

IS YOUR DOG REACTING TO YOUR EMOTIONS?



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Do dogs react to our emotions?

Have you ever walked into a room of people who were all in a bad place emotionally, and physically felt that wall of heavy emotion?

Have you ever heard the phrase "you could cut the tension in the air with a knife."? I am sure you have all experienced this at some stage.

It immediately affected your own emotions didn't it? Our animals are much more sensitive to feelings and emotions than we are, therefore for them, the impact of negative emotion is huge.

Medical alert dogs are trained to detect the slightest change in their owners biochemistry e.g. blood sugar levels. Many pet dogs even do this without any training or prompting. Our dog's pick up on our emotions not only as biochemical changes, but also as actual feelings. Just as you would feel the tension walking into the room in the situation just described, you would begin to take on that feeling yourself resulting in changes to your own biochemistry. Our dogs are exactly the same.

Every dog owner will tell you that the bond they share with their dog is something unique and has a depth that is undefinable. Often your dog knows what you are about to do even before you do!

There is one simple reason. They absorb, mirror and reflect our emotions, and in essence.....they know us by heart.

Let's explore ways in which these connected emotions may be showing up for you.

Have you previously owned a dog that had similar problems?

As a dog owner you may have experienced some similar behaviours in more than one of your dogs. Perhaps more than one of your dogs has been nervous, timid, unfriendly or aggressive with other dogs. This can be the first sign that your own emotional state influenced your dog's emotions balance in some way. This is not an intentional transfer of your emotions of course, but your dog's energy is like an antenna, picking up the slightest change in your feelings.

Owners who have fearful dogs have often experienced this issue before due to their dogs mirroring their own long-term insecurities. As a result their dogs display varying levels of fear and anxiety. These dogs often struggle to adjust to new situations, as do the owners.

Dogs who are destructive or stressed when left alone often repeatedly present themselves to owners who have their own attachment issues. In many cases the owners themselves do not like being alone.

Dogs who bark incessantly at windows, fences, or boundary lines are expressing territorial behaviour. If this has been an issue with your dogs, the problem could be a reflection of owners who have either too few or too many emotional boundaries.

Do you get the idea? Can you see any similar quirks or behaviours in your dogs, past and present? If not in behaviour then perhaps your dogs have had similar illnesses or ailments?

Does your dogs behaviour change when you are stressed?

In 90% of cases, our dogs are reacting to stress within *us*, the owners. This can be physical stress as well as emotional stress.

If you are stressed, feeling impatient, nervous, or frustrated, does your dog's behaviour get worse? If there is a specific behaviour problem, such as aggression or fear, does it get noticeably worse when you are in a certain state of mind? Is it perhaps worse at a certain time of the day - and if so, what is different about that particular time of the day?

An example of this would be a dog who is reactive with other dogs as the result of being attacked. Most dogs are emotionally resilient and will bounce back from such trauma, but as owners, we are completely different. We fear being in that position again and feeling helpless to protect our beloved dog. Each time we go out we scout the park to identify potential threats and actively avoid other dogs just in case. Our dogs pick up on this fear we are either consciously or unconsciously emitting and begin acting fearfully themselves. Initially they don't know why, but it doesn't take long for them to make the connection between another dog approaching and emotions of fear rising. They therefore conclude that all dogs are scary. The fear response escalates and turns to defensive fear aggression in too many cases.

The important thing here is that *our* stress is primarily causing the emotional stress being displayed by our dogs.

Does your dog behave differently around certain family members?

Dogs who live in a family household bring so much love to the family as a whole. You may however have noticed that different relationships exist between the dog and each of the family members. The connection the dog has to an individual is completely unique, and if you study these connections closely the differences become more obvious.

Is your dog more naughty around certain family members than others? Perhaps your dog is more anxious when being walked by a certain person? Some positive changes are of course when you observe your dog being calm and relaxed around certain people, more so than others.

These changes in your dog's behaviour are not merely the result of how soft or firm the individuals are in disciplining or training the dog, it goes much deeper. Your dog is responding to the emotional and therefore energetic connection it has with each person. Your dog absorbs all of these emotions and if they are beautiful positive emotions, the dog responds in a positive manner. If the exchange of emotions contains stress, then often the dog will show behaviours indicating the stress.

I want you to objectively look at the relationships in your dog's life and identify the subtle (or not so subtle) changes. What are the differences in the behaviour? What is the personality/emotional state of this person? Is there a correlation between the person's emotional state and the dog's behaviour?

Can you relate to your dogs emotional state?

No-one knows your dog better than you - right? Of course, the special thing about owning a dog is that your dog also knows *you* better than anyone else.

But what does this mean on an emotional level? Well, it means your dog 'tunes' into your emotions. The most important thing to a dog is how a situation '*feels*' to them. If you make them '*feel*' anxious, even unintentionally, they show timid or nervous behaviours. If you are bottling up inner resentment or anger about an aspect of your life, the dog will '*feel*' this as an actual outward expression of anger/frustration and may therefore express aggressive behaviours themselves.

Confronting as this concept may be, it is important to note that your emotions will not be the *only* factor affecting your dogs behaviour, but in many cases it can be significant. And the good news is - once identified, you can do something about it!

Let's explore a behaviour or trait your dog has and see if we can link it back to this emotional connection I have been outlining. This is where things get interesting!

Firstly, write down a behaviour or trait your dog has that particularly bothers or irritates you. This can be absolutely anything - big or small! Write it down.

Identify the problem:

How do you feel when your dog behaves this way? Do you feel angry, frustrated, helpless, confused? Write it down.

Really connect with how it makes you feel:

Is there anything else in your life that makes you feel this way, however unrelated it may seem? Write it down.

Note any kinds of similar feelings:

I want you to know look for the positive side of your dog's problem behaviour - not so easy!

For example, if your dog is aggressive a positive aspect of this is that your dog is standing up for itself, communicating it is not happy and protecting its boundaries.

If your dog is nervous, a positive is that it can clearly show that it is scared and cannot cope emotionally. Admitting we cannot cope with a stressful situation is a real asset. Often we push through and then snap when things get too much. To outsiders it can appear that it came out of the blue.

So, dig deep and write down the positives in your dog behaving this way

What are the positives?

Looking at both the positive and negative behaviours, can you relate to your dogs problem behaviour?

Do you have a tendency to act/feel this way too? Perhaps you feel it on the inside but do not often express it?

Write down some of your connections or revelations here:

Let me introduce you to Animal Energy Therapies.



This place of energetic and emotional connection with our dogs is the space where I work. I help owners understand problem behaviours with their dogs and clear the problem with both the dog and the owner.

I work with dogs who have behaviour or physical problems that training or veterinary treatment has not been able to remedy.

If you would like to learn more about my work learn more at:

www.animalenergytherapies.com