WHY DID MY DOG SUDDENLY DO A BODY SHAKE-OFF?

A full-body shake-off (like drying off after a bath) is a self-soothing mechanism. It helps a dog discharge physical tension, excess adrenaline or nervous energy after a stressful or overwhelming moment.



WHAT DOES A SHAKE-OFF MEAN?

- **RELEASES TENSION** – Helps the dog reset after a tense situation, such as a vet visit, intense dog interaction or being handled.
- **A BEHAVIOURAL TRANSITION** – Can mark the end of one activity, mindset or social interaction, and the move into the next.
- **SHAKE-OFF OR SHIVERING?** – A deliberate shake-off is a fluid movement from head to tail. Continuous fine trembling or shivering that the dog cannot stop may indicate fear, severe anxiety, pain, nausea or a medical issue.

WHEN MIGHT YOUR DOG SHAKE-OFF?

- After an encounter with a dog or person.
- During or after a stressful, exciting or stimulating event.
- In an unfamiliar environment.
- After an interesting sniff.
- After excited play or activity.
- After overstimulation.
- Before or after a walk.
- After staying in one position for a while.
- To help wake up.

THINK OF IT AS A DOG RESET

Like taking a deep breath – a way to release emotion and help the nervous system calm down.

LOOK AT THE WHOLE BODY

A shake-off may be linked to stress when accompanied by:

- Panting when not hot or exercising.
- Lip licking or excessive yawning.
- Ears pinned back or a tucked tail.
- Whale eye (whites of the eyes showing) or dilated pupils.
- Pacing, freezing or trying to hide.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

1. **GIVE A BRIEF MOMENT** – Let your dog pause for a few seconds; they are actively working to calm themselves.
2. **MOVE AWAY FROM STRESS TRIGGER** – Gently encourage them to keep moving in a happy, relaxed voice. Movement can help dissipate stress hormones.
3. **PRAISE THEM** – Praise your dog for self-regulating.
4. **ADD A CUE** – You can encourage a shake-off after or during stressful situations with a cue such as “Shake it”, “Shake baby” or “Shake away”. Praise and reward with a treat.



POWER POOCHES

SHAKE-OFFS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED AND ALLOWED. EMBRACE THEM!

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