



A dog may be our companion, but we should not anthropomorphize her. Behaviourist Eberhard Trumler wrote that this is dangerous, because an animal lover thinks differently to those people who exaggerate their love for animals into something human.

*"Humans can probably still be said to be all animal, but animals are definitely not all human."  
– Konrad Lorenz, 2004*

A dog is a dog and needs to be respected as such! We humans can ensure that our four-legged friends remain healthy. However, the greatest proof of love is demonstrated by how much we respect our dog for what she is.

Even if you are strongly motivated to undertake everything together with your dog, and always want to have her close to you, I would ask you to remember that she has her own needs. In earlier times, dogs had a job to do, and were physically fully stretched as a result. These days, many animals are kept as pets and companions, in order that their owners can satisfy their own need for love and closeness. It is commonly believed that a dog must be happy because she receives plenty of love and attention, and gets a treat from time to time. But if you're honest, you undoubtedly don't like being constantly fussed over or touched and prattled at all day by someone; it would certainly make me feel like my head was going to explode! Constant petting or constant chatter can make a dog very stressed and unhappy. Learn to rein in your need for cuddles in order to ascertain what your dog's real needs are (I'll be addressing this later). She may look sweet and cuddly, but she still has a large proportion of wolf in her, with all the associated ancient instincts. Let your dog be a dog and not a surrogate partner or child.

Sometimes, less is more. Show your dog love and give her attention in a controlled way. A dog needs quiet times and a place of her own where she can rest and sleep undisturbed.

Are you motivated to begin the Dog Relax programme and massages? Then, first of all make sure you pay careful attention to your dog's moods.

If you have a very nervous or traumatised dog, you will need a very sensitive approach.

I can only provide general guidelines here, so please bear in mind that every dog is UNIQUE, and requires a very individual approach that may sometimes call for a great deal of patience, consideration, and understanding.

### SHOWING STRESS THE RED CARD

*Less stress = more enjoyment for humans & dogs!*

The adverse effect of stress on humans is scientifically proven, but stress is not restricted to those in managerial positions, as recent studies have shown that housewives suffer from stress and burnout syndrome, and it has also been proved that dogs – and other animals – also suffer hugely from stress.

Dogs are highly social animals with a very keen sense of perception, which means they quickly pick up on any worries that their human may have. Simply living with a stressed person causes the dog an enormous amount of stress: less stress, therefore, means more enjoyment of life for dog and owner.



# DOG RELAX



## DOG RELAX

The many millions of sensory cells in our skin register every touch and contact, regardless of how light it may be, and communicates it to the brain.

Neurophysiologist Håkan Olsson and a Swedish research team discovered that there are special nerve tracts in the body that are responsible for sending a message about touch and stroking to the brain. These signals go straight to the limbic system, the part of the brain that manages the emotions.

### Oxytocin: the cuddle hormone

The release of the hormone oxytocin is important for wellbeing and harmony. Oxytocin plays an important role during childbirth and milk production, and also throughout life, as it is the 'cuddle hormone.' Stroking is calming, and this is as true for the animal kingdom as it is for humans.

During stroking, special pathways transmit stimuli to the brain and trigger a cascade of positive feelings. Blood circulation is stimulated, production of cortisol, the stress hormone, is reduced, and the emotional connection to the human doing the stroking is intensified.

Dr Ursula Zimmermann, veterinarian

Affectionate touching aids intelligence and brings about a biochemical reaction in our body by causing the release of the hormone oxytocin. This hormone has demonstrable benefits: circulation is improved and blood pressure lowered, stress hormone levels are reduced, and the immune system is activated, all quickly resulting in a feeling of wellbeing.

*"A dog's oxytocin levels rise when his owner pets him, and petting his dog raises the owner's oxytocin, too."*

*– Temple Grandin, author, 2007*

The beneficial effect on the dog owner is described in detail by Dr Carola Otterstedt in *Menschen brauchen Tiere (Humans need animals)*.

In his research, Dr Seymour Levine observed that rats which had been touched very little or not at all during their early development suffered severe consequences: the way that their nervous systems reacted to external stimuli was permanently altered. In contrast, those animals which had been cared for and touched showed far less anxiety and fear when under stress, and also demonstrated different behaviour as adults. Their hormonal stress system was checked, which protected the animals from an escalation of the chemical stress reaction.

Touch is therefore a very important factor in positive development. For this reason, tactile stimulation and social affection have a positive effect on stress reduction.

#### *The beneficial effects of massage*

- Blood and lymph node circulation stimulated, producing a detoxifying effect
- Reflective effect on the flow of energy (meridians)
- Stress reduction: physical and mental relaxation
- Tactile stimulation and regulation of muscle tone
- Creation of inner equilibrium (particularly in nervous dogs)
- Tense muscles loosened

## WELLBEING MESSAGE FOR YOUR DOG

sides of your dog's body has a relaxing and warming effect, encourages circulation, and stimulates the muscles and underlying tissue. The strokes target the more sensitive nerves, lymph flow is stimulated, and muscular tension dispersed and dissolved.

Simultaneously, this massage promotes trust and deepens attachment, and your dog learns to accept stroking with complete confidence (which also makes grooming and processes such as checking for ticks much easier).

### *Tip for humans*

It is hard to describe the deep, relaxing and luxurious effect of this massage. Try lying on your stomach and ask your partner or a friend to move their 'flowing hands' on your back: you will feel, experience and understand why your dog will enjoy this massage.

### **Relaxed neck**

Remove your dog's collar: he can either sit or lie down, but it is best if you can reach his neck from behind him. (Attempting this massage from the side is not a very good idea.)

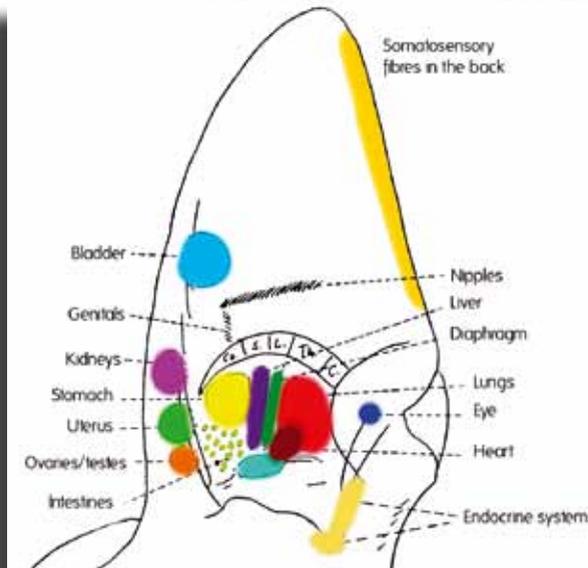
- Place your hands on the side of your dog's neck, and gently but firmly knead the large muscle groups from the upper neck down to the shoulder blades. Remember to keep movement direction downward, working from the top to the bottom (because of lymphatic flow)
- Massage the muscles at the side of the neck as well as the shoulder muscles, and those at the back/base of the neck (the trapezius, sternocephalic and brachiocephalic muscles)
- In the area of the dog's withers, use both thumbs to massage each side of the spine, centimetre by centimetre. (This is the location of the relaxation points of the bladder meridian)

### **Don't massage the spine!**

- Then place your thumbs directly on the

*Kneading: gently kneading the neck provides an important feelgood massage for your dog.*





*Zones of the left ear which correspond to internal organs.*