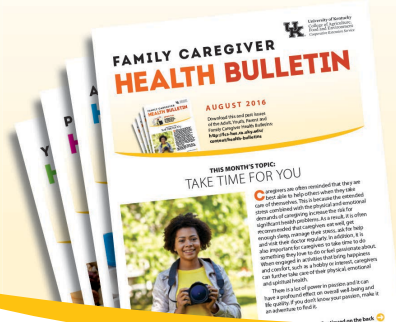




FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN



JANUARY 2017

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

ANIMALS CAN ENHANCE LIVES



Animals are able to make many people smile. To walk, brush, pet and care for an animal has been found to help “reduce pain, anxiety, depression, fatigue.” Animals also help with improving rehabilitation in regard to improving fine motor skills and balance. They increase attention, focus, self-esteem and help motivate people to care for themselves and take fewer medications.

Some believe that animals can reduce stress, grief and isolation. The Mayo Clinic reports that animal assisted therapy is being used with children having dental procedures, prisoners, people undergoing cancer treatments, older adults living in long-term care, people with Alzheimer’s disease who are sun-downing, people hospitalized with chronic diseases such as heart failure, veterans living with post-traumatic stress disorder and teens in mental health facilities.

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Animals increase the need and/or desire to exercise, they lower blood pressure and they provide stress and comic relief.

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Animals are also used with children with mental health issues, epilepsy, physical disabilities and autism.

While the bond between animals and humans is strong, official Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) is more than just spending time with an animal. AAT is a type of therapy that involves animals as a form of treatment to help “improve mental, physical, social, emotional and cognitive functioning.” Animal Assisted Therapy is led by trained professionals who are able to “set specific therapeutic goals, strategies and outcome measures.” Depending on a patient’s needs, a variety of different animals may be used, including dogs, dolphins, horses, llamas and rabbits.

Overall, animals can enhance lives, and not just for a person who is sick — they can also benefit friends, family and workers. This is because animals increase the need and/or desire to exercise, they lower blood pressure and they provide stress and comic relief. And in the end, it also makes people happy to come home to a warm, four-legged friend who is happy to see you and loves you unconditionally.

Animals can help reduce pain, anxiety, depression and fatigue. They can also increase attention, focus, self-esteem and help motivate people to care for themselves and take fewer medications.



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