

The Benefits of Pets for Human Health



Sukanya Biswas*

Pune university, Symbiosis Centre of Health Care (SCHC), India

Submission: August 22, 2019; **Published:** September 16, 2019

***Corresponding author:** Sukanya Biswas, Symbiosis Centre of Health Care (SCHC), Pune university, India

Keywords: Physical rehabilitation; Health; Stress; Social support; Heart attack; Mental health; Social psychology

Short Communication

Animals play an important role in many people's lives. In addition to seeing-eye dogs and dogs that can be trained to detect seizures, animals can also be used in occupational therapy, speech therapy, or physical rehabilitation to help patients recover. Aside from these designated therapeutic roles, animals are also valued as companions, which can certainly affect the quality of our lives. The better we understand the human-animal bond, the more we can use it to improve people's lives. This article summarizes what is known and not known about how animals help improve the health and well-being of people, and what the implications might be for helping people who don't have pets of their own. Some research studies have found that people who have a pet have healthier hearts; don't feel homesick, make fewer visits to the doctor, get more.

Pet therapy

Pet therapy builds on the pre-existing human-animal bond. Interacting with a friendly pet can help many physical and mental issues. It can help reduce blood pressure and improve overall cardiovascular health. It can also release endorphins that produce a calming effect. This can help alleviate pain, reduce stress, and improve your overall psychological state. Animals serve as a powerful force in our life. Many mental health workers will recommend patients adopt animals for numerous benefits. Looking at purely psychological reasons, a person with an animal feels safer. Animals being around in a therapeutic form allow a person to get out of their own head.

Pets lower stress and depression

Many people feel stress. Research shows that just patting /stroking your cat or dog can lower your blood pressure and make you feel calmer as it can ease physical as well as emotional stress. Even watching fish swimming in an aquarium ease tense muscles and helps reduce stress. It can also help you relax and practice mindfulness. Playing with your pet increases the levels of the feel-good chemicals serotonin

and dopamine in your brain. A study done by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) found that people recover from a stressful situation more quickly when they're with their pets than with their partners or friends exercise and are less depressed. Pets may also have a significant impact on allergies, asthma, social support, and social interactions with other people.

A pet is good for your heart

High levels of cholesterol and triglycerides can up your risk of heart disease, but owning a cat or dog can lower both, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Owning a cat or dog can also increase your chances of surviving a heart attack.

Pets provide companionship

Pets can be affectionate, accepting, loyal, honest and consistent. If you feel isolated with little support, a pet can help reduce your loneliness. A pet can provide you with a sense of purpose, which helps improve mental health conditions. If you have a pet, you are never alone and you are also responsible for looking after them. As far as we know, pets are without opinions, critiques, and verdicts. Unlike people, pets won't judge you or your illness. You can even tell them your deepest darkest secret and they will merely expect a tickle for their time.

Pets fulfill the basic human need to touch

Most people feel better when they have physical contact with others. Simply patting a pet can lower your heart rate. The healing power of touch is undisputed. Research indicates a 45-minute massage can decrease levels of the stress hormone cortisol and optimize your immune system by building white blood cells. Hugging floods our bodies with oxytocin, a hormone that reduces stress, and lowers blood pressure and heart rates. And, according to a University of Virginia study, holding hands can reduce the stress-related activity in the hypothalamus region of the brain, part of our emotional center. The

touch can actually stop certain regions of the brain from responding to threat clues. It's not surprising, then, that stroking a dog or cat can lower blood pressure and heart rate and boost levels of serotonin and dopamine.

Pets make us responsible

With pets come great responsibility, and responsibility — according to depression research — promotes mental health. Positive psychologists assert that we build our self-esteem by taking ownership of a task, by applying our skills to a job. When we succeed — i.e., the pet is still alive the next day — we reinforce to ourselves that we are capable of caring for another creature as well as ourselves. That's why chores are so important in teaching adolescents' self-mastery and independence. Taking care of a pet also brings structure to our day. Sleeping until noon is no longer a possibility unless you want to spend an hour cleaning up the next day. Staying out all night needs some preparation and forethought. Most pets require a routine of feeding, cleaning and exercise. Thus, this can give you purpose and motivation which can help your self-esteem, wellbeing and mental health.

Pets increase your social interaction

Pets create opportunities for better social interaction. Going to pet-friendly events, beaches or parks can also help increase your social network. You could make new friends just by taking your dog for a walk or waiting at the vet; they also give you the chance to meet like-minded owners at the vet, pet store, or training classes. If you have a fear of social situations, or social phobia, a pet can help with slowly introducing you to other people who also have pets and enhance your mental health.

Pets improve your fitness

You can't be a couch potato when you have a dog. Walking a dog regularly means you're less likely to be obese and more likely to be physically active, the NIH has found. If you own a dog, they need regular walks, and this exercise is good for you too. Exercise, like walking, has many benefits for your mental health and wellbeing. You can also use the time walking your dog to improve your fitness and make the most of the outdoors to help you further develop mindfulness and relaxation.

Pets a source of comfort

Pets can give you unconditional love and a well-being boost. People may need people to live a richer life, but pets can provide many of the same perks, according to a study published by the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. Pet owners had greater self-esteem and were better able to bounce back from rejection, the study found. Other studies have found that a pet can be a child's best buddy and help children develop empathy.

Benefit of Pets for Child's Development

When a child has no brothers or sisters, research shows that pets help children develop greater empathy, higher self-esteem, and increased participation in social and physical activities. Not only do children who grow up with pets have less risk of allergies and asthma, many also learn responsibility, compassion, and empathy from having a dog or cat.

i. Unlike parents or teachers, pets are never critical and don't give orders. They always love and their mere presence at home can help provide a sense of security in children. Having an ever-present pet can help ease separation anxiety in children when mom and dad aren't around.

ii. Having the love and companionship of a loyal dog can make a child feel important and help him or her develop a positive self-image.

iii. Children who are emotionally attached to their dog are better able to build relationships with other people.

iv. Studies have also shown that dogs can help calm hyperactive or overly aggressive children. Of course, both the dog and the child need to be trained to behave appropriately with each other.

v. Children and adults alike can benefit from playing with dogs, which can be both a source of calmness and relaxation, as well as a source of stimulation for the brain and body. Playing with a dog can even be a doorway to learning for a child. It can stimulate a child's imagination and curiosity. The rewards of training a pet to perform a new trick, for example, can teach children the importance of perseverance. Caring for a furry friend can also offer another benefit to a child: immense joy.

Children with Learning Disorders and Other Challenges

Some children with autism or other learning difficulties are better able to interact with pets than people. Autistic children often rely on nonverbal cues to communicate, just as dogs do. And learning to first connect with a pet may even help an autistic child in his or her interactions with people.

i. Pets can help children with learning disabilities learn how to regulate stress and calm themselves, making them better equipped to overcome the challenges of their disorder.

ii. Playing and exercising with a dog can help a child with learning disorders stay alert and attentive throughout the day. It can also be a great antidote to stress and frustration caused by the learning disability.

Few Benefits to have Pet Therapy in School

Putting an end to Bullying: Bullying is a problem in so many classrooms, with children anxious about school for fear of taunting and abuse. But in some schools, dogs are making a difference in the fight against bullies. Through few programs dogs visit schools to teach children about compassion and fairness. Developers of the program report that children can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. As it's easy for them to transition when we ask them to consider how an animal feels (if ill-treated) to how the kid sitting near them feels (if poorly treated)."

Autism Service Dogs

Children with autism typically have trouble with concentration and interaction at school and beyond. With the help of a service dog,

students may be able to increase their abilities and do better in the classroom. It helps them not only with concentration and socialization, as well as helping him keep calm.

Managing Behavioural Problems

Behavior problems are serious in school, and as many as one in 10 children suffers from a behavior disorder bad enough to interfere with learning and development. Some schools are using dogs to improve behavior problems, promoting positive behavior in students. In a controlled study, students were found to have fewer disciplinary referrals than classrooms without animals. Students' behavior improved toward teachers, and students also showed more confidence and responsibility. Additionally, parents reported that children seemed more interested in school as a result of having the animals around.

Promoting Reading

It might seem a bit silly to read to a dog, but children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. "It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all, a dog won't judge or correct you." With the Reading Education Assistance Dogs program, also known as READ, dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practice reading aloud. With the presence of a "calm and

well-trained dog," students find social support and peer interaction. In other programs reading to dogs is the incentive, allowing students to read to therapy to meet their literacy goals.

Social Development

Dogs in school offer an opportunity for improving social development at nearly every stage, from elementary age children to teens. They are especially useful for teaching students social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help tweens build self-esteem, learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older children and teens use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empower students through dog training programs.

Teaching Responsibility

With a dog in the classroom, students have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking, grooming, and feeding the dog, chores which can be distributed among the class. Trainers report that involving students in the daily care of classroom dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care, like brushing their teeth at home. The students also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.



This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License
DOI: [10.19080/PBSIJ.2019.13.555862](https://doi.org/10.19080/PBSIJ.2019.13.555862)

Your next submission with Juniper Publishers will reach you the below assets

- Quality Editorial service
- Swift Peer Review
- Reprints availability
- E-prints Service
- Manuscript Podcast for convenient understanding
- Global attainment for your research
- Manuscript accessibility in different formats
(Pdf, E-pub, Full Text, Audio)
- Unceasing customer service

Track the below URL for one-step submission

<https://juniperpublishers.com/online-submission.php>