internet. Read the instructions first and build up the training step by step. First listen to the entire CD without your dog present (possibly in the car) so that you know what sounds to expect. A CD is not a panacea, but a possible tool.

Sound frequencies

Den Hoek, the Holistic practice for Animals & People, was set up by veterinarian Eric Laarakker. They work with Western and Eastern (veterinary) medicine and offer, among other things, a sound treatment based on information medicine. This means the body's self-healing capacity is stimulated by offering certain stimuli (information), in the form of harmonic tones (sound). In a damaged cell, the cooperation, the harmony, between cells is disturbed. The more a cell is damaged, the less information it provides to other cells. The “harmony of the symphony orchestra” is disturbed. The sound frequencies stimulate the cells to communicate, collaborate and recover. Despite information-medicine being relatively new and there is still a lot to learn about the exact function, we would like to point out this possibility, because we have had a number of positive experiences with it.

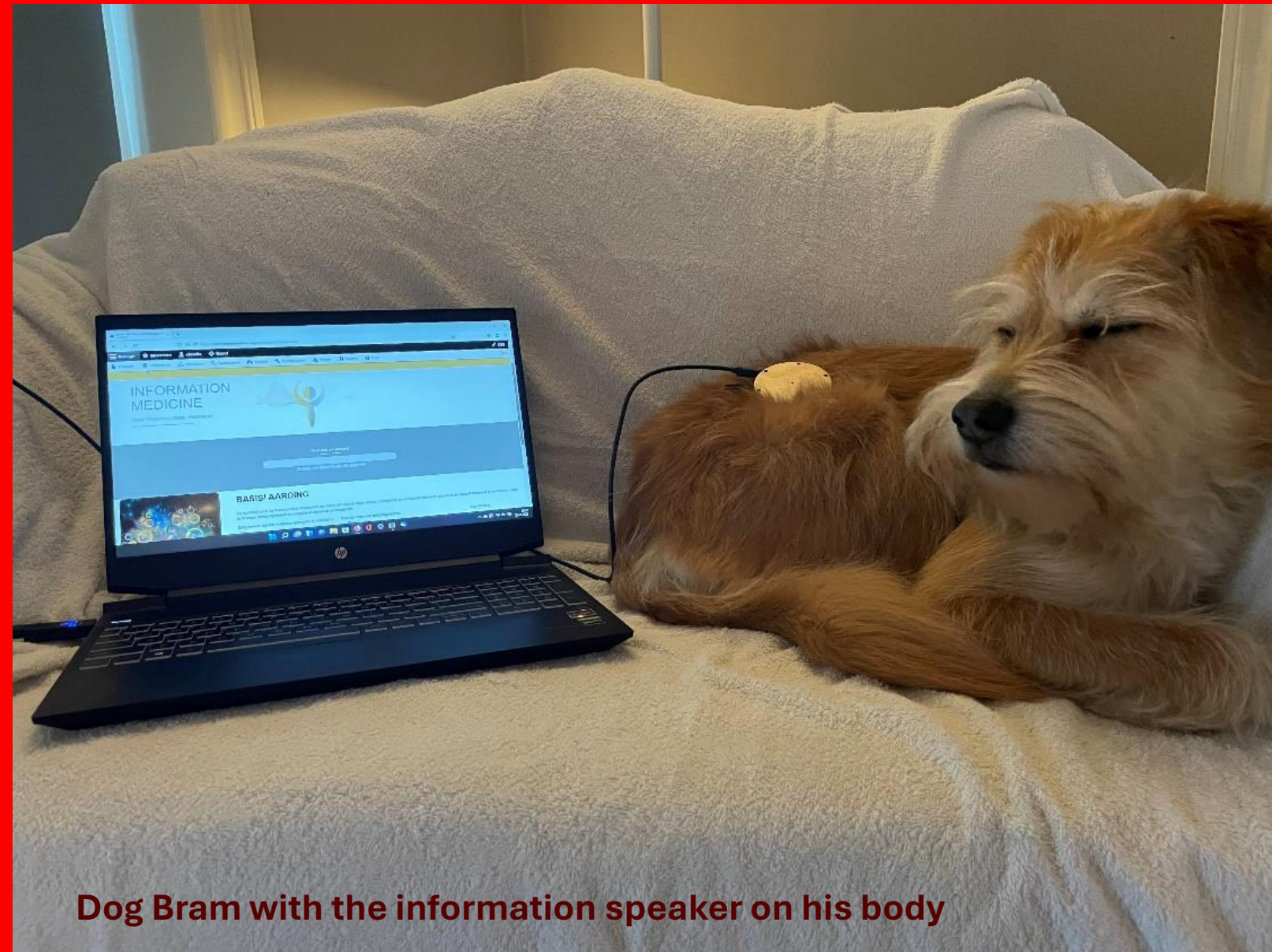


Eric Laarakker of Information Medicine says:

“In our opinion ‘Information Medicine’ is *the* medicine of the future.

The treatment with the sound frequencies offers a large number of sound files for both physical- and behavioural-problems. Which files are chosen depends on the dog and the issues. The sound files are played via our website using a speaker. For the optimal experience we recommend use of the ‘Information Speakers’ specially developed for this purpose, which are equipped with a vibrating plate, so you can hear *and* feel the vibrations. Most animals (and their guardians) relax wonderfully while playing the sound files.”

Sound therapy can contribute to faster recovery and reduce fear of fireworks and/or loud noises. Do you want to know more? Visit our website www.informationmedicine.org or contact us by email: contact@informationmedicine.org”



Dog Bram with the information speaker on his body

Claudia de Gooijer-Kant:

“This is how my dog Bram responds to playing the sound file ‘Grounding & Relaxation’. He loves it and visibly relaxes. I played the sound for him around New Year’s Eve.

What I noticed is that he recovered from his fear of explosions faster in between exposure; he was still afraid during our walks outside, but he wasn’t stressed all day long. Inside our home, he was relaxed, even on the 31st of December.

TIP 3: A SAFE HAVEN

Bathroom

Celebrating New Year's Eve in the bathroom may not sound so romantic. But if that is the place for your dog to feel more comfortable during the fireworks (for example because this space does not have windows), then you may consider creating it as a cozy and comfortable place as possible, with some treats for dogs & humans and an appropriate music such as the Relaxopet or 'Through a Dog's Ear',



Hide (and seek)

If your dog likes to hide in a “safe den”, you can create one with a crate (leave the door open) or a table, covered with a thick blanket. This can somewhat mute the loud noises from outside. Pay attention to safety and make sure your dog can easily get out and doesn't get caught in the blanket.



‘What you don't see isn't there’. This applies for many dogs and they feel better if they don't see the fireworks. If this applies to your dog, then don't forget to close the curtains, roller shutters etc. before the fireworks start.



Nice holiday houses are quickly booked up. So, make a reservation as early as possible. If you liked your stay, then you can immediately book the house again for next year.

The co-driver

If your dog likes the car, you can consider to take a ride on the highway, with some appropriate music. The noise of fireworks in your car on the highway is often far less loud than in a residential area. Make sure that you leave on time and don't wait until midnight to go out the door.

On holiday

A more romantic alternative is to take your dog to a holiday home in a nice fireworks-free environment where you can spend New Years Eve together.

“Fact”

Carbide shooting is a local custom in some areas . It's often not considered 'fireworks' but it does give very loud (dull) bangs.

So, pay attention if you do book a house somewhere and check in advance with the owner or landlord how fireworks-free the area really is

TIP 4: STANDING STRONG

As a dog owner, you are the most important factor in your dog's life; you are his safe base. Together you are a team. That's why it's so important that you support your dog when he is afraid and to show him: "I am there for you, we can do this together".

Standing Strong Together, inside

Standing Strong Together also means that your dog is not home alone, even if he is not afraid of fireworks. Your dog can unexpectedly be startled by something like an extremely loud bang, something hitting a window or a firecracker that accidentally falls into your garden or ends up on your balcony. If you are with your dog at that moment, you can respond to it immediately as best as possible. If your dog is home alone and panics, it can cause a lifetime of trauma.

Stay together

This doesn't mean you can take your dog with you to a fireworks event or to a party. You simply stay at home together, in the house and you close your windows, doors, etc. The exception on this is going to a firework-free environment together.



Are you having visitors? Make sure your dog feels comfortable with them. Instruct your company well and prevent someone leaving a door open, so your dog can escape. Stay in touch with your dog if the fireworks starts at midnight instead of just being busy with opening the champagne bottle and toasting on the New Year.

"Who keeps company with the wolf will learn to howl" → if you take your dog to a boarding facility and there is a dog with fear of fireworks, it's not unlikely for your dog to take over the fear. If your dog is already afraid of fireworks, a new (scary) environment with one or more stressed dogs will not help your dog.





“What you pay attention to grows”
No matter how difficult it can be sometimes, provide positive, helping thoughts. Focus on what is good and how you can help your dog instead of focusing on his fear and the fireworks.

DD: There is a big difference between supporting your dog and feeling sorry for him. When you get angry, sad or feel frustrated, your dog feels this too. If you are relaxed, you give a good example to your dog. So let your dog lay next to you, talk to your dog and touch him if he like this. Do not ignore your dog, but avoid, consciously or unconsciously, giving your dog the message that fireworks are terrible.

MV: There are dogs that prefer to hide because they feel most comfortable in a ‘safe den’, but there are also dogs who are looking for support and for example, would like to snuggle up to you. Give your dog a choice and see what best suits your dog.

Standing Strong Together, outside

Even if your dog is not anxious, it is still wise to keep him on a leash around New Year's Eve. Unexpected bangs can startle your dog and make him run away. Also make sure that your dog cannot escape from the house via e.g. the front door that was open for just a second.

Despite all the warnings, every year many dogs go missing around the turn of the year. So don't think “that won't happen to me,” but take appropriate measures and make sure your dog is wearing a good harness (or a well-fitted collar) so your dog can't escape.

Escaped?

Has your dog escaped unexpectedly? It is important that your dog is chipped and that he is properly registered with your name and address. You can check this via the international website <https://www.petmaxx.com/>

Also put a tag or label on the dog collar/harness with your phone number on it. Report your missing dog as quickly as possible at your local shelter/police station/Dog search groups etc.



“Fact”

Did you know that special anti-escape harnesses exist for dogs?

<https://www.dierenoppa-samersfoort.nl/product/anti-ontsnappingstuig-veiligheidstuig-y-tuigje-hond-driepuntstuig-escape-proof/>



You can skip the last walk on New Year's Eve and replace it with a very early walk on New Year's Day.



“Fact”

Tellington TTouch® is based on a direct connection between the body posture of the animal and his/her behaviour. A better balance in the body also improves the mental and emotional state.

De Telling TTouch Methode

DD: If your dog likes to be touched, you can help your dog with TTouch.

This method consists of gentle touches that stimulate cell communication and the production of endorphins, which makes us happy and relaxed.

The TTouch method focuses on the communication between you and your dog. TTouch is not a treatment that you undertake for your dog, but something you do together. You will then find out which TTouches your dog really likes. More information about this can be found at <https://ttouch.com/> and <https://www.gevoelsdier.nl/tellington-ttouch/>

TIP 5: DOG AND HEALING AIDS

Medication

If your dog is very scared, it can be helpful to give him/her medication prescribed by a (holistic) veterinarian. Some products you should start with well before New Year's Eve. Others you only give on the day itself. Be critical: choose a remedy that makes your dog feel calmer but remains clear in his head and is not getting lethargic or limp. If your dog stops moving because of muscle relaxants, that doesn't mean that he is no longer anxious, he just can't move anymore. However, the fear is still there and can often even become worse. He just can't express this anymore.

MV & DD: Some medications from the vet can have a sedative effect. Always read the package leaflet before you give anything!

If you would like us to think along, please contact us. Our contact details can be found on page 39.



Be careful with home remedies. Don't give alcohol to the dog! This is sometimes advised, but alcohol has the same (counterproductive) effect as muscle relaxants. In addition, alcohol is very toxic for your dog.

“Fact”

The choice is enormous, so ask a professional for advice. Just because one remedy doesn't work doesn't mean another remedy won't work either. And sometimes it is a combination or customisation of a remedy that is necessary.

ThunderShirt and bodywraps

The ThunderShirt is a stretch vest that is fairly tight around the dog's torso.

The effect of the shirt is based on so-called pressure therapy. Something that is also used with people with anxiety disorders. You can also compare it a bit with “swaddling babies”. The deep pressure directly affects the amygdala (the part of the brain that has an important function with anxiety) and has a regulating effect on the stimulus processing, so that you are less 'affected' by incoming stimuli. **It helps to calm an irritated or 'anxious' nervous system and gives a protected feeling due to the production of endorphins (happiness hormones).**

During a scientific study* a positive effect on heart rate and behaviour was observed if the shirt was used according to instructions. If the shirt was worn too loose, the effect was more likely negative than positive. Therefore, it is important to use the right size of shirt. A shirt that's too tight can also have a negative effect.

* Journal of Veterinary Behaviour (2014): The effect of a pressure wrap (ThunderShirt®) on heart rate and behaviour in canines diagnosed with anxiety disorder -ScienceDirect



DD: My experience is that the shirt has a positive effect on about 50% of the dogs. For the other half it doesn't work, or it actually causes more stress.

For someone without a trained eye it may appear as if a dog with the shirt on is relaxed, because he lies down or remains standing "still".

But sometimes this can be a "shutdown" of the nervous system, so the dog turns in on itself and no longer responds. However, internally there is still a lot going on and the dog actually doesn't experience peace. So, it is very important to pay close attention to all signals from the dog and also to the reaction when you take the shirt off.

Whether the shirt works or not, is difficult to predict in advance. Even dogs that do not like being touched may respond positively to the shirt. An important factor in the success of the shirt is how it is "taught".

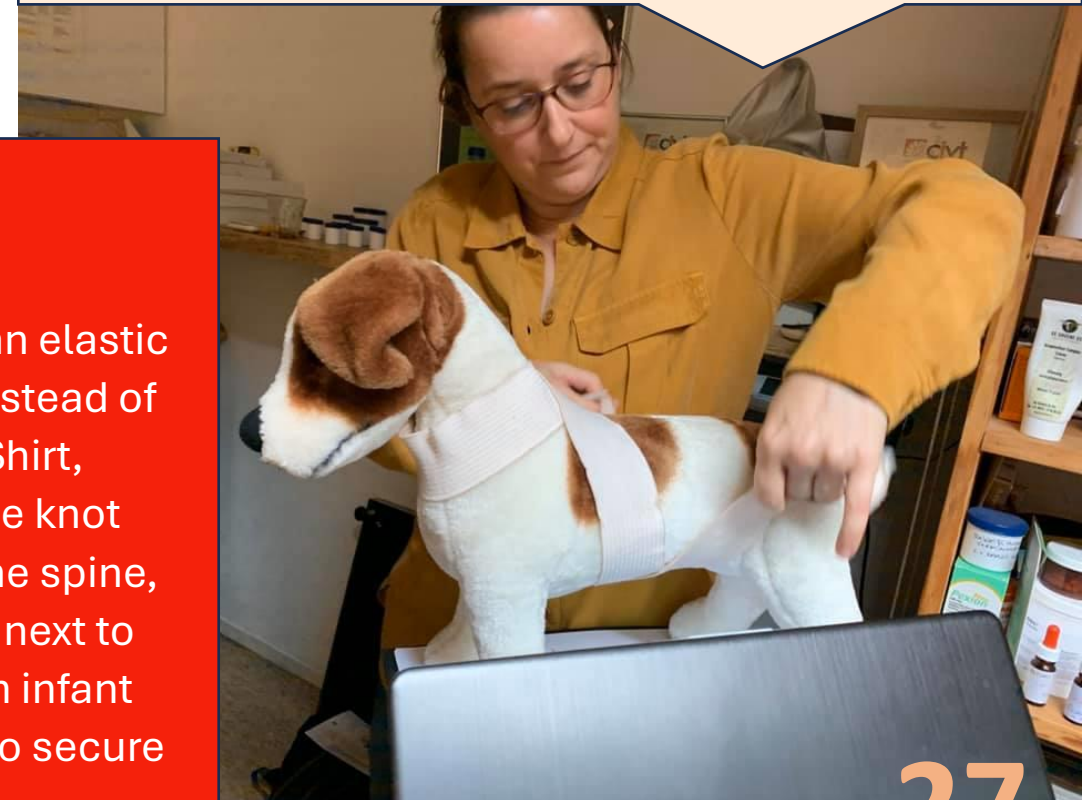
That's why Michelle and I wrote a manual for this which you will receive as an attachment to this e-book

"Fact"

ThunderShirt is a brand name. There are several brands that offer similar products. A so-called body-wrap, made from a sturdy stretch bandage, can also be a solution. Although this is often more difficult to put on the dog the correct way. In addition, the quality of the stretch bandage is very important.



If you use an elastic bandage instead of a ThunderShirt, never tie the knot on top of the spine, but always next to it, or use an infant safety pin to secure the ends.



TIP 6: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE NOSE

Some dogs feel better with a stuffed Kong, a tasty bone and/or something like nose work games around New Year's Eve. Chewing, sniffing and nose work often help to relax dogs. Keep it simple and choose something your dog is already familiar with.



It is important not to try new food or snacks around New Year's Eve: Give a bone or cookies that your dog has had before. If you give something unknown and your dog gets diarrhoea, you will have to go outside more often and you have another problem. Additionally, your dog will feel both anxious and sick.



DD: Brain /nose work should be fun and relaxing and should not cause frustration. If a dog is working for a long time on a puzzle, it does not always mean that this is positive. Do you want to know more about nose work, please contact us.

MV: Nose work can help to build trust and self-confidence, but only if it's offered in the right way. Not every form of nose work is suitable for every dog. For a dog that already has difficulty with loud noises, a so-called ball pit with plastic balls can be too much. There are "rules" for nose work regarding, material, surface, length of the session and difficulty level.



TIP 7: UNDER PRESSURE



Recognizable to many people: when you feel tired or have a lot on your mind, it is more difficult for you to deal with all kinds of intense stimuli. You can handle more if you are rested and relaxed. This is the same with dogs. A dog that is very tired or overstimulated due to a well-intentioned long walk, can handle stimuli less well. The entire month of December can be a busy time for our dogs. Christmas (dinner, visitors, a Christmas tree in the house), these are all extra excitements for your dog. All these stimuli ensure an increased stress level in your dog. Nice excitement provides the production of the same hormones as unpleasant excitement.

Anxiety and stress are each other's best friends. Therefore, keep everyone's stress level as low as possible all year round. Begin preparations in time before the holidays start, and don't make it too complicated. Dogs feel better with relaxed owners.



LOST

All of a sudden, they couldn't find her. After that bang on the street, she hid herself in the bathroom under the cupboard. Sanne and the children were surprised that Beau would even fit under it.

Beau and Sanne had been to the "Different Veterinarian" before and were familiar with our working method. So, two weeks later Beau, Tynke and Viviane are sitting on the mattress.

Beau's ears are flat against her head, her eyes and body are tense, and her tail is between her legs. On the other hand, Beau relies on our intension and hands and snuggled close to us. We use a manual technique in which the stress from the lower back and adrenal glands is calmed and removed.

Beau's body comes out of the active



(sympathetic) phase, into the rest and recovery (parasympathetic) phase. We see Beau yawning and her body starts to stretch and relax. Her small withdrawn eyes indicate to us that she has a headache. This can be felt because the rhythm in the skull (craniosacral) and between the skull and pelvis is disturbed. Tynke keeps working with Beau's skull and pelvis. For a moment it feels strange in her body because there is more movement in the cerebrospinal fluid.

Viviane works with the memories in the tissue. Beau starts barking while she lays down in a relaxed way. Sanne looks surprised, Beau yawns extensive, the traumatic story comes out.

[Read more on page 31](#)

Continued from page 30

A big sigh of relief, both for Beau and Sanne. Just to be sure, we'll give them some natural support remedies to use at home if necessary.

Three weeks later Sanne sends us an e-mail. Beau slept more during the first few days, and, in her dreams, everything is still being processed. Now she is cheerful and happy again. Even when there was a party at the neighbours' house with fireworks, Beau stood up, she shook her body and came and sat quietly against Sanne. Their bond has been strengthened and so has the (self) confidence of Beau.

Sometimes more is needed and often the human buddies themselves get some tools. Things they can do or give to help their dog. For example: think about Chinese or Western herbs, homeopathy, frequency remedies, aromatherapy, and touch at specific points.



The team AndereDierenarts, from left to right Mette, Tynke, Viviane and Karel.

In addition to being curative, it is also (especially) preventive, because sometimes we have less pleasant experiences in life and so do our animals.

For more information see <https://anderedierenarts.nl/>
And <https://www.holisticpetacademy.nl/>



THERE IS MORE...

This is just the beginning

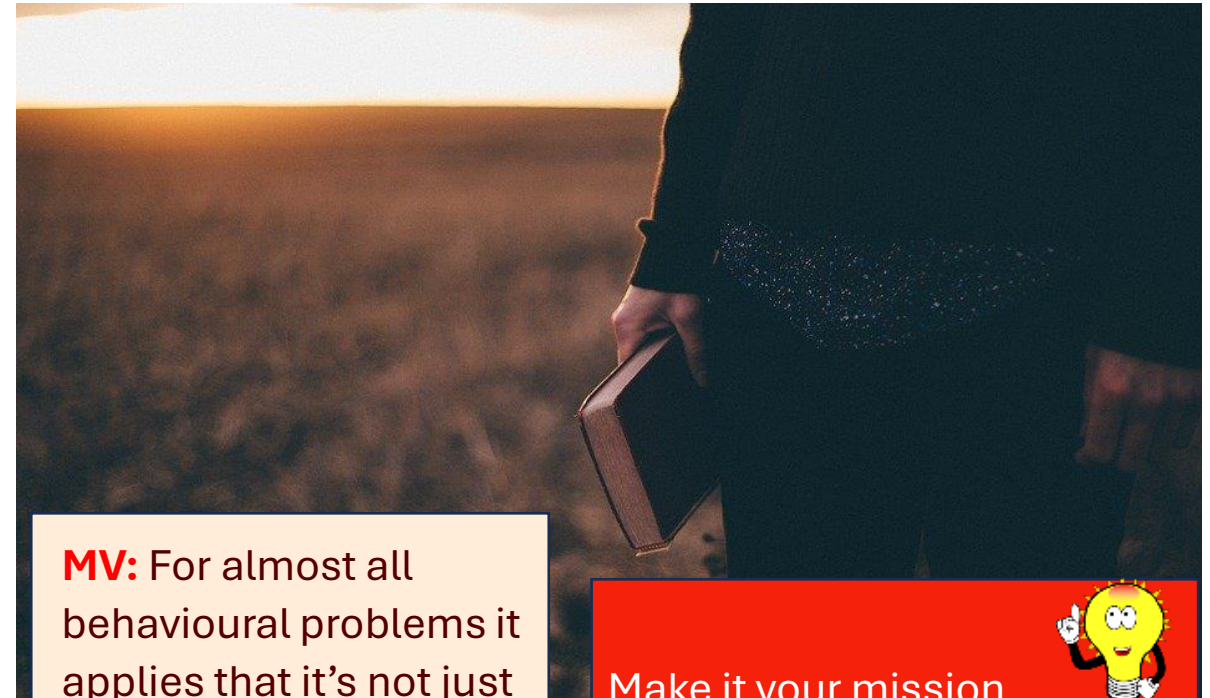
We hope that by reading the above information, you have gained (more) insight into what is possible. Most of the tips in this book are aimed at management; to create a situation as bearable as possible for your dog. Treating the fear itself requires a lot of time, commitment, and an individual approach. Yet this is certainly worth it. So, think of this e-book as a start.

Learn more

Knowledge about behaviour and health is an essential factor to provide guidance with anxiety, but also in everyday life. We are happy to help you to broaden and deepen your knowledge through seminars, workshops, lectures and private sessions. Feel free to contact us for more information.

By sharing and spreading our knowledge we hope to contribute to the well-being of dogs.

That's why everyone can download this e-book for free. Share it with your friends!



MV: For almost all behavioural problems it applies that it's not just about "that one thing"
→ Sound sensitivity is rarerly a self-contained problem.

DD: I believe in a combined approach, there is not one miracle tip that solves everything.



Make it your mission to learn how to read the body language of your dog as well as possible. The better you recognize his signals and respond appropriately to them, the stronger your bond becomes and the safer your dog feels around you.

Michelle Vrolijk

Michelle is a trained dog behaviourist. She has completed various courses, from, among others, Sheila Harper and Turid Rugaas and she started her own company in 2012.

In addition to puppy coaching, individual behavioural counselling and sniffer dog training, Michelle also organises lectures, workshops and training courses. Through information, practical examples, and extensive video material, she explores things that matter in the life of dog and owner. Students learn to look more broadly and respond differently, foresee problems and understand consequences. Clients get a glimpse into the life of their dog, which changes the lives of both.

The 'Pain in Dogs' training courses, along with the creation of a network of 'Pain Coaches for Dogs' are her latest initiatives, which were received with great enthusiasm. That's why there will be more, much more!



More information can be found on her website:

www.michellevrolijk.nl

Do you want to stay informed? Sign up for Michelle's newsletter by sending an email to info@michellevrolijk.nl stating 'newsletter' and/or follow her on facebook:

https://www.facebook.com/michelle.vrolijk.79?locale=nl_NL



Daniëlle Dessauvagie

Daniëlle has been working with animals all her life. As little girl she helped in a petting zoo and as a teenager, she worked during weekends as a volunteer on the cat boat shelter in Amsterdam.

After high school she attended the Groenhorst College in Barneveld (now known as Aeres) where she studied Animal Care, which she completed in 1990. In the years that followed, she worked at a large animal shelter in the rehoming department for dogs and at a dog and cat specialty store. From 2010 to 2013 she did a training course to become a Telling Touch Practitioner for companion animals. Since then, she gives workshops, lectures and private sessions under the name “Sensitive animal” (in Dutch Gevoelsdier).

She has followed a large part of the training courses “Pain in Dogs” and many other training courses including with Sheila Harper and Turid Rugaas.

She now has her own individual dog sitter service. 'A great experience working with so many different dogs, to build a bond, to learn from them and to meet their needs.

For more information about her background and work, take a look at <https://www.gevoelsdier.nl/>

SUMMARY

- Rule out any health problems or address them
- Have your dog regularly checked on pain or physical discomfort
- Anxiety, pain, stress and sound sensitivity (often) go hand in hand
- See what resources are available to help your dog, like music, Thunder shirt, TTouch, etc.
- Create one or several 'safe havens' for your dog in your home
- Go to a fireworks-free holiday house with your dog
- Stay with your dog, don't bring him to a boarding facility.
- Make sure your dog can't escape
- There is a lot of choice in calming supplements and medications; get good advice and remain critical



- Nosework can help your dog relax, provided it is taught/offered in the right way
- A tired dog has more difficulty processing incentives
- Often a combined approach is best
- A behavioural problem is usually a sum instead of an isolated problem
- Create a positive image in your head. Focus on what is going well
- Be aware of your own energy and behaviour. The more relaxed you are, the better it is for your dog
- Key words are trust, patience, step by step, self-confidence, and "at the dog's pace"
- It takes time, energy and patience
- Seek professional help in a timely manner, don't wait too long, otherwise the problem may grow larger.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- ✓ Work on a good base all year round. Build on your dog's self-confidence
- ✓ Support your dog when he is afraid
- ✓ Learn the dog language, watch and listen to your dog
- ✓ Protect your dog
- ✓ Ask for advice from a professional, not your neighbour, who says he has had dogs all his life
- ✓ Invest in knowledge!



- ✗ Don't leave your dog alone at home around New Year's Eve
- ✗ Don't ignore your dog
- ✗ Don't give your dog sedatives
- ✗ Don't expose your dog intentionally to stimuli that he can't deal with
- ✗ Don't test your dog to see what he can handle
- ✗ Don't go to fireworks group training

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Finally

We appreciate it when you share our e-book with other people.

With this gift we hope to reach many dog lovers and contribute to animal welfare and health.

We do ask that this e-book is forwarded in its entirety or that they download it themselves from the websites:

www.michellevrolijk.nl

or www.gevoelsdier.nl



APPENDICES E-BOOK



1. Dog body language

2. ThunderShirt

3. E-book pain in dogs



DOG BODY LANGUAGE

Examples of mild (calming) and stronger signals

- Yawning
- Lip licks/tongue flicks
- Blinking
- Sneezing
- Shaking it off as if it had rained
- Looking away
- Sniffing
- Bringing head briefly to the ground (head dip)
- Raising leg
- Ignoring
- Curving
- Wagging
- Slowing down or standing still
- Peeing
- Play bow
- Lying down (not to rest)
- Sitting down (not to rest)
- Turning away
- Signals with the eyes
- Splitting up
- Combination of various signals

Examples of distance-increasing signals

- Freezing
- Staring
- Showing teeth
- Barking
- Growling
- Lunging
- Snapping
- Single bite
- Multiple bites



Examples of stress signs/symptoms

- Shivering
- Panting
- Stiff muscles
- Dead eyes
- Sweaty paws
- Lowering body
- Bad odour (fur/breath)
- Skin problems
- Diarrhoea
- Restlessness
- Tail between the legs/against the belly
- Excessive mucus production/drooling
- Mucous threads near mouth
- Combination of various signals

Examples of coping strategies (behaviours as an expression of stress)

- Obsessive digging
- Tail chasing
- Fixation on e.g. light, shadows, flies
- mounting on leg, towel, etc.
- Obsessive or frequent scratching/itching
- Biting own body
- Shut down
- Obsessive eating and/or drinking
- Not eating and/or drinking
- Biting on lead
- Permanently alert – ‘hypervigilant’
- “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde”
- Let's try not to touch the floor/racing
- Demolishing – destructive behaviour
- Biting hands, clothing, etc.
- Illogical behaviour
- Not/hardly sleeping
- Circling
- Catching imaginary flies
- Not being able to concentrate

- Drifting/chasing cars, buses, etc.
- Hyperactive (see next page for more explanation)
- Too quiet/invisible
- Continually licking or chewing paws
- Puppy behaviour, adult dog
- Hiding
- Combination of various behaviours



Note: there is a fine line between mild and stronger and stress signals. It depends on the dog, the owner, and the situation. If a dog shows many mild signals that follow each other quickly, then they are stress signals.

It is important to look at the frequency, length and time between signals. Also look at the total picture and the context: a dog can pant due to the heat, or because he just ran, but it can also be an expression of fear. Or both: hot, out of breath and anxious.



Examples of hyperactivity

(= coping strategy such as explained above)

- Restlessness
- The brain doesn't shut off
- Not being able to have restorative sleep
- Concentration problems
- Emotionally unstable
- Oversensitive to new environment
- Learning and training problems
- Cannot calm down quickly or not at all
- Insensitive to punishment
- Impulsive behaviour
- Absent-mindedness
- Hypersensitive to changes
- In a constant state of alertness
- Reactive to sound and/or movement
- Combination

Examples of the body language

- Ears: forward, backward, flat, foul smelling, dirty, red, inflamed
- Tail: tight, position
- Body: high, low, curved, make large or small, twitch of the skin upon (light) touch, left or right oriented, goes in a different direction than movement, warm or cool spot(s) on back/body, odour, weight change

- Skin: dry, itchy, flaky, red, bald spots
- Coat: dull, mothy, shiny, crowns, loose tufts, forequarters different from hindquarters, extremely shedding (temporarily, e.g. during lessons at dog school or visit vet or long term)
- Head: high, low, looking away, at the same height and in straight line with body, skin folds
- Eyes: wide open, closed, fixating, looking away, half closed, tired, dry, inflamed, dull, sad, bags under the eyes
- Paws: relaxed, tight paws (toothpicks), trembling, foot(s) turned outward, differences between front legs and hind legs
- Mouth: tight lips, tense mouth, lines all around mouth

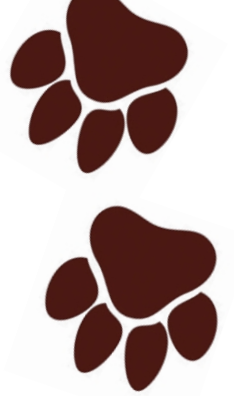


Possible reasons for stress

- Pain/health problems
- Insufficient or wrong food
- Not enough access to water
- Miscommunication
- Playing wildly, too much or wrong
- Being shouted at
- Being put under pressure
- Inappropriate equipment (slip chain, prong collar, Halti, etc.)
- Fear
- Punished for distance increasing signals
- Asking too much (e.g. during training)
- The feeling of not being heard
- Life changes such as moving, holidays
- Not enough quality time
- Insufficient sleep
- Negative experiences/the past
- Too much or too little exercise
- Too late, or no vet visits
- Clapping/lifting/inappropriate hugging
- Too high demands (for example from a puppy)
- Not being able to urinate/defecate on time
- Dog shows, competitions and exams
- Direct threat (dogs/things/people)
- Walk straight towards the dog
- Bending over dog
- Not leaving the dog alone (e.g. children, always petting the dog)

- Owner's emotions
- Arguing
- Not providing support
- Testing the dog/see what he can handle
- Little or no personal space
- Lack of respect and trust
- Not allowed to make mistakes
- Situations in which the dog cannot defend itself
- Too much/too little communication
- Holidays/flight trip/shelter elsewhere
- Laying the dog on his back
- Grabbing the dog by the scruff of the neck
- Too much/too little mental challenge
- Alone for too long
- Unsuitable dog walking areas
- Fast or vigorous movements
- Problems with animals in your own living situation
- Unsuitable living situation and/or living environment
- Family expansion (baby and/or other animals)
- Incidents (biting/being bitten, fireworks,...)
- Unrest, stimuli, various living situations regarding work,...
- Combination

Note: aggressiveness is often caused by a continuously increased stress level, which increases the activation of the dogs defence mechanism. Moreover, the dog is much more intense in all its reactions.



THE THUNDERSHIRT

For what?

A ThunderShirt can be used on dogs that are insecure, afraid or stressed, for example, by fireworks or thunder.

How does it work?

The effect is based on the fact that the shirt gives a constant pressure to the skin. The skin sensors register this pressure and alert the brain about this feeling- and movement-information. Regular use (not all day!) will help the dog remain calm and less reactive to the sensory stimuli in the environment. If a dog is frightened by a loud bang, the shirt can prevent that the dog has a more extreme fear response.

How to use?

In order to use the shirt properly, its use must be built up gradually.

Example of build up

First let your dog sniff the shirt or lay it on the ground. Let your dog carefully hear the sound of the Velcro and see what his reaction is. It is possible that your dog has to get used to it (you can also cover a large part of the Velcro with a piece of fabric to reduce the noise).

Once the dog has 'explored' the shirt, put the shirt on very gently and calmly, and watch your dog's body language. You can then slowly take it off again and the first step was made. Extend the time of wearing the shirt, at the dog's pace, step by step from approximately 1 minute to an hour. If the dog is used to it, and feels comfortable, your dog can wear the shirt several times a day, provided you take breaks in between. Once the dog is completely used to it, the dog can now wear it for part of the day, for example in case of fireworks.

First in a relaxed situation

Let the dog initially wear the shirt in a relaxed situation in which there is no question fear. Once the dog is used to the shirt you can use it for more stressful situations, which also needs to be build-up. As soon as you know something your dog considers stressful is going to happen, put the shirt on in advance, (at least 15 minutes) so the dog will not connect putting on the shirt to a scary event. Also keep using the shirt on your dog during times of relaxation on a regular basis.

45



In cases of anxiety or stress that last longer (firework, car rides, visits to the vet, etc.). the shirt can stay on longer. Always pay close attention to the signals of the dog's body language. If the dog tries to get out of the shirt, please help him immediately.

How tight?

Make sure you can keep a hand between the fabric of the shirt and the fur. The fabric should give light pressure and should not hang loose.

Never alone

Never leave your dog alone with the shirt on. If something gets caught behind, it can trigger a panic reaction which can cause even more fear than before. And the shirt may no longer be usable because of the negative experience.

First response

Pay close attention to your dog's first reaction. The pressure can come on so strong that a dog freezes, doesn't want to walk, stands with a crooked back and/or places his legs strangely. That's a sign that it's too much. In this case, build it up more slowly.

Counterproductive

Using it too quickly, too long, or too tightly can be counterproductive. A dog may express themselves with stress signals such as shaking it off, yawning, biting the leash, not being able to rest etc. It can also manifest itself through explosive behaviour that the dog takes out on its environment with unwanted behaviours.

Not every dog feels better or less anxious with the shirt. Some dogs may feel trapped in it, which is counterproductive. Pay close attention to what your dog tells you.

Finally

For almost all behavioural problems it applies that it's rarerly a self-contained problem.

Because we believe in a combined approach, we always recommend to seek help with a professional behaviourist for dogs and a (holistic working) veterinarian.

This gives the best chance of a good result.



Michelle Vrolijk &
Viviane Miellet DVM

PAIN IN DOGS

7 symptoms from
which you can tell,
that your dog is in
pain.



E-book

“Pain in dogs, 7 symptoms from which you can tell that your dog is in pain” : <https://www.michellevrolijk.nl/EboekPbH%20Engels.pdf>



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