**Improving Lives with Pet Therapy**

Do you sometimes feel lonely? Do you sometimes feel stressed? Do you sometimes feel sick? If you answered “Yes” to these questions, you might not need a doctor. Instead, you might just need a pet. Pets, like dogs, cats, or even birds, can make you feel better. In fact, many people feel healthy when they have a pet to take care of.

People who have pets often feel calmer and less lonely than people who don’t have pets. For example, Juliet Locke has a six-year-old cat named Snowball. “Snowball knows when I’m having a bad day. When I’m sitting in a chair, she’ll jump on my lap and I’ll pet her. She really helps me feel relaxed,” says Juliet.

Pets can help you have a healthy mind, and they can give you a healthy body, too.

Dr. R. K. Anderson is a veterinarian. He started CENSHARE (Centre to Study Human/Animal Relationships and Environments), an organization that researches how pets affect people. These researchers believe that people with pets are healthier than people without pets. For instance, pet owners often have low rates of heart disease. Many pet owners don’t have high blood pressure, either.

While most people think of dogs and cats as pets, having birds and fish can also be effective. In fact, people own many different kinds of pets. Researchers studied the effects of these kinds of animals on their owners’ health. The researchers found that some people actually lower their blood pressure by watching fish in a tank, or by listening to the sounds of birds. These activities are very calming.

Richard Waxman believes that all people should have the chance to spend time with a pet. He started a group called “Paws and Hearts.” It is a volunteer organization that brings animals to nursing homes, hospitals and senior centres. Mr. Waxman says that each patient can become friends with a loving dog. As a result, the patients feel calmer, and also have less physical pain. This is called “pet therapy,” and people love the animals’ visits. For example, Clara Wu lives at a nursing home in Palm Desert, California. “I just love when the volunteers bring the dogs to visit us,” Mrs. Wu says. “It brings back wonderful memories of other dogs I’ve owned.” Mr. Waxman agrees. “Pet therapy allows for a great connection between the past and the present that can be very powerful.”

Paws and Hearts isn’t only for adults. The organization also has a reading program for children called “Paws to Read.” Volunteers bring dogs to schools and libraries. There, children sit with the dogs and read stories to them. This activity often improves the children’s reading skills as well as their self-confidence. Then when they return to their classrooms, they feel surer of themselves and can read aloud more easily and clearly. It’s easy to see that pet therapy is useful for people of all ages.

**TASK 1. Check whether the following statements are True or False.**

1. People who have pets often feel less healthy than people who don’ have pets.
2. Snowball is a six-year-old dog.
3. People sometimes feel calm by watching fish in a tank or by listening to the sounds of birds.
4. Patients at a nursing home in Palm Desert, California, are happy when the pets come to visit them.
5. Volunteers from “Paws to Read” bring dogs to nursing homes and hospitals.
6. The children’s reading skills often improve by reading stories to the dogs.

**TASK 2. Read each question carefully. Choose the correct variant.**

1. Do you sometimes feel lonely? Do you sometimes feel stressed? Do you sometimes feel sick? If you answered “Yes” to these questions, you might not need a doctor. **Instead,** you might just need a pet. **Pets**, like dogs, cats, or even birds, can help you feel better. **In fact**, many people feel healthy when they have a pet to take care of.

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| * Instead means   1. in place of  2. in addition to  3. together with   * A pet is   1. an animal you keep in your home  2. a dog or a cat  3. a bird | * Which animals can make you feel better?   1. Only dogs or cats  2. Only birds  3. Dogs, cats, birds, and other animals   * What kind of information follows in fact?   1. New, different information from the idea in the previous sentence  2. More details about the idea in the previous sentence  3. An example of the idea in the previous sentence |

1. “Snowball knows when I’m having **a bad day**. When I’m sitting in a chair, she’ll jump on my **lap** and I’ll pet her. She really helps me feel relaxed,” says Juliet.

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| * A bad day means   1. an unhappy or stressful day  2. a day with bad weather  3. an unlucky day | * Someone’s lap is   1. the chair a person is sitting on  2. the top of your legs when you are sitting down  3. a small table |

Researchers believe that people with pets are healthier than people without pets. **For instance,** pet owners often have low rates of heart disease. Many **pet owners** don’t have high blood pressure, either. While most people think of dogs and cats as pets, birds and fish can also be effective. In fact, people **own** many different kinds of pets.

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| * What does **for instance** mean?   1. However  2. For example  3. Of course   * A **pet owner** is someone who   1. has a pet at home  2. likes animals  3. has high blood pressure | * Which animals can be helpful in making people healthier?   1. Dogs  2. Cats  3. Birds  4. Fish  5. All of the above |

**TASK 3. Read the dictionary entry for each word and think about the context of the sentence. Write the number of the appropriate definition on the line next to the word. Then choose the sentence with the correct answer.**

* **effective adj. 1.** having the result that one wants, productive:

*The medication is quite effective; it relieves pain quickly.*

2. in use, current: *The law was effective on January.*

*adv.* **effectively**; -*n.* **effectiveness**.

Many pet owners don’t have high blood pressure, either. While most people think of dogs and cats as pets, having birds and fish can also be **effective.**

**a. effective \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**b.** 1. Having pets is a law.

2. Having pets makes no difference to people’s health.

3. Having pets can help people be healthier.

* **relax v.** 1. to stop work and enjoy oneself: *She relaxes by riding her bicycle.*

2. to stop being nervous, tense, angry, etc.: *Why don’t you stop being angry and relax for a while!*

3. to become or make weaker, looser, less strict: *Our dress code about what we should wear to work is relaxed in the summer.*

“Snowball knows when I’m having a bad day. When I’m sitting in a chair, she’ll jump on my lap and I’ll pet her. She really helps me feel relaxed,” says Juliet.

a. relax \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

b. 1. A pet makes people leave work.

2. A pet makes people feel less worried.

3. A pet makes people feel weak.

* **therapy n.** 1. treatment of mental and physical illnesses and disorders,usu. without surgery, such as speech therapy, physical therapy, etc.: *She began therapy to overcome her fear of crowds.*

Mr. Waxman says that each patient can become friends with a loving dog. As a result, the patients feel calmer, and also have less physical pain. This is called “pet therapy,” and people love the animals’ visits.

a. therapy \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

b. 1. Patients and their pets have surgery so they feel better.

2. Patients feel better after discussing their problems with a pet.

3. Patients begin to feel better after becoming friends with a pet.

**TASK 4. Word Forms**

**In English, some nouns become adjectives by adding the suffix *-ful*, for example, *hope (n.) - hopeful (adj.).* Complete each sentence with the correct form of the word on the left.**

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| **stress** *(n.)*  **stressful** *(adj.)* | Being a police officer is a very \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ job. In fact, police officers experience so much \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that they often leave their jobs before they retire. |

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| **pain** *(n.)*  **painful** *(adj.)* | Having a toothache can be extremely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If you have severe \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in one of your teeth, you should visit a dentist as soon as possible. |

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| **help** *(n.)*  **helpful** *(adj.)* | Thank you for your offer, but I don’t need any \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with my math homework. The explanations in my textbook are very clear and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to me. |

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| **power** *(n.)*  **powerful** *(adj.)* | In the past, kings and queens were very \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ people. Today, however, kings and queens in most countries have very little \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They no longer have complete control of their countries. |

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| **use** *(n.)*  **useful** *(adj.)* | In the 21st century, people have less and less \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for CDs. MP3 players seem to be much more \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to them. |