Benefits of Emotional Support Animals

## **Description[[1]](#footnote-1)**: this website describes the various physical and psychological benefits of owning and interacting with emotional support animals.

## Target Audience[[2]](#footnote-2)

## The target audience for this website is antisocial individuals with anxiety, ages 16 and up, who attend high school or college.

## Success Statement[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Antisocial individuals** *should* consider owning **emotional support animals** *because* pets can greatly impact one’s **emotional and physical health** in a multitude of ways.

## Emotional Comfort

Many benefits have been found in canine companionship, including effects on reducing feelings of loneliness, depression, worry and irritability, and increased feelings of calmness. There's even some evidence that pets can have a direct effect on depression and mood through close proximate contact and stroking. If an individual constantly finds themselves experiencing feelings of loneliness, pets can provide a consistent source of comfort and affection, sometimes even being able to feel when their owner needs them. People were able to confide in their pets when they were unable to open up to other people. In this respect, pets provide a safe environment where people can talk without fear of being judged or being a burden to others. Pets can provide unconditional love and affection which fostered self-acceptance and congruence.

## Physical Health

## Pets can have a great impact on physical health. One study found that those with pets were more significantly likely to use ambulatory mental health care than those without. In some other studies, the main mechanism through which pets appeared to contribute to practical work was through the ability of pets to distract and disrupt attention from symptoms or upsetting experiences such as hearing voices, panic attacks or suicidal ideation. Indirectly, pets encouraged a form of behavioral activation. Pets were seen to enhance mobility, increase exercise and promote contact with nature, all of which were considered beneficial to mental health. Pets’ contribution to practical work is seemingly made possible through the provision of opportunities for routine tasks required to care for an animal, providing a positive focus for activity, providing a needed challenge, by introducing humor into situations, providing a direct grounding role, lessening the negative impact of symptoms and reducing the stress associated with the vagaries of living with their condition.

## Conduits to Social Interaction

Pets can help increase the quality and quantity of the owner's social interactions. Pets reportedly increased social interaction with others including friends and family and with more peripheral social interactions. They also fostered a sense of social and community integration. Interestingly, one study found that dogs increased social interactions that would not have been possible without their pet. The reasons identified in the included studies as to why pets were considered useful in terms of enhancing the amount and quality of social interactions included having the confidence to venture into new social situations with their pet, owners finding it easier to be in the presence of other people when their pet was present, being more open during social interactions and being able to have difficult conversations with existing friends and family through their pet.

## Identity

Pets can provide owners with a sense of purpose and give meaning to their lives. Often participants described how this had been diminished since diagnosis with a mental health condition but that pets helped them to overcome this and provided them with a platform for going forward with their lives. This sense of meaning and purpose included pets giving their owners a reason to live, to contributing to a sense of control and empowerment and giving individuals hope for the future. Owners’ felt that their pets contributed directly to maintaining a consistent sense of identity and self. They felt pets provided a form of validation through the pride associated with successfully caring for a pet but also as sustaining elements of pre-illness identities including roles of mother, pet owner or animal lover and as being a protector of animals.

## References

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tAUseHTzt7K78WJp6Wg4DsJ40u2Oe5YF/view>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oxhrD7YMZHHgtdvYDw877e7SOQs--0If/view>

1. Use this description as content for the page’s description specified in the <meta> tag. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The target audience describes the specific group of people most likely to respond positively to the information presented on the website. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The success statement informs in a single sentence who is the target audience, what actions to take regarding the information delivered on the site, and why they should take those actions [↑](#footnote-ref-3)