



Wellbeing Insights



PARENTING CORNER

Pets & Kids: Learning Life Skills Together!

Pets can be a wonderful addition to any family, providing companionship, love, and valuable life lessons for children. One of the most significant advantages of pet ownership is the opportunity for kids to learn responsibility. Assigning age-appropriate pet-care tasks helps children develop life skills while strengthening their bond with their furry, scaly, or feathery friends.

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Looking for ways to boost your self-care routine? [Click here](#) for your daily inspiration!



Pets & Kids: Learning Life Skills Together!

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Responsibilities by Age Group

Toddlers (Ages 2-4)

At this young age, children can participate in simple, supervised pet-care tasks. While they cannot take on full responsibility, they can begin to develop empathy and awareness of an animal's needs by:

- Helping to fill the pet's water bowl, with assistance
- Brushing the pet, with supervision
- Helping to put away pet toys
- Learning gentle pet interactions (e.g., soft petting, no tail pulling)

These small tasks help toddlers understand that pets have needs and encourage them to be gentle and kind to animals.

Preschoolers (Ages 4-6)

As children grow, they can take on a bit more responsibility with continued supervision, such as by:

- Assisting in feeding by measuring out food
- Independently refilling water bowls
- Cleaning up pet toys
- Helping with basic grooming, such as brushing a dog's fur or wiping a pet's paws

Preschoolers benefit by learning routines and the importance of consistency, as well as improving their motor skills through simple tasks.

Elementary-Aged Children (Ages 6-10)

At this stage, kids can handle more complex responsibilities with some guidance, such as:

- Feeding pets independently, according to a schedule
- Walking small dogs, with adult supervision
- Cleaning cages, litter boxes, or small pet enclosures, with assistance
- Helping with pet training by giving treats and commands
- Bathing pets, with adult supervision

These tasks help children develop discipline, patience, and a sense of accomplishment, as they see the positive impact of their efforts on their pets' wellbeing.

Preteens (Ages 10-12)

At this age, children can take on more substantial responsibilities with minimal supervision, including:

- Independently walking dogs (depending on the dog's size and behavior)
- Regularly cleaning litter boxes, cages, or tanks
- Assisting with vet visits and understanding basic pet health
- Training pets with consistency and patience
- Preparing pet food, including dietary adjustments if needed

This stage helps children enhance their problem-solving skills and deepen their sense of accountability.

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Teenagers (Ages 13+)

Teens are capable of full pet responsibility and can handle tasks independently, including:

- Walking and exercising pets daily
- Administering medications, if necessary
- Training pets in advanced behaviors
- Managing feeding schedules and monitoring pet health
- Researching and addressing pet care concerns

By this stage, teens develop strong leadership skills, empathy, and a deep appreciation for animals, which can benefit them throughout their lives.

The **Benefits** of Pet Responsibilities for Kids

Taking care of a pet teaches children essential life lessons that extend beyond the home. Here are some key benefits:

- **Responsibility and Routine:** Following a consistent schedule for feeding, walking, and grooming teaches children time management and accountability.
- **Empathy and Compassion:** Caring for an animal helps kids understand the needs of others and develop a nurturing attitude.

- **Improved Social Skills:** Interacting with pets can boost confidence, help with communication, and provide companionship, reducing feelings of loneliness.
- **Physical Activity:** Walking, playing, and training pets encourage physical movement and an active lifestyle.
- **Patience and Problem-Solving:** Training and caring for pets requires persistence, creativity, and problem-solving skills, teaching resilience.

Involving children in pet care at an age-appropriate level benefits the pet and contributes significantly to a child's growth and development. By gradually increasing their responsibilities, children learn valuable skills that will serve them well into adulthood while forming a deep and loving bond with their pets. Encouraging responsible pet ownership in kids nurtures a lifelong appreciation for animals and instills qualities that shape them into caring and capable individuals.

Protecting Your Pet: Comparing Pet Insurance to Veterinary Care Plans

Caring for a beloved pet can be expensive, making it essential to prepare for unexpected costs. Routine preventive care helps keep your pet healthy by catching conditions early, but accidents can still happen. To avoid financial strain, consider building an emergency fund or investing in pet insurance — or both — for added peace of mind. Combining these options ensures more comprehensive coverage, helping you provide the best care for your furry companion.

Here’s a table comparing traditional pet insurance to veterinary care plans:

<div><div>Traditional Pet Insurance</div><div></div><div><p>Coverage Scope</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ideal for providing financial protection against significant, unexpected veterinary expenses• Covers accidents, illnesses, surgeries, medications, and emergency care• Some policies offer add-ons for vaccinations, flea/tick treatments, and wellness exams<p>Cost Structure</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly or annual premiums vary based on pet’s age, breed, health, and coverage level• Out-of-pocket costs include deductibles, co-pays, and costs exceeding policy limits<p>Key Differences</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offers comprehensive coverage for unexpected and costly medical events• More flexibility in choosing veterinary providers• Customizable plans offering various levels of coverage and deductible options• Pay the veterinary bill upfront and submit a claim for reimbursement based on policy terms (deductible, co-pay, reimbursement percentage)• Monthly or annual premiums vary based on pet’s age, breed, health, and coverage level• May involve additional out-of-pocket costs for emergencies</div></div>	<div><div>Veterinary Care Plans</div><div></div><div><p>Coverage Scope</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Useful for managing and budgeting for routine preventive care• Focuses on vaccinations, regular check-ups, dental cleanings, and parasite prevention• Does not generally cover unexpected illnesses, accidents, surgeries, or emergency care<p>Cost Structure</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involves a monthly subscription fee spreading the cost of routine care over the year• Some plans offer discounts on additional services or products not covered under the plan<p>Key Differences</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focuses on preventive and routine care• Benefits are specific to a single practice• Covered services are predetermined by veterinary practice with limited customization• Covers services directly at the point of care• Helps manage and budget for routine care costs</div></div>
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Before purchasing any plan, use online comparison tools and read independent reviews to evaluate providers thoroughly. Carefully review the policy’s terms and conditions to understand the coverage details and any exclusions before committing. By thoughtfully weighing the benefits and considerations, you can choose a plan that best fits your needs — and provides the best care for your beloved pet.



The Joys & Benefits of Pet Ownership

Owning a pet is a big responsibility, but the work is well worth the reward. Pets make us happier, get us moving, and help melt away stress and loneliness. The key is finding one that matches your lifestyle.

Let's delve into how pet ownership can lead to a happier, healthier life.



Mental Health Benefits

One of the most significant advantages of owning a pet is the positive effect on mental health. Pets provide companionship, reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation. This is particularly important in today's fast-paced world, where social interactions can often be limited.

Pets offer a sense of purpose. Caring for an animal requires a routine and responsibilities, which can help keep mental health challenges at bay. Studies have shown that pet owners are less likely to suffer from depression compared to non-pet owners. Petting an animal releases endorphins, the body's natural "feel-good" chemicals, which help alleviate stress and anxiety.



Physical Health Benefits

Owning a pet encourages physical activity. Whether it's taking a dog for a walk or playing with a cat, pets get us moving. This can be particularly beneficial for individuals who otherwise might not engage in regular exercise. Regular physical activity helps in maintaining a healthy weight, improves cardiovascular health, and boosts overall energy levels.

Moreover, interaction with pets has been found to lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels. The simple act of stroking a pet can lead to reduced cortisol levels, the hormone associated with stress, and lower stress levels can lead to better heart health. A study by the American Heart Association even suggests that pet ownership, particularly of dogs, is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease.

The Joys & Benefits of Pet Ownership

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Social Benefits

Pets can also act as social catalysts, helping us connect with other people. Dog parks, pet training classes, and veterinary visits offer opportunities to meet and interact with fellow pet owners. These social interactions can lead to the formation of strong, supportive communities.

For children, growing up with pets can teach important life skills. It fosters a sense of responsibility, empathy, and compassion. Kids who interact with pets also tend to have higher levels of self-esteem and are less likely to develop allergies.



Therapeutic Benefits

Pets are increasingly being used in therapeutic settings. Therapy animals visit hospitals, nursing homes, and schools to provide comfort and relief. The presence of a pet can brighten the day of someone who is sick, elderly, or dealing with trauma.

Service animals, such as guide dogs for the visually impaired, demonstrate the profound impact pets can have on our lives. These animals are trained to assist with daily tasks, providing their owners with greater independence and a better quality of life.

The benefits of pet ownership extend far beyond simple companionship. From improving mental and physical health to enhancing social interactions and providing therapeutic support, pets play an indispensable role in enriching our lives. Whether you have a playful puppy, a serene cat, or any other beloved animal, the bond you share with your pet can lead to a happier, healthier existence. If you're considering welcoming a pet into your home, remember that the joy they bring is matched by the responsibilities of caring for them. With the right commitment, pet ownership can be one of the most rewarding experiences, offering a myriad of benefits that contribute to overall wellbeing.

The Wonderful Pets of Our Wellbeing Team



How has serving as a foster parent for a rescue impacted your family?

"My family and I have fostered well over 200 animals over the last 4 years and there are so many lessons learned. Through this experience, we've learned how to be compassionate, patient, and understanding. Each animal's unique story offers valuable lessons in empathy and responsibility, enriching our family's life in the best of ways! There are many ways to help rescue organizations, whether it be through donation, transportation, respite care, or foster care. You can learn more about fostering and/or find a local organization that is need of your help [here](#)."

- Kara Hepp



What is one way your pet has improved your daily routine?

"One way my cats have improved my daily routine is by teaching me to slow down and savor the stillness. Whether it's a quiet cuddle session or just watching their expert-level relaxation techniques, their presence fills me with a sense of calm and contentment, making me more present and grounded in the moment. Honestly, I think I need them more than they need me! Some might say I'm obsessed with my furry friends, but they just make me so incredibly happy. They don't have to do anything (and they usually aren't) to turn my everyday moments into pure joy."

- Lacey Bowen



"Arit's morning walks help me start the day with fresh air and movement, kickstarting my step count and setting the tone for a paw-sitive day!"

- Anisa Karczynski

The Wonderful Pets of Our Wellbeing Team

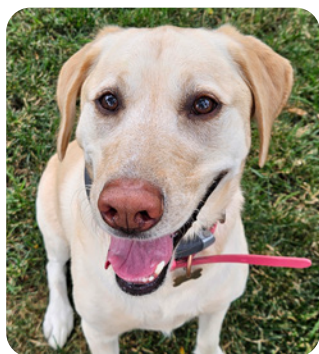
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What's a life lesson your pets remind you of?

"Whether it's playing or snuggling, Rose and Eve are so happy to be doing life together. They remind me that when you're with the ones you love it's easy to appreciate life's simple pleasures. They also shower me with endless love and kindness, and they greet me with boundless excitement every single day. Just as much as I mean the world to them, they mean the world to me!"

- Angie Kennedy



What has been an unexpected reward of pet ownership for you?

"My children love animals, especially dogs, because of Newsie & Nala. Their positive experience with our dogs has shown them how special animals are and how we need to care for and protect them. Watching them develop skills for taking care of another living being has been so cool to watch. Their capacity for compassion and empathy has grown tremendously. It's quite beautiful."

- Danielle Shaw



"Being a household with many pet allergies, we're limited to what kind of pets we can have. When our family moved to a farm, we became chicken parents. I was initially resistant to it, but these ladies bring so much joy to our days. My sons are learning so much about caring for another living thing, and it's something fun that gets them outside. We've decided the chickens' clucks sound like they're saying 'hello' when we greet them, and they come running when we walk outside, hoping for a treat and some pets. Chickens are more fun than I expected, and the delicious eggs are just an added bonus to having these beautiful girls hanging around."

- Stephanie Faris

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