

Why People Often Look Like Their Pets

If you have a little time on your hands, you can find many amusing photos online of people who resemble their dogs. It turns out that there may be some truth to the idea that people and their dogs look alike.



By Bonney Brown

Dr. Stanley Coren conducted a study asking women to look at photos of dogs and rate each on appearance, friendliness, loyalty and intelligence. In general, women with hair styles that covered their ears preferred dogs with floppy ears while women with shorter hair preferred dogs with pricked ears, rating them not only as better looking, but also attributing other positive traits to the dogs.

“There is a psychological mechanism which explains why a person might choose a dog that looks similar to themselves,” says Coren. “Simply put, we like things that are familiar.”

Psychologists Michael Roy and Nicholas Christenfeld from the University of California at San Diego showed photographs of dogs and owners to people, asking them to match them. Surprisingly, two-thirds of the time, people were able to accurately match the dogs to their people.

The similarities between dogs and their people may be more than skin deep. A report published in the journal, *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, showed that dog owners’ personalities tend to be similar to their dogs in four of the five major areas they measured: emotional stability, sociability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. The lone exception to the similarity was openness.

Personality similarities could be due to the impact of the owner on the dog. It’s easy to imagine how a dog may become more neurotic from living with a neurotic person. A recent study showed that dog’s personalities evolve throughout their lives and that they are influenced by their owners. At the same time, this and other studies acknowledge that most people choose a dog that shares their personality traits and that they feel will fit with their lifestyle.

What about multi-dog households? Turns out when people choose to own multiple dogs, it is common for the dogs’ personalities to vary significantly, both from each other and from their person,

One dog or several in your home, it’s clear that they influence our lives in substantial ways. Owning a dog can boost your immune system, reduce feelings of anxiety and help people make social connections. No wonder that 90% of Americans who share their lives with pets consider them to be members of the family.

Bonney Brown is Co-Founder and President of Humane Network. She created and sustained a 94% communitywide save rate as Executive Director for Nevada Humane Society, which had more than 10,000 annual animal admissions. And she was National



No More Homeless Pets Director, COO and Communications Director for Best Friends Animal Society.

