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The Benefits of Caring for a Pet

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Did you know that opening up your home to an animal can significantly improve your quality of life? Having an animal around can also prevent and alleviate symptoms of depression.

Animal-assisted therapy is used to improve patient's response to treatment, but the help of animals is certainly not limited to medical conditions. Caring for an animal has mental health benefits worth considering.

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Animals Are a Good Distraction

The two main characteristics of depression are rumination and toxic emotions. People struggling with this condition find it difficult to focus on daily tasks, because their minds may often be overwhelmed by negativity, while their motivation has plummeted.

An Interference with Negativity

An animal in your home can distract you from negative thoughts just by being there for you. Dogs, for instance, are wonderful companions for people with depressive tendencies, because they are always happy and loving.

Furthermore, you can focus on creating a healthy home for your pet, taking good care of it, teaching it tricks, etc.

Animals Make Your More Active

Having a pet can be extremely fun, but it's also a serious responsibility. You have to feed it, walk it, clean it, brush it and take it to the vet, once in a while.

Opportunity to Be Active

Everyday life with an animal presents countless opportunities for behavioral activation, which will eventually ease symptoms of anxiety and depression.

A Way to Get out of Bed

All of these tasks may seem like a burden sometimes, when you are feeling especially unhappy and it is harder than ever to get out of bed.

However, keep in mind that coping with depression relies greatly on your willingness to push yourself, even if it is slightly at first. It's important to accept change and become a more active individual.

Animals Allow You to Be Nurturing

Preventing mood disorders, such as depression, depends greatly on your ability to cultivate positive emotions. This is the main reason why animals are such a wonderful presence around the house.

The Trap of Depression

People who experience depression often find it difficult to express love and compassion. Throughout this course, you have seen how easily a depressed individual may become trapped by negativity and hopelessness. In addition, chronic fatigue can stand in the way of caring for both oneself and others.

Boosting Your Compassion

Knowing that you have someone who is completely dependent on your love and care, can provide that extra gentle nudge, to get you out of bed. With time, caring for an animal can help you cultivate your nurturing side, provide a sense of purpose and worth in your life.

Animals Facilitate Social Interactions

Animals can act as social catalysts, bringing people together through common interests.

Your Personal Publicist

When it comes to social interactions, your pet can be an excellent 'icebreaker'. For instance,

taking your dog to the park, provides an opportunity to interact with other animal lovers. Since social skills play a crucial role in our everyday life, a little practice is always welcomed.

If you are anxious about communicating with strangers, animals, especially dogs can be excellent facilitators, by bringing others to you.

If You Cannot Take in an Animal

There are plenty of reasons why someone would not be able to bring an animal into their home. Perhaps someone in your household is allergic – in that case you can look into breeds that are non-allergenic. Or maybe you just don't feel ready for that kind of responsibility yet.

The Benefits of Volunteering

Just because you can't have an animal at home yet, doesn't mean you cannot take advantage of all the benefits that spending time with animals provides.

A wonderful way to both be helpful and help yourself, is by volunteering with animals. You'd be surprised how many animals have been treated poorly and need human love and care to recuperate.

Where Should You Look?

Look for volunteer opportunities at your local animal shelter, rescue center, veterinary clinic, or search online, through various volunteer and animal adoption platforms.

Consider the Responsibility

Before deciding to take an animal into your home, carefully consider the fact that this is a live being, which would need you, in order to survive and feel well. This kind of responsibility should not be taken lightly, because you may involuntarily cause your pet a lot of suffering, if you don't take proper care of it.

Seek Support

Of course you can do a great job at taking care of your pet, but if you don't feel too confident at first, try to have someone, such as a friend, family member, neighbor, vet, provide support.

Social Responsibilities

Last but not least, when deciding what animal to take in, it is always a good idea to consider adopting a pet, rather than purchasing one. This way you'd be providing help to someone who is in need, in addition to getting a loving companion.

Remember to avoid having wild or exotic animals at all costs – they only thrive in nature.

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