

Pets offer therapeutic aid for people with borderline personality disorder

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People living with borderline personality disorder may enjoy a better quality of life by owning a pet, new research led by Curtin University has found.

The research, published in the journal *Advances in Mental Health*, suggests pet ownership can positively influence social skills, increase community engagement, and promote participation in meaningful activities for people living with the disorder.

Lead author Dr. Julie Netto, from the School of Occupational Therapy, Social Work and Speech Pathology at Curtin University, said the research aimed to explore the impact of pet ownership on their emotions, interactions and activities.

"Pet ownership is commonly associated with many psychological benefits, including companionship, social support, improved self-esteem and attachment development," Dr. Netto said.

"Our research aimed to determine whether pet ownership could help adults living with [borderline personality disorder](#), who may often have emotional and social challenges.

"We found that pet ownership can provide meaning and purpose, influence positive emotional attachments, influence positive social connections, promote participation and engagement in meaningful activities, and have therapeutic value for people with borderline personality disorder."

Dr. Netto explained that the findings of the study further supported the pivotal role of pets for therapeutic treatments.

"Previous research suggests that [pet ownership](#) can be used to positively impact children, people with chronic illnesses and the elderly. Our findings show that animal companionship may also help support the personal recovery journeys for people specifically with borderline personality disorder,"

Dr. Netto said.

"Further research is needed to explore the connection between the two factors, but our findings may be of interest to mental health clinicians who may utilise the therapeutic value of pets to improve the lives of people living with the disorder."

The study examined the outcomes of eight individuals living with borderline [personality disorder](#) who were accompanied by either a dog, cat, rat or bird.

More information: Maya Hayden-Evans et al. 'Pets provide meaning and purpose': a qualitative study of pet ownership from the perspectives of people diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, *Advances in Mental Health* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/18387357.2018.1485508](https://doi.org/10.1080/18387357.2018.1485508)

Provided by Curtin University

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