



Holiday Madness from a Dog's Mind

By Jennifer Shryock

As the holidays approach and you make your plans keep in mind that stress and changes in routine can impact our dogs behavior. Often we get frustrated and are on edge as there is so much to do to prepare for dinners, visits and other celebrations. The following is a glimpse of some of the confusion our canine family members may experience. Keep in mind that as you are busy rushing around your dog is observing and sensing a change in you. They may "act out" if and when usual attention seeking methods do not work. This is predictable and can be avoided by being aware and maintaining some of the usual routines your dog is comfortable with.

The following playback of an anonymous dog hopefully will help you to understand what your dog/s may be experiencing. Enjoy!

Hi, My name is Carin. I am a spunky young and beautiful female dog. I am writing to share an experience with you that many of us dogs feel needs to be addressed and understood by all of our 2 legged friends. So, here is the story.

This morning was different then most. My 2 legged friend got up before I was ready and convinced me it was time to go "potty" in the dark. Seems a bit backwards from my point of view and I was a bit thrown off. Anyway, I went with her odd idea of going potty before the sun went up. It is only every now and then that she does this odd routine change. This means our whole day is unpredictable. What is she thinking!?! As I am out there doing "potty" she is rushing me. What is wrong with her!?! Geesh, I have not gotten an opportunity to sniff properly to strategically place my gift to the earth. "Let's go Carin." She says as she heads for the door. As I turn away from the opportunity to explore and leave more gifts, I wander behind her back indoors. I head for the bedroom but no, this is not where my 2 legged friend is headed. She is really confusing me. I follow her to the kitchen and figure I will just snuggle up here for a nap and ignore her apparent memory loss about the sun coming up and our relaxing time in bed together for a morning cuddle. Seems she has forgotten altogether about that as I watch her from under the table. She even nudged me with her foot once not paying attention to my being there. Something is definitely different about today.

As I try to catch up on my interrupted sleep, I am aware of many things. My 2 legged friend is rushing from place to place. The phone is ringing and she is busy doing things I am not too happy about. She uses this loud thing that eats things off the floor. I used to chase it but that was not appreciated. Now I know to go to the corner to observe the beast. Then once she had finished with that beast she was using the spray bottle with something YUCKY smelling in it. YIKES! I recall one time getting squirted by a spray bottle once when I went to visit my feline friend's potty area. I was only trying to help and clean up but it seems that too was not appreciated. As I keep my distance to watch her use the spray bottle I can not stop sneezing! What is in that! YUCK! My friend is putting it everywhere and wiping things. I sneeze, and shake off my fur hoping it will go away. I tried to follow my person around to make sure she did not altogether loose control. After all nothing was normal about this day so far and I was concerned. I ended up going back to my



spot under the kitchen table as clearly she did not understand my concern and dedication to making sure she was fine. I was apparently in the way and although my sneezes were cute that was all I heard from her except "go lay down" and a lot of "move it." I am confused and tired.

Finally my person comes into the kitchen. YEAH! Maybe now things will go back to usual. I get up and stretch and go over to greet her. She pats me on the head. This annoys me! What about a scratch of the ears???? No, she is busy. I continue to wonder what is going on today! Then I see it. She reaches in the refrigerator and pulls out this HUGE great smelling sight! Oooooohhhhhh, aaaahhhhhh wag, wag, wiggle wiggle! I am so excited as it smells so good. She tells me "go lay down! Not for you!" Darn! As I go back to my spot under the table I hear her talking to the large bird she is touching instead of me. Now I am very confused. She puts this item in the oven and then heads out of the kitchen. I follow her and now, yep now she is going to the bedroom. It seems today she wants to sleep when the sun is up. How odd?!? I join her in the bedroom and then realize I have to go "potty." I wiggle by the bed, and lick her hand and wiggle some more. She invites me on the bed but I HAVE TO GO POTTY! I can not stop wiggling! She is resting and gets irritated as I am wiggling so now she tells me "off!" What am I going to do? I have to go!?! I bark, and wiggle and circle but she is now asleep. I go to the door hoping it might open on its own or she will hear me but then I realize my body relieved itself. I tried to go outside and to let my person know but it is a weird day and I am not sure what to do. I now go and lay down in the bedroom with my person. It is naptime for now.

The above is a doggie point of view about how things can change around the Holidays. Many of us will have guests visit and will be busy and changing our normal routines. Keep in mind that your dog is paying attention to you and your level of stress at these times. Often dogs become stressed due to routine changes. It is important to think of ways to help your dog stay to a comfortable routine even as you are busy preparing for a big family dinner or gathering. If you normally have a quiet home with few visitors it is even more important that your dog has the comfort of routine during the day when you will be having many young and old visitors in your home. If your dog is stressed due to a lack of routine during the day then they will be less tolerant once the guests arrive. Here are some points to remember when you have large gatherings in your home.

- If there are children visiting the dog/s and children must not be unsupervised even for a short period of time.
- Sometimes putting a leash on your dog may help them to feel more secure.
- Let your dog/s visit for short periods and then secure them away from the activity if you can not observe them.

- Observe your dog's body language. Licking lips, turning head away, yawning, shaking, lifting paws etc may be subtle cues to you that your dog is a bit stressed or is anticipating conflict of some sort. Pay attention and allow breaks from the busy activities.

- Be aware of people sneaking your dog tidbits that may come out on the rug later on!
- Respect your dog's tolerance limit. If you notice your dog looking for a quiet spot then provide one.



- Allow your dog to have their own celebration treat with a stuffed kong or other yummy treat. Frozen filled kongs are wonderful for these times.

Most of all enjoy your family and friends and stay safe this Holiday Season!

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