



How Dogs Can Help Our Mental Health — And How We Can Help Theirs

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Authored by: Nutro Pet Food

## How Dogs Can Help Our Mental Health — And How We Can Help Theirs

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Sure, owning a dog comes with a lot of responsibilities: There are rainy-day walks, early-morning wake-ups and sleep-interrupting zoomies. But having a dog also comes with tons of benefits — and probably the most important of those is the positive impact on your mental health. Several studies have shown that dogs can reduce stress, anxiety, depression and loneliness. Keep reading to learn about the benefits of being a dog owner — and how you can make sure your dog benefits from your relationship, too.



### A Reason To Exercise And Socialize

Whether it's a walk around the neighborhood each day or a jog at the local park every evening, dogs definitely keep us moving. And this movement releases endorphins, which can help us shake off the blues and feel more relaxed.

Dogs also help keep us social. Think of how many people you wave to on your daily walk, or how many pet parents you've talked to at the dog park. These social interactions help us

feel less lonely and more connected to the people around us.

Also, trained companion dogs can help increase social skills in children with autism, which can in turn foster their independence, confidence and assertiveness.



## **A Sense Of Responsibility**

Dogs don't just need exercise; they also need food, attention, training and quality bonding time — all of which you're responsible for as their owner. Caring for your dog and making sure they're getting the proper nutrition and an appropriate amount of belly rubs makes you feel needed and gives you a sense of purpose, both of which can help boost your mental health.



## **Simple Relationships Without Judgment**

A dog's love is unconditional. They provide you with a source of support that never wavers, and no matter what you say to them, they'll never judge you. This creates a safe environment where you can share what's on your mind. While your dog may not be able to respond with words, chances are they'll show they care in other ways — like tail wags and kisses.

Dogs also offer simple, conflict-free relationships and will never overstep boundaries (unlike humans), which can be especially beneficial for those with autism or PTSD.



## **Returning The Favor: How To Support Your Dog**

Your dog does so much for your mental health — so how can you do the same for your dog? Well, as you've probably figured out by now, our dogs can't talk to us. Instead, they communicate with body language. It's critical that we learn what their actions mean so we can understand what they need and can help reduce the anxiety, stress or fear they may be feeling.

Growling, barking, whining and pacing are all signs that your dog is stressed or uncomfortable. Other behaviors to look for include a tucked tail, tucked ears, raised hackles or excessive panting. Pay attention to the situation and the environment when your dog is exhibiting these signs, and try to determine what is making your dog feel this way.

When you know what's making your dog anxious, you can work to eliminate the trigger and help them feel more at ease. A trainer or your vet may also be able to help.

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## **8 Outdoor Activities To Enjoy With Your Dog**

It's no wonder we refer to dogs as our best friends. They're loyal companions that love to be a part of our routines and hobbies — including some of our favorite outdoor activities. These eight ideas will help strengthen the bond between you and your dog while you both enjoy the great outdoors.

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## **8 Tips To Keep Your Dog Active This Winter**

The days are getting shorter and the temperature is getting chillier for much of the country — ready or not, winter is on its way! For your dog, the shift of seasons can also mean a change in their activity level. As the cold weather approaches, get creative on planning out some fun winter excursions for your pup. Varying indoor and outdoor dog activities will help keep them engaged and out of mischief — and give you something new to enjoy as well!

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## **Caring For A Large Dog: 5 Things You Should Know**

Large dogs — boxers, greyhounds, poodles and Weimaraners, just to name a few — can come with large personalities. If you already have one, you probably know that these dogs don't quite understand just how big they are — for instance, many large breeds are convinced they're perfectly lap-sized. But if you're thinking about getting a large-breed dog for the first time, here are some unique considerations to keep in mind.

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## **9 Tips For Keeping Your Dog Healthy And Safe This Winter**

Salty streets and chilly weather can sometimes make winter activities difficult, but going outside can be a natural (and healthy) choice for your dog even as the seasons change. Check out these winter safety tips to keep your dog safe and comfortable during the chilliest days of the year.

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