

Animal Assisted Therapy & What Science Says For Mental Health:

- The simple act of petting animals releases an automatic relaxation response.
 - Humans interacting with animals have found that petting the animal promoted the release of serotonin, prolactin and oxytocin- all hormones that can play a part in elevating moods.
- Lowers anxiety and helps people relax.
- Provides comfort.
- Reduces loneliness.
- Increases mental stimulation.
 - Assist in recall of memories and help sequence temporal events in patients with head injuries or chronic diseases such as Alzheimer's disease.
- Can provide an escape or happy distraction.
- Can act as catalysts in the therapy process.
 - May help break the ice.
 - May reduce the initial resistance that might accompany therapy.

For Physical Health:

- Lowers blood pressure and improves cardiovascular health.
- Reduces the amount of medications some people need.
- Breathing slows in those who are anxious.
- Releases many hormones such as Phenylethylamine which has the same effect as chocolate.
- Diminishes overall physical pain.
- Relax more during exercise.
 - Participants were motivated, enjoyed the therapy sessions more, and felt the atmosphere of the session was less stressful during Animal-Assisted therapy.
- For Children with Autism
 - Many children with autism feel a deep bond with animals and feel that they are able to relate better than humans.
 - Children with autism were engaged in significantly greater use of language as well as social interaction in their therapy sessions that incorporated animals compared to standard therapy sessions without them.

Reference: <https://www.uclahealth.org/pac/animal-assisted-therapy>