

Let's Talk: The many benefits of pets

Presenter – Lynn Borteck, Clinical Counselor

Visual cue: Lynn giving Sheba, her pet dog, a treat and petting her.

Hey, hey sweetie! Hey, look what I've got for you! Look what I've got for you! Yeah, yes, yes! Come on!

Hi, I'm Lynn. Let's talk about pets. If you have pets, you don't need me to tell you how wonderful they are as companions. But did you know how many different benefits you actually get from having a pet of any kind? There are incredible health benefits. Here's just a brief list.

Stress relief

First of all, they're stress relief. Owning a pet can decrease depression, stress and anxiety. In fact, researchers have done studies that show when people are doing a difficult task, they find it easier and less stressful when they have their pet with them even compared to when they have a good friend or their spouse with them.

Physical and emotional health

Second, having a pet has been shown to possibly help lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol and even reduce the risk of stroke. Also, having a pet is a natural mood booster. It can actually make you happier. Pets make us laugh, we have fun when we're with them. And they're like a best friend that you have around all the time.

Blood sugar level detection

So, here's something special about dogs. Dogs can actually monitor your blood sugar level. In fact, studies have shown that 40 percent of dogs change their behavior around you when your blood sugar level dips. As a result, there's an organization called Dogs for Diabetes that is training dogs to work with diabetics to help them know when their sugar is dropping.

Therapeutic help

Also, pets can be very therapeutic. Have you ever seen therapy pets in hospitals or nursing homes? They can really soothe people and help them feel better. Pets can also help people who have autism and ADHD, because they can help them learn to focus and carry out routines. People who have had trauma in their lives can gain a lot of benefits from their relationship and caring for pets.

A friend to talk and play with

Also, have you ever noticed that you're always a rock star when you come home to your pet? They're always glad to see you. And they make great confidantes. You can tell them anything and not worry about it going any further. On the other hand, you don't really have to explain yourself at all if you're not in a great mood. Dogs make great exercise buddies. They're wonderful motivation because they really need to be walked and so it motivates you to get out and get that exercise and walk them. And other pets too, that like to be played with.

Social connections

Pets are also great magnets to other human beings. How often do you take a dog for a walk and not wind up in a conversation with a neighbor or a friend? Also, when kids have birds, or gerbils, or another pet, it's a great gathering point for them when they have friends over. They can all play together. Another really interesting thing is that having a pet can help discourage allergies. It can't cure allergies but having a pet around all the time can expose kids to allergens in small, consistent doses, and that can help build immunotherapy.

A child's companion

While we're on the topic of kids, pets are great for kids. Pets help teach kids to be responsible, to care for others, to express themselves. Pets are a really good emotional outlet for kids.

Unconditional love

So, all in all, I think you can see that there are lots and lots of benefits to having pets. There's the unconditional love, and of course, there's someone to come home to who never complains about what's for dinner.

Visual cue: Lynn petting Sheba, her pet dog, and hugging and kissing her on the head.

Girl, oh, my good girl. That's exactly what we want. Kiss, mwah!

[8 health benefits of having a dog.](#) Animal Health Foundation. Accessed March 2019.

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