

Helpful Guides

Why animals can help your **mental health**

There are several ways in which animals can help improve mental health and well-being, whether through everyday exposure or a one-off experience.



Why do dog lovers need a cuddle on the sofa at the end of a tough day? Why does a furry animal on your knee make you feel better? The connection between animals and mental health is well-documented and is a real help to so many people.

Here are some of the ways a furry friend can help so many people:

1. Soothing anxieties

The presence of a trusted animal can have a soothing effect. Whether it be anxieties or overstimulation, being near an animal that you love and trust - like a dog, cat, rabbit or horse - allows you to focus on one thing. The difference between an animal and, say, a book or game is that the relationship runs both ways. Not only is your attention focused, but you are giving and receiving companionship and affection. This reciprocal relationship allows you to feel positive emotions alongside any negative ones you are experiencing. You can then begin to process these negative feelings in a less overwhelming headspace.

2. Building social skills

When you struggle with your mental health, you may find that building healthy relationships and social skills is challenging. When you're around an animal, like a dog or cat, you're free to form a relationship without expectations.

When you bond with an animal, you can experience social connection without the pressure of another person's thoughts and inner life.

3. Encouraging exercise

Exercise can be great for your mental health. Having a pet that needs regular exercise, typically a dog, can encourage people who might otherwise struggle with motivation to move their bodies regularly.

Getting out in the fresh air and moving is a great way to banish negative thoughts, even for a short time.

4. Reducing isolation and promoting independence

Social isolation can be hugely detrimental to mental health. Animals, particularly those commonly kept as pets, are very social, and that constant presence in your home is a great way to reduce isolation.

Pets can encourage people to hold responsibilities and help to gain independence through their never-ending support.

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