

College Students Find Comfort in Pets During Hard Times

Study: University life easier to cope with for those who own a cat or dog.

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A new study found that nearly a quarter of college students surveyed said living with a cat or dog helped them through difficult times. Keeping a cat or a dog might be the ticket to good grades in college, a new study by researchers at Ohio State University suggests.

In a survey of students at a large university and other adults in the area, respondents credited their beloved pet for keeping feelings of loneliness and depression at bay. Nearly a quarter of college students surveyed said they believed living with a cat, dog, or a combination of the two helped them get through difficult times.

The recent findings demonstrate how four-legged friends provide health benefits for people of all ages, according to Sara Staats, lead author of the study and professor emeritus of psychology at Ohio State's Newark Campus. "We found that a lot of young adults are choosing to have an animal companion for important reasons," she said, adding that many think that without their pet, they would feel lonely.

The study was based on survey responses from nearly 350 college students at a Midwestern commuter campus and area community members. Only those people who currently or previously owned a cat, a dog, or both were included in the present study. People who were 18 to 87 years of age were surveyed to study the differences between other adults and the students.

The results were recently published in the journal *Society and Animals*.