

# ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY RESEARCH

## PHYSICAL BENEFITS



- Animal-Assisted Therapy helps release endorphins that manipulate perceptions of pain and stress
- Petting a dog can be relaxing, which is measured by a slower heart rate and a drop in blood pressure
- Playing with animals emits important hormones and neurotransmitters in the brain that promote proper body function and rebuild strength
- Owning a dog can help reduce the risk of asthma
- Dog owners are more likely to survive heart attacks than non-pet owners
- The presence of a dog can ease the effects of Alzheimer's disease
- People with dogs have been found to have lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels when compared to people who do not

## EMOTIONAL BENEFITS



- Animal-Assisted Therapy increases the body's level of oxytocin, which boost happiness, improves empathy and promotes a happier life
- Animal companionship can lower the level of cortisol, a hormone associated with stress, in the body and increase serotonin, a chemical associated with well-being
- Elderly people with dogs are better able than non-pet-owning elderly people to cope with daily activities
- A bond between a pet and human is one of unconditional love, which can teach and support feelings of self worth and value, especially in children
- For those who may feel like detaching from normal social activity, Animal-Assisted Therapy can relieve feelings of social isolation
- Especially in children, Animal-Assisted Therapy is a great way to release excess energy for better concentration
- Children who have dogs tend to be more self-reliant, sociable, and less selfish than children without pets
- Owning a dog gives isolated people a routine, a sense of purpose, and a sense of fulfillment that helps prevent depression and loneliness



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *Can you train my pet to be a therapy animal?*

We do not offer basic obedience training at Hand in Paw. Rather, our workshops train potential teams how to provide Animal-Assisted therapy in nursing homes, schools, and healthcare settings. We are happy to work with you on basic obedience commands to prepare for the final evaluation for Hand in Paw registration.

### *Does Hand in Paw provide or train service animals?*

No, Hand in Paw is a human service organization that provides training and evaluations for therapy animals and their handlers; we do not have any association with service animals. For a guide to different service animal organizations, please visit [handinpaw.org/service dogs](http://handinpaw.org/service dogs)

### *What are the pre-requisites to being a Hand in Paw Therapy Team?*

Your pet must be at least 18 months old. You must have owned your pet for at least six months. If volunteering with your dog, you and your dog must have completed a basic group obedience class.

### *Where should I take my dog for basic obedience?*

Anywhere you'd like! Hand in Paw does not endorse any particular trainers, we only ask that your dog be trained for general obedience: sit, down, stay, and come. They must also walk politely on a loose leash, even in a crowded environment with other animals.

### *What other animals can be therapy animals?*

Hand in Paw registers dogs and cats as well as other domesticated animals such as rabbits, miniature horses, llamas, birds, etc.

### *How old does someone have to be to volunteer?*

Hand in Paw volunteers are required to be at least 18 years old.

### *I have a wonderful pet that I would love to give or loan to your organization so that you can take him to places in the community. How does that work?*

Our Therapy Teams are just that – teams. Pets and their handlers work together to improve the health and well-being of the community. If your pet is part of our organization, you would be, too!