

Why pets may help your mental health

JUL 28, 2026



Featured topic and speakers

A wagging tail, a gentle purr or simply having a loyal companion by your side can make a world of difference.

Join us as we explore the science behind the human-animal bond and how pets may help combat loneliness, reduce stress, increase feelings of connection and support a healthier, happier life. Discover why our furry friends may be one of the most powerful sources of comfort and community.

Want more content like this? [Find out if pets make us healthier.](#)

- Sign up for our free weekly newsletter, "[What Doctors Want Patients To Know](#)"™
- Subscribe to @americanmedicalassociation on [YouTube](#).
- [Sign up](#) for Morning Rounds and free daily newsletters from the AMA.
- Follow [#AMA](#) on [social media](#).

Speakers

- **Courtney Campbell, DVM, DACVS-SA**, veterinary surgeon

Transcript

Dr. Campbell: When pets are in your life, something extraordinary is happening. I see it every day in my surgery practice. People aren't just there for their animals, they're there for what the animal means to them. In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a report about loneliness, and they said that the effect of loneliness can be as unhelpful as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day. Pets can combat loneliness.

When you stroke a pet that you love, you get a rise in oxytocin, rise in dopamine, rise in prolactin, rise in beta endorphins, and a reduction in cortisol and other stress hormones.

Amanda: I mean, he's incredibly funny and demanding, so it forces me to have to be up and aware. I also just finished grad school in mental health, so I'm now a therapist and genuinely having him with me for that ride. I don't think I would have gotten through it without him.

Dr. Campbell: A lot of people feel like pets may be just filling the gap for lonely people. That's not necessarily the case. Pets bring people in. When you're at the dog park, you may speak to somebody, you may join a cat community or you may bond online over the connection you have and the love you have of pet ownership.

Amanda: I absolutely feel happier and healthier with Toulouse in my life.

Disclaimer: This video is for educational purposes only and is not medical advice. If you have questions about your health, please consult your doctor.