

Pets

Pets have been proven to have a positive influence on our physical and mental health. Owning a pet can lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, reducing the risk of heart disease. But research has found that pets can be therapeutic and improve mental health wellness.

"The healing touch of petting an animal and being kissed or nuzzled in return establishes a soothing intimacy at a time of loneliness. They also serve as a stimulus to exercise, a key factor in most recuperation. At a time when the ill person is feeling disconnected from the world, incapable of his or her normal responsibilities, the pet demonstrates that they are still needed by another and that their presence would be terribly missed."

(From *The Healing Power of Pets*, by Dr. Marty Becker).

It is not just the owners who benefit from owning a pet. Keeping a pet is helpful to both you and the animal. Opening up your home to a pet ensures that one more animal will be fed, loved and taken care of. Before taking on the responsibility of adopting a pet, be sure you can handle the work that goes along with providing a safe and happy home for the animal.

Pets Ease Anxiety and Stress

Pets can help us relax and forget about our problems for awhile. Gazing at fish in an aquarium is soothing. Caring for a pet can reduce the stress in our lives. A study of children in a war-torn region of Croatia found that pet-owning children had the lowest levels of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Some Benefits of Pet Ownership to Mental Health:

- Pets can help ease loneliness or isolation. They give us a reason to get up in the morning. They accept us for who we are and don't judge us.
- Physical contact is important to our mental health. Stroking and cuddling with a pet is very therapeutic.
- Animals improve our mood with their companionship. A pet can provide a reason for living.
- Pet owners are more active. The exercise we get from walking, feeding and grooming a pet helps to keep our minds and bodies healthy. We're also likely to laugh and feel more playful when we share our home with a pet.
- Routine is beneficial in enhancing emotional stability. Caring for a pet provides a predictable routine and link to reality.