

Furry Helpers

Did you know that dogs can help people in the hospital? Often people in the hospital feel lonely, bored, and sad. Imagine how their feelings might change if they had sweet little dogs to come and sit in their laps every day!

Therapy dogs undergo **conditioning** to help people deal with difficult times in their lives. These dogs can make people feel less lonely. In fact, they can make people feel happy and more active. Sometimes the dogs can even help sick people get better faster. These dogs help doctors and nurses **shoulder** the burden of helping sick people.

Dogs are not the only ones who can do animal therapy. Birds, cats, elephants, lizards, pigs, horses, and even dolphins can help people. For example, a horse can help a person who has an injury. First the person is placed on a horse. Then someone leads the horse slowly around. The injured person begins to remember how to balance. They also develop a friendship with the horse!

It is very important that any animal used for pet therapy is friendly. Suppose a patient **beckoned** to a therapy dog to come closer and play, and the dog **bared** its teeth and growled. Then the patient might become upset and afraid. This is why only certain animals make good therapy pets. These animals are trained to be gentle. Good therapy animals also have no trouble meeting new people.

Animals can be good at helping people with special needs. But what about healthy people who own pets? Can animals still make them healthier and happier? The answer is yes. Dogs need exercise. Dog owners can run in the park with their dog and **throw** a ball for the dog to catch. Getting exercise with a furry pal is sure to keep anyone's spirits up!

Scientists have **surveyed** and studied many pet owners over the years. They have found that pet owners are much healthier than non-pet owners. This is especially true of people who live alone, including the elderly. In fact, owning a pet is one of the best ways of **stalling** the effects of aging.

If you and your parents want to find a pet, you can go to your local animal shelter and spend some time **thumbing** through pictures of animals that need a home. People need animals, and there are many animals in shelters that need people, too.

COMPREHENSION How can a pet help someone deal with a challenging experience? Which words help you understand what animals and people do?



Walking the Humans

Sammy pulled on the leash, **prodding** his human to walk faster. He hoped to find Daisy, the cute little Sheltie who almost always walked her human at this time of day. Sammy **shifted** to the other side of the path, hoping to catch a glimpse of her through the trees, but he couldn't see her anywhere. Then he heard her pretty, laughing voice.

"Hi'ya Sammy! Did you miss me?" called Daisy from behind him.

Sammy took a deep breath and **inflated** his chest to make himself look bigger.

"Daisy! Have you been following me?" he asked.

"Yes, sorry I'm late. It took me a while to get my human out of bed this morning. I think she's feeling a little sick."

"You're right," answered Sammy, looking up at Daisy's human. "She looks pale."

"Yes, but they all look pale when it gets cold. I guess that's the price they pay for not having fur," joked Daisy.

Just then, a voice called to them from the other side of the park. "Hey, guys!" They turned to see a huge dog bounding toward them. A human was running after the dog. He was trying to catch the big dog's leash, which was **swinging** from the dog's neck, to and fro.

"Hey, guys. Look! I'm running my human," said the big dog.

"Oh no! It's PeeWee!" said Sammy, **bracing** himself for a big collision.

"Hey, hey, hey! Here I come!" The big dog jumped up and landed on Sammy. PeeWee was just trying to be friendly, but he was **squashing** Sammy.

"Hey, this is kind of comfortable," said PeeWee. "I could get used to this."

Daisy barked until Sammy's human noticed what was happening. He took PeeWee by the collar and pulled him off Sammy.

PeeWee acted as if nothing had happened. "Hey, look," he said. "My human is here. Hey, nice run, human. You're a good human."

The human looked angry. He **yanked** the leash and stomped away with PeeWee. Sammy and Daisy breathed sighs of relief. PeeWee could get a little too excited sometimes.

The dogs said goodbye to each other and started to take their humans home. They could not wait to see each other again tomorrow.

COMPREHENSION What is surprising or unusual about this story? What words in the story tell about the characters' actions?

