

# Cause for PAWS

## PETS CAN KEEP THEIR OWNERS CALM

Hanging out with your pet is more than just fun. It can turn your frown upside down. Studies show that spending 15 to 30 minutes with Fido or Fluffy lowers the level of cortisol, a hormone the body releases as a response to stress. It also raises levels of dopamine and serotonin, nerve chemicals that produce calmness and pleasure.

### Rx: GET A PET

Pets offer a sense of being wanted and needed. They offer acceptance without judgment. Taking care of a pet helps people focus on something other than themselves and gives them something to nurture and care for.

Pets brighten the lives of people who are anxious, lonely, or depressed. Therapists sometime prescribe a pet to people who are dealing with depression. Dogs, in particular, are used as therapy to help trigger memories in Alzheimer's disease patients, motivate people who have had strokes or have disabilities, and comfort people who are elderly or in the last stages of life.

### PET BENEFITS

- Lower blood pressure.
- Reduce stress.
- Increase sense of well-being.
- Lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels.
- Increase the odds of an owner's survival after heart attack.
- Lower anxiety.
- Decrease feelings of loneliness and depression.
- Help keep owners fit.
- Provide companionship.
- Listen without interruption.

### Action Step

A pet can be a great companion, but might not fit into your lifestyle. Ask yourself if you would feel more fulfilled with a pet. Then research the right type of pet for you.

