

Proof of Power

Scientific studies may prove what cat lovers have known all along: Petting your cat is good for you.

Brad Kollus

Simple Therapy There are many studies regarding how pets in animal-assisted therapy (AAT) programs help people with disabilities, the elderly and other special groups. Odendaal believes a basic truth is often being overlooked: Much is said in the media about animal-assisted therapy, but I have noted in veterinary practice - I have been in companion animal practice for 14 years - that the animals in our homes do not receive the credit for enhancing our well-being that they deserve, Odendaal says.

Petting is such a simple act that has such a powerful effect. No wonder it is so popular. Interactions between people are complicated, but interactions with animals seem less so, says Penny Bernstein, associate professor of biological sciences at Kent State University, Stark, Ohio, campus. To have a cat that you can pet all the time and then wants you to do it some more when you stop is a very rewarding thing.