

How Pets & Animals Help Seniors with Dementia

Pets and other animals have the tendency to make people happy, brighten their day and distract from everyday troubles. No matter what type of animal, i.e., dog, cat, horse, bird or even fish, animals are known to have therapeutic properties. Seniors with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, in particular, can benefit in an increasing number of ways from a pet or other animal's therapeutic traits. Physical health, emotional well-being and social involvement are among the many ways seniors with memory impairments benefit from pets and animal therapy.

Physical Health

Depending on what kind of pet or animal seniors have, it's possible for them to benefit from physical benefits because of being a pet owner. Even those who are exposed to animals can take advantage of the physical health benefits of being around them. Some of the physical health benefits include:

- **Exercise.** Owning pets can lead to increased levels of physical activity, making your loved one healthier and even happier, thanks to an increased amount of positive endorphins. Walking and playing with pets can spur other positive health changes, too.
- **Cardiovascular health.** Heart health is easily able to be improved thanks to pets. Because of frequent interaction with pets and animals, those who are animal lovers tend to have lower blood pressure and cholesterol which can protect them from heart disease.
- **Improved self-care.** Those who have pets are used to developing a routine of care. When they take care of their pets, they also tend to make time to care for themselves. Having a pet can also establish a feeling of responsibility, which means that they need to stay well so their pets can, too.

Emotional Well-Being

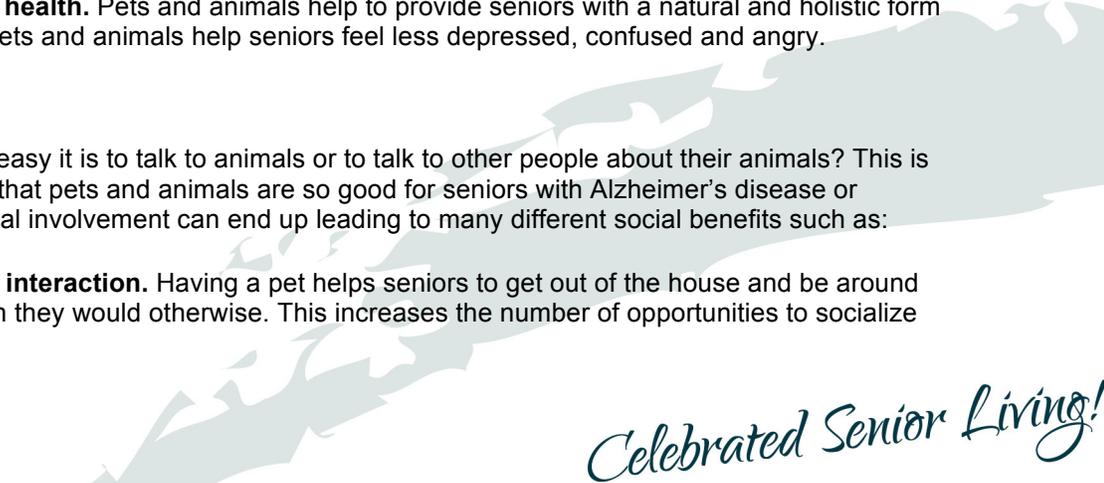
Many seniors with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia can begin to feel depressed as time goes by as a result of not being able to communicate how they would like to and not being able to do things on their own as much. While pet and animal therapy doesn't exactly "cure" emotions, it can significantly improve mindset and distract from negatives feelings. Pet and animal therapy helps to:

- **Decrease feelings of isolation.** Because of the companionship that pets provide, seniors are less likely to feel lonely and more likely to get out and take their pet for a walk.
- **Increase self-esteem.** Pets and animals help seniors feel loved and accepted regardless of their age, disease or abilities. The love that animals have for their owners and others has no boundaries.
- **Improve mental health.** Pets and animals help to provide seniors with a natural and holistic form of stress relief. Pets and animals help seniors feel less depressed, confused and angry.

Social Involvement

Did you ever notice how easy it is to talk to animals or to talk to other people about their animals? This is one of the main reasons that pets and animals are so good for seniors with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Increased social involvement can end up leading to many different social benefits such as:

- **Higher levels of interaction.** Having a pet helps seniors to get out of the house and be around people more than they would otherwise. This increases the number of opportunities to socialize with others.



Celebrated Senior Living!



- **More interest in activities.** As a result of increased levels of interaction, those with pets may be more likely to go out and be involved in various clubs and activities.
- **Stimulation of memory.** As was stated before, being around animals and pets can help to make loved ones with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia more lucid. When their memories are stimulated, they are able to communicate and connect with others easier.

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