



BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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Owning a Dog or Cat Can Reduce Stress

When thinking of ways to reduce stress in life, usually techniques like meditation, yoga and journaling come to mind. These are great techniques, to be sure. But getting a new best friend can also have many stress relieving and health benefits. While human friends provide great social support and come with some fabulous benefits, this article focuses on the benefits of furry friends: cats and dogs! Research shows that, unless you're someone who really dislikes animals or is absolutely too busy to care for one properly, pets can provide excellent social support, stress relief and other health benefits—perhaps more than people! Here are more health benefits of pets:

Pets Can Improve Your Mood:

For those who love animals, it's virtually impossible to stay in a bad mood when a pair of loving puppy eyes meets yours, or when a super-soft cat rubs up against your hand. Research supports the

mood-enhancing benefits of pets. A recent study found that men with AIDS were less likely to suffer from depression if they owned a pet. (According to a press release, men with AIDS who did not own a pet were about three times more likely to report symptoms of depression than men who did not have AIDS. But men with AIDS who had pets were only about 50 percent more likely to report symptoms of depression, as compared to men in the study who did not have AIDS.)



For more information or support about reducing stress, contact the work/life experts at **BalanceWorks®** by calling:

1.800.327.2255

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Pets Control Blood Pressure Better Than Drugs:

Yes, it's true. While ACE inhibiting drugs can generally reduce blood pressure, they aren't as effective on controlling spikes in blood pressure due to stress and tension. However, in groups of hypertensive New York stock-brokers who got dogs or cats were found to have lower blood pressure and heart rates than those who didn't get pets. When they heard of the results, most of those in the non-pet group went out and got pets!

Pets Encourage You To Get Out And Exercise:

Whether we walk our dogs because they need it, or are more likely to enjoy a walk when we have companionship, dog owners do than non-pet owners, at least if we live in an urban setting. Because exercise is good for stress management and overall health, owning a dog can be credited with increasing these benefits.

Pets Can Help With Social Support:

When we're out walking, having a dog with us can make us more approachable and give people a reason to stop and talk, thereby increasing the number of people we meet, giving us an opportunity to increase our network of friends and acquaintances, which also has great stress management benefits.

Pets Stave Off Loneliness and Provide Unconditional Love:

Pets can be there for you in ways that people can't. They can offer love and companionship, and can also enjoy comfortable silences, keep secrets and are excellent snugglers. And they could be the best antidote to loneliness. In fact, research shows that nursing home residents reported less loneliness when visited by dogs than when they spent time with other people! All these benefits can reduce the amount of stress people experience in response to feelings of social isolation and lack of social support from people.

Pets Can Reduce Stress—Sometimes More Than People:

While we all know the power of talking about your problems with a good friend who's also a good listener, recent research shows that spending time with a pet may be even better! Recent research shows that, when conducting a task that's stressful, people actually experienced less stress when their pets were with them than when a supportive friend or even their spouse was present! (This may be partially due to the fact that pets don't judge us; they just love us.)

It's important to realize that owning a pet isn't for everyone. Pets do come with additional work and responsibility, which can bring its own stress. However, for most people, the benefits of having a pet outweigh the drawbacks. Having a furry best friend can reduce stress in your life and bring you support when times get tough.

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