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How dogs love us: A neuroscientist and his dog decode the canine brain. Gregory Berns

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How dogs love us: A neuroscientist and his dog decode the canine brain. Gregory Berns
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Dr Gregory Berns takes us on a journey to discover how the canine brain responds to humans. The journey began when he asked himself the question 'what is my dog thinking?' His team of co-workers and students began to formulate the methods and devise the experiment. They had to overcome the politics of the university and the requirements of the ethics committee as this type of experiment had never been done before and there was no precedent.

The team had to find expert advice on how to train the dogs to go into an MRI machine without being sedated as they needed the dogs to be alert but to remain still during the experiments. This took time as the dogs had to be trained to remain still before they went to the MRI machine. As this had not been done before it was a lot of trial and error.

The experiment took many months with varied setbacks but the team persisted and the results were published in the paper *Functional MRI in awake unrestrained dogs*.

This book is not only about the writing of the paper and the experiment but also about Dr Gregory Berns and his family's relationship with their dogs past, present and their new addition to the family, Callie, a small terrier cross which was the dog chosen for the experiment. The other dog the participated in the initial experiment was a border collie named McKenzie who had already had agility training.

With the large amount of training required to get their dog Callie ready to go un-sedated into a MRI machine it involved the entire family. Scale models were constructed which took over parts of the living areas in the family home.

The book is a good read and gives an insight into how an academic paper evolves from the question posed to the experiment and the final writing. It also gives proof to what all dog owners know that dogs do love us in their own special way.

The paper '*Functional MRI in awake unrestrained dogs*' is available on line at <http://dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0038027>