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**Improving Mental Health with the Human-Animal Bond**

[The Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI)](http://www.habri.org) is a not-for-profit research and advocacy organization that funds scientific research on the mutually beneficial relationship between people and animals, known as the human-animal bond.

Ask any pet owner and they’ll agree, pets are family. In fact, 98% of pet owners say their pets are important family members according to [HABRI’s 2016 survey of pet owners](https://habri.org/2016-pet-owners-survey). HABRI’s survey of pet owners also found that 75% of pet owners reported mental health improvements from pet ownership and 75% reported a friend’s or family member’s mental health has improved from pet ownership. The close relationship we share with our companion animals positively impacts our mental health, and has been scientifically documented to help address certain mental health conditions.

Findings from a recently published [study](https://habricentral.org/resources/58595) found that pets contributed, over time, to individuals developing routines that provided emotional and social support. The responsibilities associated with taking care of a pet provide the ability to gain a sense of control and provided a sense of security and routine which made subjects feel they could rely on their pets in time of need.

While more research is needed, studies have shown that animal-assisted interventions, including animal-assisted therapy (AAT), are [beneficial as supplemental treatments for substance abuse](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2752/175303709X434167). Animals have also been found to help [create an accepting environment](http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2012/03/09/146583986/pet-therapy-how-animals-and-humans-heal-each-other) and often put people at ease, helping them to reveal what’s on their minds. This has been beneficial for all kinds of mental health conditions and for people of many ages, conditions and backgrounds, not just those suffering from addiction.

HABRI is [partnering](https://habri.org/partnerships) with other like-minded organizations like Mental Health America to share knowledge of the scientific research that demonstrates the health benefits of pets. HABRI does not provide direct services to people seeking help to improve their physical or mental health conditions. Instead, HABRI relies on it’s great partners, who help make a difference in so many people’s lives across the country every day:

**Pet Partners –** Pet Partners registers handlers of multiple species as volunteer teams and provides innovative programs that bring therapy animals to hospitals, schools, libraries, nursing homes and more. For information about Pet Partners, please visit [petpartners.org](https://petpartners.org/).

**Association of Service Dog Providers for Military Veterans –** The Association of Service Dog Providers for Military Veterans is a coalition of non-profit service dog providers for military veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, and military sexual trauma working to prevent suicide and improve military veterans’ mental health. For more information, please visit [servicedogs4vets.org](http://servicedogs4vets.org/).

**The National Link Coalition -** Over the past 30 years, researchers and professionals in a variety of human services and animal welfare disciplines have established significant correlations between animal abuse, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, elder abuse and other forms of violence. Mistreating animals is no longer seen as an isolated incident that can be ignored: it is often an indicator or predictor crime and a “red flag” warning sign that other family members in the household may not be safe. The National Link Coalition is a multi-disciplinary, collaborative initiative to increase awareness and address public policy, programs and research. For more information, please visit [nationallinkcoalition.org](http://nationallinkcoalition.org).

For more resources relating to responsible pet ownership and how you can benefit from the healing power of the human-animal bond, please visit [HABRI’s helpful links page](https://habri.org/helpful-links).

*While responsible pet ownership, animal-assisted interventions, or just finding ways to spend more time with companion animals are great ways to support mental health, this information is not a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment for specific medical conditions.*