The Safe Haven *for Your Dog*

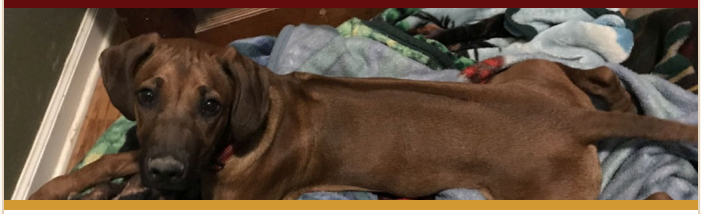
Every dog needs a place they can retreat to, to feel safe, and be alone when they want.

It is also a treatment

Safe havens are a first-line treatment for fear-related aggression, storm phobia, and separation-related behaviors. Conditioning to this space before anything is wrong is worth the effort. Make it a desirable place, not a punishment.

WHAT IT IS, AND WHEN THEY NEED IT

A Place of Their Own



A safe space can be a crate, an exercise pen, or a room.

Each dog gets their own. A place they will not be disturbed.

When They Need It



- For visitors and repair people
- Around new babies and children
- When your dog feels afraid, frustrated, or both
- Around other animals they are uncomfortable with
- For daily naptime, like children

Being comfortable away from their people is an acquired skill. It is easier to build from the start than to teach a dog who has already learned being alone is stressful.

Setting Up *the Safe Space*

Build the space before you need it. Keep the rules the same every time they use it.

The Space

- [ ] A comfortable room with good ventilation and temperature control
- [ ] A door that closes securely, and locks if small children are a concern
- [ ] An exercise pen, if no separate room is available
- [ ] Soft bedding and a supply of water
- [ ] Novel toys. Food-dispensing and interactive toys are a must.
- [ ] Not a damp basement or an unheated garage

The Atmosphere

- [ ] Low lights. Close the blinds, or use window film.
- [ ] Classical music, soft rock, jazz, or an audiobook, whatever your dog prefers. No Metallica.
- [ ] A box fan, or a white or brown noise machine, to mask sounds elsewhere in the house
- [ ] Pheromones: a plug-in diffuser

The Rules

- Only good things happen there.
- Open access. They come and go freely, on their own.
- The space belongs to one dog only.
- Put it on cue. Go to your bed. Go to your room.
- Practice before you need it, every day.

Please Do Not

- ✕ Use it for punishment or a time out
- ✕ Let children or unfamiliar people invade the space
- ✕ Let other animals take it over
- ✕ Send them there only once trouble has started
- ✕ Skip the daily practice

A dog's safe haven must be theirs alone. Keeping others out is what makes it safe.

How to *Condition It*

Work through these in order. Practice before you need the space, not on the day you do.

PART 1: MAKE IT A GREAT PLACE TO BE

1. Spend about five minutes in the room with your dog. Add minutes daily.
2. Give a special treat they only get in there: a stuffed food-dispensing or puzzle toy (stuffed ahead and frozen is a good choice), or a long-lasting chew.
3. Stay in the room while they eat the treat. Do this for one week.
4. Time how long the treat takes them to finish. You will need that number.
5. While your dog works on their special treat in the safe haven, get up and do something ordinary, like loading the dishwasher or folding laundry. Leave the door open.
6. Move around the house the way you normally would: into another room, upstairs, and back again. Come back before the treat is finished. If it takes ten minutes, come back before eight.

The foundation is simple: a safe haven is a place your dog chooses, where good things happen whether you are in the room or not.

Go About *Your Day*

Your dog learns that good things happen in the safe haven, whether you are in the room or not.

PART 2: BUILD FROM THERE

7. If your dog follows you, that is fine. Do not close them in or send them back. Bring them back to the safe haven with a new stuffed toy or a lick mat.

8. Add a remote treat feeder in the safe haven, so good things show up there even when you are in another room.

9. The first time you use the space for real, pick quiet guests who stay 15 to 20 minutes, no longer. Build from there.

→ Then keep sending them there daily, on cue, with something good to do. Daily repetition is what keeps it working.

When You Do Leave

Do not sneak out. Choose one object, like a paper shape on the door, that goes up only when you leave and comes down as soon as you return. If your dog cannot be alone yet, use a pet sitter or daycare, or take them along.

How long it takes

It may take days or it may take months. In the end you will have a dog who is comfortable spending time by themselves and chooses to retreat to their safe space.

Tracking *Your Progress*

Write down each session. A few notes make it easy to see progress and to know when to slow down.

Signs to Slow Down

If your dog stops eating the treat, whines, barks, paces, or cannot settle when you leave the room, that step was too long. Go back to the last time that went well.

If your dog already becomes distressed when left alone, talk with your veterinarian before you start step 5.

Date	Treat or toy	Minutes to finish	Time out of the room	How it went

Slow and steady builds a safe haven your dog chooses on their own.