

# Do Dogs Feel Love?

Provided by: 

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We feel tremendous love for our dogs, and our dogs sure seem to love us. But is a dog really capable of emotions? Or are we just projecting our feelings onto our dogs?

Scientists avoid the subject because part of what sets humans apart from the animals is our ability to experience feelings. To say that animals actually have feelings, in the same way we do, would change everything – perhaps disrupt our entire position and standing in the animal kingdom.

However, any dog owner knows that dogs love completely and have a greater capacity for love than most people. If one were to describe the main characteristics of a dog, they would have to be:

1. strong affection
2. warm attachment
3. unselfish loyalty and benevolent concern for others

Wait a minute – those are the Merriam-Webster Dictionary definitions of love. Probably why the author of *Dogs Never Lie About Love*, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson writes, “dogs are love.” So there isn’t a question of whether dogs love, the mystery is how they have such an enormous capacity for it. Dogs who are neglected or abused still show love for their human and wag their tails in hope of a little affection.

Dogs taken from abusive situations hold no grudges toward the human race. A half an ounce of kindness from a new person results in an abundance of affection from the formerly mistreated dog. Humans rarely have the capacity to so completely forgive and love under those circumstances.

Probably the biggest reason the dog has become man’s best friend is because we know that when it comes to love, a dog can always outdo us. The highest form of love, agape love, which is completely unconditional, is something that people often have to work at or grow into. Agape love seems to come naturally between parent and child, but it’s more difficult between husband and wife, and harder still between friends. To love someone regardless of what wrongs they have done you is very difficult for humans.

A dog, however, is born with an endless capacity for agape love, and doesn't even have to work at it. You can be a complete grouch, ignore your dog, and refuse him your love. When you decide you're ready to be sociable again, your dog doesn't pay you back by ignoring you too. He's just happy you're there. More amazing still, is that the love that dogs and owners feel for each other lasts a lifetime. This is the ideal love humans strive for, but often fail at.

As Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson so beautifully writes in *Dogs Never Lie About Love*, "Learning to know somebody intimately is often the beginnings of dislike, sometimes even of contempt. Among humans, love often does not survive a growing acquaintance, but in a dog, love seems to grow with acquaintance, to get stronger, deeper. Even when fully acquainted with all our weaknesses, our treachery, our unkindness, the dog seems to love strongly – and this love is returned by most dog-loving humans. We, too, seem to love our dogs the more we get to know them. The bond grows between us and our dogs."

This is why we need dogs. They do something for us that rarely a human companion can do. No matter how much you mess up your life, or how much wrong you do, no matter how many mistakes you make or how often you make them, regardless of your looks, income or social standing, your dog never judges you. He always thinks you are wonderful and loves you with all his heart.