



# My Dog, my Best Friend!

Research into the Relationship  
between Humans & Dogs

By Sandra Dolk  
Holistic Animal Therapist



# C O N T E N T S



3	Why I started this project
4	Results
8	Conclusion
10	About the researcher

# WHY I STARTED THIS PROJECT



*Zoey & Sandra*

## ***What makes a Dog such a precious friend to people all over the world?***

I was hoping to find an answer to this question when I invited dog owners in the summer of 2024 to participate in my research into the Relationship between Humans & Dogs.

No less than 154 people from 7 countries responded and filled out the questionnaire. Thanks to all of them, my question got answered and that made me very happy!

But I also received something else, which I had not anticipated nor expected when I started this adventure. I got a very special and personal insight into the lives of 154 people who once lost their hearts to a dog. The way they talked about themselves and their dogs touched me deeply and made me feel incredibly grateful and humble.

If you are one of those people, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for sharing your story about your Best Friend. It was a privilege to feel the joy and the sadness, the pride and the reluctance, the fun and the frustration, the uncertainty and of course the love in every word that was written down.

In this e-book you'll find the results of my research. It was carefully compiled for everyone who participated in it, and for anyone else who has interest in the subject. I hope you will enjoy reading it!

*With Love  
Sandra*

# The Results





**Every Dog is special!!  
This is what makes him  
or her Unique to their  
Human Friend :)**

- 1: Sweet / Soft (42%)
- 2: Cheerfulness (40%)
- 3: Connection / understanding  
each other (24%)
- 4: Cuddling / Affection (22%)
- 5: Teacher / Healer / Mirror /  
Rock (21%)
- 6: Cooperation (17%)
- 7: Presence (16%)
- 8: Oddities (16%)
- 9: Sensitivity (15%)
- 10: Communication (15%)

**The most fun thing to  
'do' is Just Being  
Together (78%)**

Followed by:

- Going for a Walk (67%)
- Cuddling (53%)
- Playing (43%)
- Scent or Brain Work (35%)
- Training (29%)

**A - Many dogs have  
something that causes  
stress or tension (81%)**

- 1:3 Interacting with other  
dogs
- 1:4 Sensitivity to  
atmosphere or stimuli
- 1:4 Meeting new people
- 1:4 Loud noises or specific  
sounds
- 1:10 Staying home alone
- 1:20 Dealing with (young)  
children
- 1:20 Car rides



**B - For the majority this  
also has an effect on the  
dogs Human Friend  
(61%)**

It makes them feel:

- Insecure (42%)
- Tense (38%)
- Frustrated (30%)
- Powerless (23%)
- Burdened (20%)
- Sad (7%)
- Angry (6%)





It just 'Happened', was 'Love at first sight' or there was 'Just something to it'.

17% speaks of 'Fate' or 'Meant to Be' and 16% believes that their dog somehow picked **them** instead of the other way around.

Quite a few people call their dog their 'Guardian', 'Savior' or 'Angel' for they came into their lives when they were in a sad or dark place, due to illness, depression, worry, loneliness, loss or some other battle they were facing in their life.

### ***The main reason why People & Dogs are (or have been) together is Awareness (58%)***

### ***We find a lot of recognition in our dogs (96%)***

Especially regarding:

Character (75%)  
Behavior (51%)

Followed by:

Life Themes (23%)  
Health Issues (15%)  
Physical Characteristics (13%)

***1:3 says it wasn't a conscious decision they made when getting their dog.***

> We learn a lot from our four legged friends, about dogs, their behavior and our relationship, about ourselves, about healing, living in the present moment, about unconditional love and self expression.

### ***The second reason is Support (39%)***

> Dogs are there for us, no matter what.

### ***The third reason is Challenge (27%)***

> Dogs invite us -by their behavior, health or other needs- to widen our horizons and to look beyond what we are familiar





**Daphne & Oreo**

***The most important values in the Relationship with our Dog are Trust (80%), Love (72%) and Being able to Be who we are (58%)***

Other Values are:

Friendship (42%)  
 Having Fun (38%)  
 Cooperation (34%)  
 Communication (29%)  
 Understanding (28%)  
 Equality (22%)  
 Humor (20%)  
 Purpose (12%)  
 Getting a Second Chance (9%)

***There is a great reciprocity between Humans & Dogs: What we appreciate in our dog, (we think) our dog also appreciates in us.***

This is mainly about  
 Unconditional Love, Loyalty &  
 Friendship (49%)

Followed by:

Being who they / we are (36%) and  
 their Presence / our Bond (26%)

We Love our Dogs for simply being in our lives, for their cuddles, their liveliness, playfulness and curiosity, for standing by our side, for sitting and sleeping with us, for listening without judgment and for loving us unconditionally.

In return (we think) they love us for our care and attention, for walking and playing with them, for being together and for taking them with us, for understanding and protecting them, for feeding and spoiling them and for loving them unconditionally.

Having to say goodbye to a dog is one of the hardest things to do and almost as hard to talk about. Despite the impact of the loss and grief, most people do welcome another furry friend into their hearts & homes after. Obviously there's just nothing like the Love of a Dog...



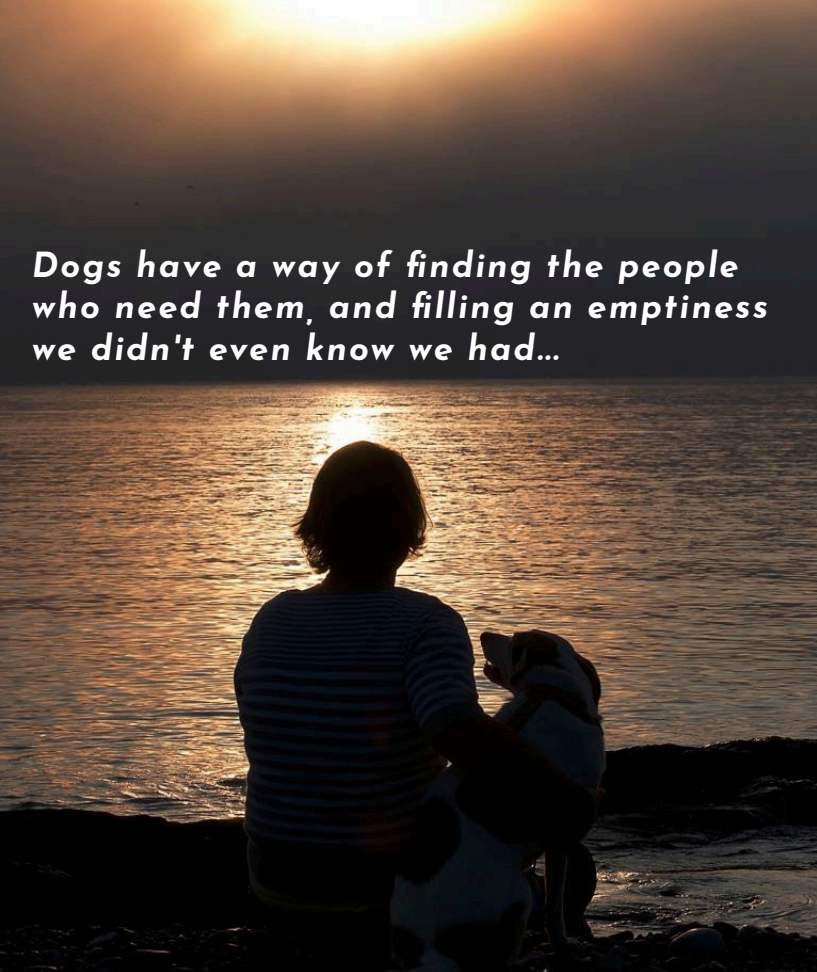
**Kane & Lori**



# Conclusion





A photograph of a person sitting on a beach at sunset, with a dog sitting next to them. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow over the water and sky. The person is seen from behind, wearing a striped shirt. The dog is sitting and looking towards the water.

**Dogs have a way of finding the people who need them, and filling an emptiness we didn't even know we had...**

After attentively reading all the stories and carefully bundling the answers about how people found their dog -or vice versa-, what makes their furry friend so special, what they like doing together, what dogs may have trouble dealing with in everyday life and how this may effect their Human Friends, what we value most in the relationship with our dogs, and what (we think)

they value most in us, the results speak for themselves:

*The Relationship between People & Dogs is both Unique and Universal.*

Reading every single story has deepened my Love for dogs and increased the Magic surrounding these special, wise and loving creatures, who so generously and selflessly share their lives and love with us. Because no matter how many questions, statistics and analyses you may throw at them, THE WAY THAT OUR DOGS MAKES US FEEL, cannot be 'captured' in words, and certainly not in numbers.

I truly believe that the world is a better place because of dogs, and all other animals that enrich and brighten up the homes and lives of people with their presence.

I would therefore like to finish by making a deep bow and expressing my sincere Gratitude to all 154 dogs whom I have been able to get to know a little.

I love you all!!

*With Love  
Sandra*



# About the researcher

## Holistic Animal Therapist

### Sandra Dolk





## ABOUT SANDRA



*"I Believe every Soul needs & deserves to be Seen, Valued and Loved. It is my Intention to reach out and touch anybody's Hand, Heart, Feathers or Fur. Because I Care" - Sandra Dolk*

Sandra is committed to the physical, mental & emotional well being of animals in the broadest sense of the word. She offers her services non-profit / For the Love of Animals to give everyone the opportunity to share their question or concern about their animals, regardless of money.

As a Holistic Therapist for Dogs, Horses & Cats, she combines manual techniques from Emmett Therapy, TTouch & massage, with Reiki, Jin Shin Jyutsu, Aromatherapy, the use of gemstones & Animal Communication. By using the 5 elements from Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Sandra figures out how seemingly isolated symptoms are related, enabling treatment of the source of a problem instead of treating the symptoms. In addition to her broad training in complementary veterinarian care, Sandra is also a registered Para-veterinary.

At De Wissel, an Animal Shelter in Friesland (The Netherlands), she helps dogs to release their stress on a physical, mental and emotional level. During these sessions she also supports the dogs to learn how they can self-regulate their emotions. This enables the dogs to lower their stress on their own, making them feel better and become more at ease in their temporary home.

The Essential ingredients in Sandra's sessions are Trust, Respect & Peace. To allow maximum freedom of choice and movement during sessions or treatment, she works off leash on a fenced in field at De Wissel, both with dogs from the shelter and with those from her clients.

**Details & Contact information:** <https://www.sandradolk.nl/english>

Sandra loves writing about her life journey. She published two Dutch books ('Gewoon Gelukkig' in 2008 followed by 'BloemenZee' in 2023) and now there is this e-book (both in Dutch & English), based on the research she did into the Relationship between Humans & Dogs.

Currently she is finishing a book about her life & work with animals, which will be released at the end of 2025.