



Companion Animals and Mental Health Research Overview

The human-animal bond is a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that is influenced by behaviors considered essential to the health and well-being of both. The following is a summary of research supporting the human-animal bond between people and companion animals, or pets, for improved emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing.

How the human-animal bond contributes to emotional wellbeing

- Pets provide daily comfort that can distract from and disrupt life's stressors.¹
- Pets can help people recover after experiencing a crisis.²
- People are more likely to laugh throughout the day in the presence of pets.³
- Pets serve as great motivators to practice healthy coping strategies and habits.⁴
- Pet dogs encourage physical activity, which is linked to improved mental health.⁵
- Having a pet may facilitate behaviors that enhance coping with chronic pain.⁶

How the human-animal bond contributes to psychological wellbeing

- Pet ownership and care necessitates a daily routine which can empower pet owners with a renewed sense of purpose and meaning.⁷
- Connecting with animals and nature has been shown to strengthen feelings of love, belonging, and sense of perspective.⁸
- Regularly caring for a pet can provide motivation for people managing mental health conditions and disabilities to function in daily life.⁹

How the human-animal bond contributes to social wellbeing

- People consider pets as valued family members in their social support network.¹⁰
- Pets act as natural icebreakers that help facilitate new friendships.¹¹
- The positive presence of pets encourages people to be more cooperative and friendly towards each other.¹²
- 85% of people agree that pets can help reduce loneliness.¹³
- Sheltering foster cats can reduce loneliness in older adults.¹⁴
- 75% of pet owners agree that pets help bring people together from different walks of life, and that having a pet makes it easier to connect with neighbors.¹⁵

Citations

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