



NEWS



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# Pets help Mental Health Sufferers

## Five reasons why pets help mental health sufferers

**November, 2017:** 1 in 4 people across the globe will at some point in their lives suffer from a mental or neurological disorder. Closer to home that figure is said to be around 45% of the total Australian population.

Whether suffering short or long term; the most common trigger for mental health issues is social; with sufferers often experiencing long periods of isolation, social rejection and stigma.

Those that own a pet can show improvements in the fight against mental health issues.

PetSafe® Brand Australia this month partnered with Dr Leigh Plummer, a Sydney based Clinical Psychologist, to further explore how pet ownership can help to improve the lifestyle of those suffering mental health issues.

‘Experiencing a mental illness, such as depression and anxiety, can be a daily battle’, comments Dr Plummer, ‘There is some research showing that owning and caring for a pet can help to support your mental health by improving social, emotional and physical wellbeing’.

PetSafe® Brand Australia and Dr Plummer have come up with the top five reasons why pet ownership can help to improve the lives of those suffering mental health conditions:

### 1. Increase physical activity

Being a pet owner can lead to more engaging and physical activity.

‘Whether you are being more active with a pet in the home, or getting out and about, having a pet can increase your level of exercise which in term has been shown to improve mood, decrease stress, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression and enhance physical fitness’, states Dr Plummer.

### 2. Increase social interaction and remove isolation anxiety

Pet ownership can help to boost social interactions and lower isolation issues.

‘Having a pet can absolutely increase your social interactions, be it through social media or face to face,’ says Dr Plummer. ‘Incidental conversations with strangers, about your pets, can take place on a walk, at the dog park, or even on a Facebook Community Pet Group’.

### 3. Provide companionship and reduce loneliness in the home

Pets provide 24/7 companionship, which helps to improve a person’s mood and reduce loneliness for those people that live alone.

‘The unconditional love that a pet can give you is often a relief to those that have difficulty interacting with others, or have low self-esteem’, says Dr Plummer

### 4. Boosts mood by providing routine and purpose

Owning a pet provides a person with daily routines, which in turn can boost their mood and help stop them feeling sad.

‘It’s not only what our pets do for us, it is also the act of caring for a pet that helps us to feel good’, says Dr Plummer, ‘giving and caring for others can feel productive and be rewarding. We may also feel useful and needed. Caring for a pet may also temporarily take the focus off ourselves, our worries and negative thoughts’.

### 5. Reduces fear and anxiety

Pets are great listeners and companions. They can provide those who suffer from fears, anxiety or depression, comfort and unconditional support and love, with no judgement.

While some pets might be better than others for people to own, Dr Plummer concludes that it is completely up to the individual and their needs.

‘I don’t think that there are any pets ‘better’ than others to own, it is all up to the individual and what suits your needs. What are you hoping to get out of caring for the pet and how will it fit into {or improve} your current lifestyle situation. I think every animal has its own individual personality, which makes caring for a pet all the more rewarding!’

*Comments provided by Dr Leigh Plummer, Clinical Psychologist based in Sydney, Australia.*

*\*Additional health advice:*

*While there may be many benefits to caring for a pet, it is important to seek professional advice and support for a mental illness. If you think that you may be experiencing any mental health concerns, talk with your doctor and consider engaging in treatment with a mental health professional.*

For more information about PetSafe® Brand products visit: <https://intl.petsafe.net/en-au>

