

Very good dogs don't necessarily make very good co-workers

April 29 2020, by Jessica Myrick



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Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us are working from home in close proximity to our human children or fur babies.

Cats have their fans, but I want to focus on dogs.

Dogs are great companions. Science suggests [owning one may benefit mental health](#). Just [making eye contact with your dog can release the feel-good hormone oxytocin](#).

But, as a researcher who [studies emotions, procrastination and how people interact with pets](#), I can tell you that sometimes work emphasizes getting things done over feel-good chemicals. So what do we know about how this new-found time with your dog might be affecting your productivity?

Good dog, bad dog

[There's evidence](#) that bringing your dog to work with you can reduce your perceived [stress levels](#) as the day progresses. And [research on stress management](#) has shown that employees who feel good are more productive.

Taken together, those findings bode well for including your canine companions in your at-home work routines.

Keep in mind, pets can get stressed when their surroundings or routines change, and it may take a while for both you and your pup to settle into a new working-with-your-dog lifestyle.

Working with pet videos

If you don't have a pet but want to benefit from the same potential boosts in mood or productivity, there is always the internet.

In a cross-sectional [survey I conducted with 7,000 internet users](#) in 2015,

I found that watching cat videos can give people a quick boost of happiness and energy. While this study focused on felines, dog lovers may get similar benefits from watching videos of their favorite pooches.

[A study of veterinary students](#) tested this idea. The course instructor picked 20 class days and on half showed a cute or funny [video](#) featuring [dogs](#) or cats during the middle of the lecture.

Students were surveyed during all 20 class days. On the days they viewed animal videos they reported more [positive mood](#), greater interest in the course material and deeper understanding of the course material.

While you are not going to get a lot of work done watching hours of pet videos on YouTube, some research suggests that taking short breaks for a mood-boosting activity, be it [petting an actual dog](#) or [watching a video of one online](#), may not only improve your mood but also decrease stress or re-energize you when you do return to your work.

Finding a solution

More studies are needed in this area to come to a stronger scientific consensus on the relationship between working alongside your dog and your productivity.

The value of having a dog with you during your workday will depend on the type of work, the workplace or work-from-home environment, the type of dog and your own style of work.

In the meantime, pick up your dog for a minute so all your co-workers can make eye contact with her via the group Zoom video session and share in your [oxytocin boost](#).

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