Tips on Pet Therapy Benefits for Seniors

If you have an aging loved one who suffers from isolation, an animal companion could work wonders for their emotional and physical well-being. Even occasional interactions with animals in a long-term care setting can enhance residents’ mood and behavior. Research shows that owning or interacting with a pet improves a senior’s overall quality of life by providing physical, emotional and social benefits, including:

**Physical Benefits**
- **Heart Health** – Lowers blood pressure, cholesterol and risk of cardiovascular disease
- **Improved Activity** – Increases the frequency of physical activity and exercise.
- **Healthy Behavior** – Helps develop a routine; encourages owners to eat regularly or complete chores.

**Social Benefits**
- **Increased Interaction** – Adds more opportunities to socialize with neighbors.
- **Encourages Conversation** – Sparks many discussions, especially with fellow pet owners.
- **Involvement in Activities** – Makes seniors less likely to dwell on the past and more likely to pursue current activities, leading to social bonds and interaction.

**Emotional Benefits**
- **Decreased Loneliness** – Provides companionship; gives isolated seniors a source for affection, conversation and activity.
- **Stress Relief** – Increases levels of serotonin, the “feel good” hormone that relieves stress; provides physical contact, which helps to calm anxiety.
- **Better Self-Esteem** – Reminds discouraged seniors that they are still capable of being loved and needed.
- **Sense of Purpose** – Provides a reason to get up in the morning; combats depression symptoms by eliminating feelings of worthlessness; enhances seniors’ mental health by making them feel loved and needed.

If you think your loved one could benefit from pet therapy through owning a pet, carefully consider your loved one’s physical health and abilities, financial situation and lifestyle before bringing an animal home. Ask yourself these questions to help you make the best decision:

- What kind of pet would best suite my loved one?
- Can they take care of a pet now and in the future?
- Is my loved one an experienced owner?
- Does the pet have a good temperament?
- Could I adopt an older animal in need?

Even if your loved one can’t own a pet due to their health or living situation, they can still benefit from pet therapy through pet visitations.
A Healthy Tradition of Care and Wellness

Located near Bryn Mawr Hospital, Bryn Mawr Terrace – part of Main Line Senior Care Alliance – has provided exceptional care and services to seniors and their families since 1966. It's a tradition we're proud to continue.

Today, Bryn Mawr Terrace serves as a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC), offering a range of services – including short-term rehabilitation, traditional nursing care, independent living, personal care, memory care, restorative care and respite care – all in a setting that is warm, welcoming and nurturing. For more information on Bryn Mawr Terrace and our variety of needs-based lifestyle services, please call us at (610) 525-8300 or contact us online.

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