

- Pets

Interacting with dogs may positively affect the brain

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A study published in the journal 'PLOS One' claims that the company of dogs provides various benefits. In particular, interacting with dogs could have positive effects on our brains.



Researchers from Konkuk University in south Korea came to this conclusion after conducting an experiment with 30 adults. They asked them to perform eight different activities, each lasting three minutes, with a 4-year-old female poodle.

These included feeding her, playing with her and taking her for a walk. Throughout the experiment, the volunteers wore electroencephalography electrodes to record electrical activity in their brain. After spending time with the poodle, the participants were asked to complete several questionnaires to assess their emotional state and stress.

It emerged that the participants' brains emitted more alpha waves when they played with or walked the poodle. These waves are known to be associated with a state of mild relaxation.

The academics also observed a majority of beta waves when individuals played with, stroked or groomed the poodle. The brain emits these fast waves when it is on active standby.

As such, it seems that participants were more focused when they engaged in these activities, the researchers report in their paper.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the volunteers were cognitively stimulated when interacting with the dog. Their questionnaire responses indicated that they felt less tired, stressed and depressed.

“This study demonstrated that specific dog activities could activate stronger relaxation, emotional stability, attention, concentration, and creativity by facilitating increased brain activity,” conclude the researchers.