

Can your dog keep you healthy?



For those of you who love dogs, you already know the answer to this question...YES! 'Man's best friend' does a world of good for us on an emotional level and a physical level as well. In our family we have a 10 pound, 11 year old, Rat Terrier named Rufus. I like to say she is a small dog, with a BIG name! Rufus comes to work at LVI every day and tags along with us anywhere she is allowed. She is more than a pet...she is a family member. There is nothing I wouldn't do for this lovely, little creature.

"Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole."

Roger A. Caras

For those of you who don't have a dog, I totally understand if you don't get this. I once was very similar. I used to make fun of people who would leave early from a party because their dog had been 'alone all day.' I couldn't understand why someone took time off from work when their dog had passed. Since having Rufus, I full on have changed my attitude and views on pets. Pets become cherished loved ones. They become a part of our social group and a member of our families. You care for that pet as if it were one of your own children. They in turn show you the most beautiful kind of unconditional love.

"A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself."

Josh Billings

So how does a dog keep us healthier? Studies show that dog owners have longer average lifespans. *Why?*

Dogs are heart healthy: Studies show that dog owners have better triglyceride levels, blood pressure levels, and cholesterol levels. If a person has had a heart attack, studies show those that have pets have longer survival rates than those who do not.

Petting or playing with a dog can increase oxytocin (a stress reducing hormone) and it can decrease cortisol (a stress producing hormone). Petting a dog for ten minutes or more can even reduce your blood pressure!

Dogs are personal trainers: Who needs to go to a cardio class when you have a dog? Get out there and go for a power walk, or a jog. Dogs are great motivators for fitness because they are always ready and willing to be on the go with you. Whether it's a game of fetch in the yard, or stand up paddle boarding at the beach you have a constant companion. Dogs help us get our bodies moving!

"A dog is one of the remaining reasons why some people can be persuaded to go for a walk."

O. A.

Dogs help fight depression: Who can possibly be unhappy when a dog is wagging its tail and licking your face? Imagine what the world would be like if we all greeted each other with such enthusiasm as our dogs greet us! This unconditional love helps to reduce our stress and anxiety. We increase levels of the brain chemical dopamine and serotonin. Dogs give our lives value by giving us higher self-esteem and combatting loneliness. A furry friend under foot changes our mood for the better.

"My little dog - a heartbeat at my feet."

Edith Wharton

So for those of you who have considered getting a dog...I'd encourage you to go for it! Whether it's a specific breed you desire, or you plan on rescuing a dog, this is a decision you will never regret. For the young and the old, dogs positively affect our health. We all want to feel better and live longer...perhaps the answer is just a leash away!