



WASHINGTON HEALTH SYSTEM
Center for Mental Health and Wellbeing

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



Benefits of Pet and Pet Therapy

The benefits of having therapy dogs in the classroom, assisted living facilities, etc. include: Physical benefits. Interaction with therapy dogs has been shown to reduce blood pressure, provide physical stimulation and assist with pain management. Social benefits. A visiting therapy dog promotes greater self-esteem and focused interaction with other students, teachers, residents and staff.

- 1. Mental Stimulation-** Pets are a wonderful source of interaction, entertainment and enjoyment.
- 2. Shifting of focus-** People concentrate too much on themselves because of chronic pain, depression or poor self-esteem. Animals can provide a new focus of conversation.
- 3. Acceptance-** Animals accept people unconditionally and this can be heartwarming and soothing.
- 4. Increased Self Esteem-** Animals can add purpose and inspiration to their lives.
- 5. Entertainment-** Pets inspire humor and good times.
- 6. Rapport-** Pets are emotionally safe and non-threatening. They don't discriminate or impose demands. They live for the moment and interacting with them often helps people concentrate on the present and stop dwelling on the past or worrying about the future.
- 7. Development of Empathy-** Animals are easier to 'read' than humans and interaction with pets can help develop an individual's sense of empathy as they respond to the animal's needs.
- 8. Reminiscing-** Caring for pets encourages adherence to a daily schedule and will often evoke wonderful memories of the past.
- 9. Physical Activity-** Caring for a pets encourages physical activity: feeding, playing, walking etc.
- 10. Socialization-** Most people love animals and will enjoy sharing time together in the company of animals, talking and laughing together.

For more information visit: www.healthline.com and www.goldencare.com

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What is Pet Therapy?

Pet therapy is a guided interaction between a person and a trained animal. It also involves the animal's handler. The purpose of pet therapy is to help someone recover from or cope with a health problem or mental disorder.

Dogs and cats are most commonly used in pet therapy. However, fish, guinea pigs, horses, and other animals that meet screening criteria can also be used. The type of animal chosen depends on the therapeutic goals of a person's treatment plan. Pet therapy is also referred to as animal-assisted therapy (AAT).



How is CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy) used to treat back pain?

According to St. Luke's Hospital, If you consult a psychotherapist for cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), your treatment may include stress management, behavioral adaptation, education, and relaxation techniques. CBT can lessen the intensity of back pain, change perceptions about levels of pain and disability, and even lift depression. The NIH considers CBT useful for relieving low back pain, citing studies that show CBT to be superior to routine care and placebo.

How Does CBT Work?

It is believed that changing your thoughts about pain can change how your body responds to pain.

You may not be able to stop physical pain from happening. But, with practice, you can control how your mind manages the pain. An example is changing a negative thought, such as "I cannot do anything anymore," to a more positive thought, such as "I dealt with this before and I can do it again."

A therapist using CBT will help you learn to:

- Identify negative thoughts
- Stop negative thoughts
- Practice using positive thoughts
- Develop healthy thinking

Healthy thinking involves positive thoughts and calming your mind and body by using techniques such as yoga, massage, or imagery. Healthy thinking makes you feel better, and feeling better reduces pain.

CBT can also teach you to become more active. This is important because regular, low-impact exercise, such as walking and swimming, can help reduce back pain over the long run.

For CBT to help reduce pain, your treatment goals need to be realistic and your treatment should be done in steps. For example, your goals may be to see friends more and start exercising. It is realistic to see one or two friends at first and take short walks, maybe just down the block. It is not realistic to reconnect with all of your friends all at once and walk 3 miles (5 kilometers) at once on your first outing. Exercise can help you to deal with chronic pain issues.

Getting Started

Ask your health care provider for the names of a few therapists and see which ones are covered by your insurance. Contact 2 to 3 of the therapists and interview them on the phone. Ask them about their experience with using CBT to manage chronic back pain.

For more information visit: www.va.gov and www.apa.org

What is CBT?

CBT is a form of psychological therapy. It most often involves 10 to 20 meetings with a therapist. Focusing on your thoughts makes up the cognitive part of CBT. Focusing on your actions are the behavioral part. First, your therapist helps you recognize the negative feelings and thoughts that occur when you have back pain. Then your therapist teaches you how to change those into helpful thoughts and healthy actions. Changing your thoughts from negative to positive can help you manage your pain.



Dear Valued Referral Sources,

Thank you for taking the time to refer to our facility. We look forward to collaborating and expanding our client's wellbeing together as a team.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Campbell, MSW, LSW

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Greene County Crisis Line: (888) 480-7283
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