

Pets Help Their Humans De-Stress, Stay Fit: Survey

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TUESDAY, June 21, 2022 (HealthDay News) -- While chronic stress is a key risk factor for heart disease and stroke, most cat and dog owners say pets help them chill out and stay active.

A new American Heart Association (AHA) survey of 1,000 pet owners found 95% relying on their animal companions for stress relief. About 7 in 10 said they'd rather spend time with their pet than watch television, and nearly half (47%) said their pets helped them be more active.

"Many pet owners have found emotional support from their pets, and science backs up the [physical and mental health benefits](#) to pet companionship," said Dr. Glenn Levine, chief of cardiology at Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston and lead author of the AHA's scientific statement on pet ownership and heart disease risk.

"Chronic or constant stress is a key risk factor of heart disease and stroke, and studies show having a pet can improve mood, reduce stress and encourage healthy lifestyle habits like physical activity," Levine said in an association news release.

[Having a pet](#) may also improve other key health markers, such as blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar, the AHA said.

In the new survey, about 69% of pet owners said they take better care of their pets than themselves. About 70% of those who are employed said they would be happier and more productive if their pet could join them on the job, either on site or while working remotely. Owners under 40 were more likely to say they'd find value in working with their pets.

Respondents said their pets help them lower stress by snuggling (68%); making their owners laugh (67%), and relieving loneliness (61%).

To celebrate the [bond between pets and people](#), the heart association is bringing back their campaign [Best Friend Fridays](#).

Each Friday in June, July and August, people are encouraged to share photos on social media, showing how their pets help them reduce stress and practice healthy habits. Use the hashtag #BestFriendFridays.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has tips for [staying healthy around pets](#).

SOURCE: American Heart Association, news release, June 20, 2022

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