

The Benefits of Pet Therapy

By Brenda Sangster, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Capital District

As caregivers, it is so important to take care of ourselves, and having a pet can be a great way to relieve stress. Did you know that having a pet may decrease your blood pressure, provide companionship, help you meet new people, reduce anxiety, and add structure and routine to your day?

Stroking, holding, cuddling, or touching an animal can calm and soothe us. They are a source of love and friendship and can actually make us healthier. Many studies have shown that having a pet can help us live longer and can also help us cope better during difficult times.

When considering a pet it is important to think about your level of activity. Is most of your time spent at home? Are you very active? Who else is in your family (are there children, are you caring for an ageing relative)? Are there other pets? What is your home environment like? What time commitment can you make?

For our family, the right choice for us was to have a cat. Her name is Lulu and she is an indoor cat. We don't have to worry about her wandering off. She was very easy to train.



Lulu

She is fiercely independent. She is also a great companion to my 83-year old mother. When I come home at the end of the day, I look forward to Lulu greeting me at the door. She stretches out so I can rub her belly -- and expects it!

On the other hand, my co-worker Lynn has a dog named Winnie. A dog is a better choice for Lynn's family. They have grown children, are very active, and live in an area that has lots of places for Winnie to exercise and play. Lynn will often bring Winnie to work, and we feel she is a great addition to our office.



Winnie

Consider adding a pet to your family! Owning a pet has been known to lessen stress, and they do offer their owners unconditional love.

1.877.488.7390

Do you have a friend or relative who is struggling with the physical and emotional demands of giving unpaid care to a loved one? Please suggest they give us a call. All our services and programs are free. No referral needed!