

## 07-09 KT Pet Care Pet's for Stress Relief and Therapy

Many of us may think of yoga, meditation, journaling and long hot baths when we think of ways to reduce the stress in our lives. Many of us also know the benefits of having a pet for stress relief and the betterment of our health. Some may say that they have good friends that provide them with support and listen to their problems. These friends are important but not always available and sometimes judgmental. Relationships with people can also be stressful. A pet is always there for you, in sickness and in health till death do you part. Pets give you unconditional love, affection and are never judgmental.

Pets improve your mood. Research has shown that men with aids are much less likely to suffer from depression when they have a pet of some form to come home to. Pets are also known to control spikes in blood pressure even better than blood pressure reducing medication. Having a pet for patients that have life threatening diseases, gives them a stimulus to survive and care for their pets.

“ Research has shown that heart attack victims who have pets live longer. Even watching a tank full of tropical fish may lower blood pressure, at least temporarily. A study of 92 patients hospitalized in coronary care units for angina or heart attack found that those who owned pets were more likely to be alive a year later than those who did not. The study found that only 6 percent of patients who owned pets died within one year compared with 28 percent of those who did not own pets.

The therapeutic use of pets as companions has gained increasing attention in recent years for a wide variety of patients -people with AIDS or cancer, the elderly, and the mentally ill. Unlike people, with whom our interactions may be quite complex and unpredictable, animals provide a constant source of comfort and focus for attention. Animals bring out our nurturing instinct. They also make us feel safe and unconditionally accepted. We can just be ourselves around our pets.”

([http://www.holisticonline.com/stress/stress\\_pet-therapy.htm](http://www.holisticonline.com/stress/stress_pet-therapy.htm))

UCLA conducted a study on patients who owned a dog and those who did not. The ones who did not, require a lot more medical care for stress related aches and pains than the patients who did own a dog.

“In a study conducted at City Hospital in New York, it was found that heart patients who owned the pets were significantly more likely to be alive a year after they were discharged from the hospital than those who didn't own pets. The presence of a pet was found to give higher boost to the survival rate than having a spouse or friends.”

([http://www.holisticonline.com/stress/stress\\_pet-therapy.htm](http://www.holisticonline.com/stress/stress_pet-therapy.htm))

After reading all the information above the next step for those of you who may not have a pet in your life, is what pet to choose. It is extremely important to understand that owning a pet of any kind brings responsibility to the owner. Some pet's are easier than others are less expensive to feed and can be left at home for a few days with out interaction. Cats, fish, reptiles and rodents all fall into this category.

Dogs of course are undoubtedly more work, increased responsibility and depending on the size of the dog they are more expensive to feed and require visits to the vet. All of these things should factor in to what pet you should decide to own. If you love walking and can afford the time and money to support a dog, great. If you aren't so big on exercise or have limited finances, then perhaps a pet that does not need to go for walks is a better choice.

If you decide to get a dog remember that there is a wide range of breeds and they all have a differing requirement for exercise. There are seven categories of dogs to choose from.

1. NON SPORTING (Dalmatian, French Bull Dog)
2. WORKING (Rottweiler, Doberman)

3. HERDING (German Shepherd, Border Collie)
4. GUNDOGS (Pointer, Golden Retriever)
5. TERRIERS (Jack Russel, Cairn, Yorkshire)
6. HOUNDS (Beagle, Basset, Bloodhound, Greyhound)
7. TOY DOGS (Pomeranian, Chihuahua, Maltese)

When your doing research make sure that the level of exercise the dog will require will meet your level of desire to walk, run or bike with the dog. Important also to know the costs of caring for your dog be it nutritionally or medically. Another critical thing to remember is that not all dogs are great with people, children or both. Assess your situation and choose wisely. Many people choose a dog not for it's temperament but for how it looks. This is a huge error and can leave you with countless problems in the future. Remember that buying a dog or cat from a "Pet Store" is a big mistake. Most of these animals come from "puppy mills". They are generally rife with health issues and the breeding animals are treated horrendously.

If you have done your research properly and decided on the pet you want to own, they will bring you hours of entertainment, stress relief and happiness.

#### References

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