

Surprising ways owning a dog is good for your health

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(HealthDay)—Apart from the sheer fun of owning a pet, having a dog

enhances well-being and even personal growth in many ways.

Caring for a dog teaches kids responsibility and offers everyone in the family unconditional love. Many studies have found that the [social support](#) that [dogs](#)—and pets in general—provide boosts their owner's emotional health.

There are also many physical benefits to [dog ownership](#).

Walking Rover on a regular basis—once or twice every day—can help you reach your own daily [exercise](#) goals and, in turn, lower your heart disease risk. In fact, according to one study, owners who walk their dogs on a regular basis are over 50% more likely to meet minimum exercise guidelines. Surprisingly, though, many [people](#) simply don't walk their dogs enough for them or their pets to get in a good workout.

The advantages of having a dog extend beyond the home. Bringing your pooch to work can reduce your stress. And studies by researchers at Central Michigan University suggest the presence of a four-legged "co-worker" can boost cooperation, bonding and trust among employees. That's important because getting people to work effectively as a group is often a challenge, even when companies try to engage staffers with activities like team-bonding exercises.

For the study, researchers divided participants into groups with and without a dog, and gave each group creative tasks to complete. People in the groups with a dog showed more enthusiasm and energy, and felt more closeness and trust than those without a dog. It seems that having a dog in the room encourages kind and helpful behavior, which in turn can help boost how well you do. If your workplace morale needs a jolt, consider a canine addition to the staff.

More information: The American Heart Association has more on how

[having a dog](#) affects heart health.

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