



FREE GUIDE

Calm-down toolkit

Five exercises for anxious moments

Introduction

Every pet has hard moments — a thunderstorm, a vet visit, a stressful change at home. This guide isn't about fixing the root cause of anxiety; it's a practical toolkit for the moment things feel overwhelming, plus how to tell when a pattern needs more than a calming exercise.

Reading stress signals early

Stress rarely starts with the obvious behaviors. Early signs include lip licking, yawning outside of tiredness, a lowered or tucked tail, whale eye (showing the whites of the eyes), pinned-back ears, or sudden stillness. Catching these early gives you a chance to intervene before your pet escalates to barking, hiding, or bolting.

Five calming exercises

- Slow, deliberate breathing near your pet — animals pick up on your own tension, and visibly calming yourself first genuinely helps.
- A licking activity (a frozen food puzzle, a lick mat) — the repetitive motion has a measurable calming effect.
- A pattern game: rewarding your pet simply for noticing a trigger and looking back at you, rather than reacting to it.
- Gentle, slow pressure — many pets settle with a weighted blanket, a snug wrap, or calm physical contact if they already enjoy touch.
- Moving to a pre-established safe space with familiar bedding and low light, away from the source of stress.

Creating a calm-down space

Set this up before you need it, not during a crisis. A calm-down space should be a low-traffic area with a comfortable bed, dim or natural light, and no pressure to interact — pets should be able to opt into it and out of it freely. Avoid using this space for anything unpleasant (baths, nail trims) so it stays purely associated with safety.

When to loop in a professional

A calming toolkit is for moments, not for a pattern that's getting worse over weeks or months. If your pet's anxiety is intensifying, generalizing to more triggers, or affecting their eating, sleeping, or safety, it's time for a vet visit to rule out a medical cause, followed by a certified trainer or veterinary behaviorist if needed.

Calm-down toolkit checklist

- ☐ A lick mat or frozen food puzzle kept ready in the freezer

- ☐ A designated low-traffic calm space set up before it's needed
- ☐ A weighted blanket or wrap, if your pet already enjoys touch
- ☐ A log of known triggers, so you can prepare in advance where possible
- ☐ A plan for the next vet visit if stress signs are increasing over time

Summary

Most anxious moments pass faster when you respond calmly and early, with tools set up in advance. If the pattern is growing rather than fading, that's the signal to bring in outside support.

This guide is for general education only and is not a substitute for advice from a certified trainer, veterinarian, or veterinary behaviorist. If you're seeing signs of distress, aggression, or a sudden change in behavior, please consult a professional who can assess your pet directly.