CENTRE FOR AUTISM
MIDDLETOWN

Benefits of pets for autistic children and young people

Research shows that pet ownership can:

- Reduce stress and anxiety and prevent or reduce the frequency of extreme stress responses.
- Teach about empathy and how to look after and care for something.
- Improve social skills, confidence and language development as the child plays and communicates with their pet.
- Give the child a sense of pride and responsibility.
- Encourage independence and help the child overcome fears as they may feel more comfortable going to new places with their animal companion alongside them.
- Provide stability, routine and a sense of security.

DON'T FORGET

It is important to make sure any pet introduced to the household is a good fit for the child's needs and sensitivities as, like all children, all animals are unique and have their own temperaments.

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Ward, A. et al (2017) "Social-emotional Adjustment and Pet Ownership Among Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder", Journal of Communication Disorders, 65, pp. 35–42.

Wright, H. et al (2015) "Pet Dogs Improve Family Functioning and Reduce Anxiety in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder", Anthrozoös, 28(4), pp. 611-624.

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