THE POWER OF PETS

Most pet owners are clear about the immediate joys that come with sharing their lives with an animal. However, many of us have no idea of the physical and mental health benefits that can also accompany the pleasure of snuggling up to a furry friend. Nothing compares to the joy of coming home to a loyal companion.

The unconditional love of a pet can decrease stress, improve heart health, and even help children develop their emotional and social skills. Therapy dogs are sometimes brought into hospitals or nursing homes to help reduce patients' stress and anxiety, interacting with them has been shown to decrease levels of cortisol (a stress-related hormone) and lower blood pressure.

While it's true that people with pets often experience greater health benefits than those without one, a pet doesn't necessarily have to be a dog or a cat. A rabbit could be ideal if you're allergic to other animals or have limited space but still want a furry friend to snuggle with. Birds can encourage social interaction and help keep your mind sharp if you're an older adult. Snakes, lizards, and other reptiles can make for exotic companions. Even watching fish in an aquarium can help reduce muscle tension and lower your pulse rate.



Despite all the benefits, it's important to remember that owning a pet is beneficial and comforting only for those who love and appreciate domestic animals and have the time and money to keep a pet happy and healthy. If you're simply not an "animal person," pet ownership is not going to provide you with any health benefits or improve your life.

Even if you love animals, it's important to understand that owning a pet is a major commitment that will last through the animal's lifetime, perhaps 10 or 15 years in the case of dogs. And at the end of that commitment, you'll face the grief and mourning that comes with losing a beloved companion.

ALTERNATIVES TO PET OWNERSHIP

If you don't have the time, money, or ability to own a pet full-time, there are still ways you can experience the health benefits of being around animals. You can ask to walk a neighbor's dog, for example, or do volunteer work at an animal shelter. Most animal shelters or rescue groups welcome volunteers to help care for homeless pets or assist at adoption events.

SHELTER AND RESCUE ANIMALS.

Whether mixed breed or purebred, dogs and cats adopted from a shelter or rescue group make excellent pets. For the most part, pets end up in a shelter through no fault of their own. Their owner may have died or moved to a place that doesn't allow pets, or the pet may have simply been abandoned by irresponsible owners who bought them on a whim and later discovered that they were unable or unwilling to care for them properly.

Volunteers usually take care of the animals until they can find a permanent home. This means that rescuers are often very familiar with a pet's personality and can help advise you on whether the pet would make a good match for your needs.

By adopting an animal from a shelter or rescue organization, you'll not only be giving a home to a deserving pet, but you'll also save an animal's life.

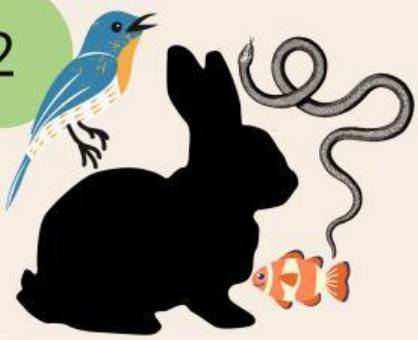
LIVEWORKSHEETS

Read the text and label the pictures with the titles from above.

1



2



3



4



5



Adopt other animals-

Therapy dogs-

Benefits for children-

Titles:

Adopt an animal from a shelter or rescue organization-

1

Walking the dog.
- Keep fit and healthy.
-Reduce stress and anxiety levels.

2

3

4

5

Complete each square with the corresponding benefits:

- Ideal if you are allergic to dogs or cats and have limited space

- decrease levels of cortisol (a stress-related hormone) and lower blood pressure

- keep your mind sharp if you're an older adult - develop emotional and social skills

- reduce patients' stress and anxiety -encourage social interaction

- give a home to an abandoned pet - save an animal's life

- reduce muscle tension and lower your pulse rate

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Read the text again. Match the questions with the correct answers

There is an extra option you don't need.

1. Is owning a pet good for every kind of person? Why?
2. How can people with no pets experience the health benefits of being in contact with animals?
3. Which are the most common reasons why pets end up in shelters?

a. You can ask to walk a neighbour's dog or do volunteer work at an animal shelter.

b. No, because owing a pet is only good for children and older adults to keep their minds sharp.

c. No, because owning a pet is beneficial and comforting only for those who love and appreciate animals, have time and money to keep a pet happy and healthy

d. Because their owner may have died or moved to a place that doesn't allow pets, or the pet may have been abandoned by irresponsible owners.

LIVEWORKSHEETS