

Pets ‘just as good as a marriage’

theday.co.uk/pets-just-as-good-as-a-marriage-4 13 April 2025



Oleg Gapeenko/Vecteezy

Kitten love: The UK's 68 million people own approximately 11 million cats and 13 million dogs.

Is a cat better than a partner? New research shows just how much furry friends can boost people's moods.

What's happening?

Researchers looked at **data** from 2,500 British households. They found that living with a pet improved life **satisfaction** by the same amount as earning an extra £70,000 a year.

This is the same increase as getting married. Dr Adelina Gschwandtner says "people do not actually realise how important their pets are".

Find out more

Journalist Katie Glass thinks living with a dog is much better than living with a man. Her dog Bear is "never snappy, in a bad mood or stressed about work".

Surveys have shown that stroking animals can reduce people's levels of stress **hormones**. They are less likely to suffer from **depression**.

Some worry about the **ethics** of owning pets. "Lying on a bed and having treats fed to you is **profoundly frustrating** and boring," says one expert.

But many argue the loving relationship that exists between pets and their owners can make both happy.

Is a cat better than a partner?

Some say

Yes! Pets love people no matter whether they are rich or poor, young or old, messy or clean. No wonder they bring humans so much happiness.

Find out more

A dog or cat cannot drive someone to the airport, help with their bills and housework, or understand their deepest hopes and dreams. The best pet is still just an animal.

Six steps to discovery

Some people say

"There are two means of refuge from the miseries of life: music and cats."

Albert Schweitzer (1875 – 1965), French-German Nobel Prize winner

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Do you or your family have any pets at home?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Do most people prefer cats to dogs?

What do you think?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - Imagine that your school is going to acquire a therapy pet. Write a letter to your teacher arguing what pet would be best.

5. Express

What do others believe? - Should the leaders of your country give people pets for free to boost happiness? Discuss as a class.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Design a statue to celebrate the pets of your country. Draw a picture of your design.

Glossary

Data - Pieces of information.

Satisfaction - Pleasure or happiness.

Hormones - Chemicals created inside living creatures. They are used to send messages from one part of the body to another.

Depression - Low mood that affects someone's daily life, and can last for weeks or months.

Ethics - The moral rules that people follow in order to have a good life and benefit society.

Profoundly - Deeply.

Frustrating - Upset or annoying.