

This 'Love Principle' Applies to Your Dogs as Well as You

Dogs like to socialize with each other. And having more than one gives your dog a built-in playmate. But here's the rub — and it can produce a type of stress that's easily misconstrued to be something it really isn't. Apply this 'love rule' today for a more balanced relationship.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- For some dogs, spending too much time together can lead to irritation, stress and even aggression
- Time apart often makes the heart grow fonder and helps to diffuse any built-up tension
- Even one solo walk or activity each week can provide your dog the chance to be his own dog for a while
- You can also let your dogs make the choice to spend time without one another by giving them access to different rooms of the house
- On the other end of the spectrum, some dogs are so closely bonded that even a short time apart may cause extreme anxiety

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If you live in a multiple-dog home, you may have had the pleasure of witnessing your dogs form strong, life-long bonds. Your two (or more) pups may sleep together, eat together, play together and go on walks together. In fact, it may seem as though they're joined at the hip!

If this sounds familiar, it's important to distinguish between dogs spending time together because they want to and those spending time together because they have to. If there's only one cushy spot to lie on, for instance, or you always take your dogs places together as a pair, the latter may be the case.

This isn't to say that dogs don't enjoy socializing with other dogs; they often do. But, just as is the case with human siblings, spending too much time together can lead to irritation, stress and even aggression.

Why Some Dogs Benefit from Being an 'Only Dog' — Even for a Short While

There are many benefits to having more than one dog, assuming **the dogs' personalities** mesh well together. The dogs can provide companionship to one another and provide a built-in playmate when you're away.

In some cases, an older established dog can also act as a positive influence on a new addition to your home, especially if the new dog is anxious or fearful. The new dog may take cues from the established dog, leading to feelings of calm.

The new dog may also learn acceptable behaviors regarding where to go to the bathroom from the established pet. (This can also work in the opposite way, however, if the established dog exhibits negative behaviors.) That being said, giving your dogs some time apart can provide a much-needed break.

If your dogs spend virtually all of their time together, minor stresses or irritations can build up into major blowouts. Time apart makes the heart grow fonder and helps to diffuse any built-up tension.

If You Think Your Dogs Need Time Apart, Here's How You Do It

If you think your dogs despise being apart because one of them whines as you take the other away, it could be that they actually despise being left behind as opposed to being temporarily apart from their canine companion.

You can avoid this by having one member of the household take one dog for a walk or play session while you take the other to do a separate activity. If you're the only owner, leave one dog at home with a highly sought-after treat-release toy and take the other dog for a walk, solo.

You don't, by the way, need to take your dogs for separate walks every time. Even one solo walk or activity each week can provide your dog the chance to be his own dog for a while.

You can also simply let your dogs spend time without one another by giving them access to different rooms of the house. That way, they can pick and choose when they want company and when they do not.

Are Your Dogs Co-Dependent?

On the other end of the spectrum, some dogs are so closely bonded that even a short time apart may cause extreme anxiety. This is also a less-than-ideal situation.

If this is the case for your dogs, you can start out by separating your dogs for very short periods (such as five minutes) at a time (with both dogs engaging in something distractingly fun), then gradually work your way up to longer durations.

While they may not enjoy it at first, learning to be comfortable when away from their "other half" will be helpful if you need to take one dog to the veterinarian or they have to be apart for any other reason.

If you've adopted two dogs from the same litter, they may also display signs of littermate syndrome. This phenomenon occurs when canine siblings are so closely bonded that it may hinder their ability to bond with humans or interact with other dogs.

They may also have extreme separation anxiety if they're separated from their littermate (or, on the flip side, may fight virtually non-stop when they're together).

If your dogs are hyper-attached, whether they're littermates or not, this is an unhealthy form of emotional dependence that can hinder each dog's ability to function as a stable adult dog. If your dogs display signs of hyper-attachment, you can try the following to help develop some emotional independence:

- Provide a separate crate for each dog. You can keep them near each other at first then gradually increase the distance until the dogs can't see each other
- Consider separate training sessions for each dog
- Offer separate play sessions for each dog, including possibly spending time at a fun doggy play group or daycare

Ultimately, like people, most dogs benefit from a good balance of time together and time apart. In many cases, you can let your dogs take the lead on this by providing access to shared spaces, as well as areas where your dog can take some time to himself.

Sources and References

[The Bark April 5, 2016 \(Archived\)](#)
