

A man's best friend

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"A dog is a man's best friend," is a phrase that has been around for centuries. The first known record of this phrase was in 1789 by Frederick the Great of Prussia. He was very fond of his Italian greyhounds and loved them so much he wanted to be buried next to them. Throughout history are stories of companionship between human and dog.

In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus' beloved dog named Argos was the only one to recognize him upon his return. Charles Burden sued a man who killed his dog, because he said that he had killed his best friend in the world. There are many other stories of dogs in history and their companionship with humans. Research has been done on the benefits of owning a dog. Health can be affected positively by owning a furry friend. A dog is the best pet to own, and there is a reason they are called, "a man's best friend."

"An abundance of health benefits come from owning a dog. Studies have shown that owning a canine companion can contribute to your heart health. Not only do dogs fill your heart, they can make it stronger. According to *Huffington Post*, dogs are linked to lower blood pressure and reduced cholesterol. Triglyceride levels also decrease, which contribute to overall cardiovascular health and fewer heart attacks; and if the owner does have a heart attack, they have better survival rates. Spending just a few minutes with your dog can lower anxiety and blood pressure.

Dogs also increase levels of serotonin and dopamine, two chemicals related in the brain that play big roles in calm and well being. These benefits increase the longevity of the owner's life. Dogs can help your health without you even knowing it. When you come home from a long day at work or

school, what better way to be welcomed than from a friend who shows they are more than excited to see you? Dogs are this friend. Dogs will love you no matter who you are or what you look like.

“ A dog is the only thing on Earth that loves you more than he loves himself,” -Josh Billings. Dogs love you unconditionally. They accept your tears without judgement and look past flaws. They are always there for you, and have undying loyalty. Psychology Today states that eight of the thirteen essential traits of a good friend are: they are trustworthy, they are generally very dependable, they are loyal to the people they care about, they are able to be non-judgmental, they are a good listener, they are supportive of others in their good times, they are supportive of others in their bad times, and they are fun to be around. Dogs exhibit these traits.

You are your dog's whole life, and they will love you with everything they have. You always know that even after a terrible day, there will be a happy face and wagging tail waiting for you at home. Dogs can also positively affect your lives. In the UK, a team of scientists at the Universities of Liverpool and Bristol found that UK residents with dogs were more likely to encounter other dogs owners and be more social. Dogs make us laugh and provide daily entertainment. Dogs might even protect us from poor health.

Children born into households with a dog have a lower risk of developing asthma and allergies, the reason being dog dust. A study by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences last year showed that mice exposed to dust from households where dogs were permitted inside and outside developed an altered community of microbes in their gut that protect against

allergens. It was hypothesized that these microbes could be what is protecting young children from developing allergies in households with dogs. This is called dog dust. Dogs also increase health because they make owners more active. Researchers at Michigan State University reported in 2011 that 60% of dog owners who took their pets for regular walks met federal criteria for regular moderate or vigorous exercise.

Dogs make us feel special and needed. They genuinely make us feel better and happier. Just the simple act of making eye contact with your canine friend can release the feel-good chemical called oxytocin. "I will learn how to be responsible," is the argument most children use when asking their parents for a dog. Despite how cliché it may be, it is true.

When owning a dog, you learn to care for another life and they give you a purpose. They make you feel important and wanted. Any dog owner will tell you that the bond between a human and dog is one that can never be replaced. Not only are dogs your best friend, they are your family. They bring a friendship that provides mental and physical health.

Dogs and humans special relationship goes back many tens of thousands of years, and hasn't faltered since. There is no doubt that humans and our furry animal friends belong together. Dogs will always be there for us. Everyone deserves a dog in their life. It is truly a blessing to have one to be your best friend