

Expert Relationship Advice: Dogs Make Everything Better



By [Dr. Amy Osmond Cook](#)

We all know how great dogs are; no one can quite match your dog's unique brand of love. While your fuzzy fur baby will always be the love of your life, did you know that your dog can also make your human relationships better?

According to my research, having a dog is good for you. Not only does having one in your life lower your stress levels and blood pressure, but your furry family member also boosts your immune system and brings added joy to your personal relationships. Here are four reasons being a dog person makes you a better people person.

Expert Relationship Advice On Dogs In Relationships

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1. Improve Communication: If it's hard for you to make connections with people, your fur buddy can help. An early study by [Therapy Dogs International](#) discovered that people who were in elder care facilities that used canine therapy treatments were more social with other people in their facility. They were more verbal in general and more alert.

I found that when you play with, pet, and talk to your dog while in the presence of other people, you'll feel relaxed, which may make others see you as approachable. Introverts especially benefit communication-wise by owning a dog. If you're an introvert without a pet, go out and get one. You

won't be sorry.

2. Strengthen Relationships: While many believe children are key to strengthening a marriage, research has found a dog will have a similar effect. In an Association for Psychological Science study, researchers found that participants experienced more positive feelings about their partner after viewing a picture of them with cute animals.

[James K. McNulty](#), the psychological scientist over the study, said, "One ultimate source of our feelings about our relationships can be reduced to how we associate our partners with positive affect, and those associations can come from our partners but also from unrelated things, like puppies and bunnies." While there are many ways to make your relationship with your partner stronger, such as by celebrating one another and staying connected, to me, when people bring a dog into their life, they are strengthening their relationship with each by having something special to share.

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3. Develop Patience and Empathy: When it comes to emotional intelligence, canines score high. That intelligence can rub off on their owners, who can become more empathetic and loving toward other humans. A study published in the [National Center for Biotechnology](#) found that when children have the opportunity to care for another living being, they become more empathetic.

Getting better at empathy also helps you read people's nonverbal cues. Improving your ability to read nonverbal cues can be particularly helpful in relationships. The way that your partner is looking, moving, reacting, and listening can tell you whether he or she cares, how well you're being listened to, and if they're being truthful.

As a pet owner, patience is a must. Animals are going to

misbehave. Your fuzzy family member will try to steal your steak off the counter or pee on the floor. Dealing with your pet's slip-ups may make it easier for you to handle the ones that your partner makes.

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4. Renews Focus on Others: In relationships, it can be tough to figure out the point that the other person is trying to make as well as what he or she really wants. Often, the reason behind this is our own [lack of focus](#). If you typically forget a person's name right after being introduced, it's likely because you were paying attention to how the person was perceiving you instead of what they were saying.

When you take a dog to a trainer, your furry friend will learn how to focus to pay attention to your words and actions. The next time you're in a social situation, think about your pet and how he or she focuses—mimic that.

If you aren't a pet owner and find most of your personal relationships challenging, consider becoming one. Along with making life just better in general, owning a dog improves your personal relationships by making it easier for you to communicate. With a dog in your home, you'll learn [how to be a better human](#) by feeling more positive about your partner, empathizing more and focusing on the people in your life. As [Orhan Pamuk](#) wisely put it, "Dogs do speak, but only to those who know how to listen."

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