

HOW PETS HELP US MAINTAIN GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

HABRI has partnered with Mental Health America to raise awareness of pet ownership as a back-to-basics way to improve mental health. Here are some ways that the human-animal bond can contribute to positive healthy habits that boost our mental health.

EXERCISE

Making time for regular exercise can improve self-esteem, brain function, and lessen social withdrawal and stress. Pet dogs can be powerful exercise motivators through regular walks, with one study showing that dog owners walk 22 more minutes per day compared to those without a dog¹.



STRESS MANAGEMENT

We all experience stress as part of life, but chronic stress can negatively impact our long-term health and wellbeing. Interacting with pets has been demonstrated to lower blood pressure^{2 3} and reduce cortisol, a stress-related hormone⁴.



COPING SKILLS

Coping skills are strategies or activities used to moderate difficult situations and feelings. Pets can help people develop coping skills by providing a regular routine, offering positive distractions from unwanted thoughts, and providing owners with a sense of purpose and meaning⁵.



SUPPORT SYSTEM

Having a good support system with other people to rely on for help protects our long-term mental health. Pets can help connect us with others, serving as natural icebreakers and easy conversation starters that can help people make new connections in their communities⁶. According to one study, 40% of pet owners reported receiving one or more types of social support from people they met through their pets⁷.



Learn more about maintaining good mental health by downloading the Mental Health America 2022 Back to Basics Toolkit [here](#).

Visit www.habri.org to learn more about the many ways in which pets can help us lead healthier, happier lives.



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