

## Pets As Support

### Benefits of Animal Contact Include:

- Lower blood pressure
- Lower cholesterol
- Reduced anxiety
- Reduce depression
- Opportunity for touch
- Increase in social interaction
- Longer survival for chronically ill patients
- Healing of grief & loneliness

Seeking volunteer opportunities?

- Visit nursing homes with your pet
- Donate time/energy/money to an animal shelter, zoo, aquarium, etc...

*“Animals are such agreeable friends- they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms” - George Eliot*

Anyone who has loved a pet knows the joy and companionship (and responsibility) that a pet can bring. Research has shown that caring for a pet provides health, social and emotional benefits.

### Physical Health

Many people who have pets have lower stress levels, blood pressure and heart rates than people who don't have pets. Gazing at a fish aquarium has been shown to reduce stress and blood pressure. Children who had a dog present at doctor appointments showed lower heart rates, blood pressure and behavioral stress than the children who did not. Walking a dog is a great way to get regular exercise. Dogs are now being trained to assist in predicting seizures, alerting to hypoglycemia and controlling 'freezing' in Parkinson's disease, which may provide a more secure and independent life for many people.

### Social

Taking a pet out for a walk provides an opportunity to meet people and develop relationships. Shy people have a topic for conversation when they have a pet. Children can learn empathy and responsibility when adults show them how to care for pets. Animals in long-term care institutions cause laughter and interaction among residents. Just having a pet at home can help reduce feelings of being alone in the world.

### Emotional

Pets can be there for us in ways that people cannot. Pets don't judge us, but love us unconditionally—when we feel like no one else does. They are excellent listeners and can keep a secret! The ability to love and care for a pet helps to provide a purpose in life, which increases life expectancy in terminally ill people.

### Web Resources

[www.deltasociety.com](http://www.deltasociety.com)    [www.asPCA.org](http://www.asPCA.org)    [www.cdc.gov/HEALTHYPETS](http://www.cdc.gov/HEALTHYPETS)

### A word of caution!

Despite all of these benefits, a pet is not for everyone! Before going out to purchase or adopt a pet, it is important to know the responsibility that comes with your new companion. Ask yourself if you have the time, finances, living situation and patience that are appropriate to care for your pet for many years to come. Companion animals can be a wonderful addition to our lives, but it is our responsibility to make sure that we select the right type of companion for our individual situation. If a pet is right for you, consider the Humane Association or rescue groups for an adult animal.

**Contact Workplace Solutions today for free, confidential assistance.**