



Published June 21, 2017

Do you ever gaze into your dog's eyes and feel a glow of affection? It's not your imagination. And, get this, your dog feels it, too.

What you're both experiencing is a spike in a natural hormone produced by your body, oxytocin. It's sometimes called the love, the cuddle or the feel-good hormone. Mothers are well familiar with it. Oxytocin levels shoot up during the later stages of childbirth and immediately afterwards to nudge mothers into bonding with their newborn and to stimulate milk production.

But it affects men, too. Oxytocin is nature's strategy for bringing individuals together, for creating harmony and a sense of attachment. It's likely a gift from nature that helped

us evolve into earth's dominant species.

Dogs are one of the few animals who seek man's gaze. To most other creatures, man is seen as a threat and looking us in the eye agitates them unless they choose to grit their teeth and flash a glare to warn and ward us off.

Between dogs, it's considered rude and provocative to stare at another canine. But they'll look their owners square in the eye. The tighter the bond, the more they'll look. Oxytocin is working its intimate magic. But it's hard science, as well. The attraction, the oxytocin loop between man and dog, has been studied and measured in the lab.

Wolves, who are closely related to the dog, avoid our eyes. At some point at least 30,000 years ago, they went their own way. And dogs learned to trust man, to seek our company and to gaze deep into our eyes. Because it makes them feel loved. When we gaze deep, we feel that way, too.

Man's best friend? It sound like nature wanted it that way, doesn't it?