

Does your dog have what it takes to be a hero?

[I]n the journal *Learning and Behavior*, scientists [report](#) that the dogs most likely to come to the aid of their owners are those that feel empathy for humans—but not too much. Pooches that must push through doors to reach their distressed people need to both care enough to take action and keep the composure to do so.

...

34 dogs were separated from their owners by a clear plastic door held shut with magnets. The owners were instructed to either make crying noises or hum “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” for up to five minutes.

..

As soon as each trial began, each dog had the opportunity to go to its owner. To [researcher Emily] Sanford’s surprise, regardless of the anguish their owners conveyed, half the dogs pushed through the door to get to their humans’ side.

...

When the researchers turned their focus to the dogs’ anxiety levels, however, they found that the dogs most likely to exhibit heroics were actually less stressed than others. As the experiment began, the dogs who didn’t run to their owners instead spent their time barking, fidgeting and pacing the room, appearing to be overwhelmed by the pressure of the situation.

...

“We think the dogs who opened that door might have been at that sweet spot: they perceived stress, but weren’t so personally distressed that they couldn’t do anything,” Sanford says.

Read full, original post: [Why the Most Helpful Dogs Keep Calm and Carry On](#)