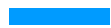


## **One Senior Place: Adopting a pet is a good idea for lonely seniors for many reasons**



Lisa Conway | Special to FLORIDA TODAY

Q: My mother is lonely and wants a pet. Is getting a pet a good idea for seniors?

A: What a great (and important) question!

As we age, adults can experience loneliness, isolation, anxiety and a decline in health — especially after the loss of loved ones and close friends.

We now know that owning a pet can alleviate some of these issues and provide many different benefits.

***Previous One Senior Place columns:***

**Parkinson's disease:** It may not have a cure, but there are treatments that help

**Hey ladies! Get your screenings:** There are multiple screenings women should get. Here are nine to consider

**Memories fading:** Are you at risk for developing Alzheimer's? Here's what we know

**By the numbers**

Research by the National institutes of Health shows that pets can provide important forms of emotional and social support for older adults, reducing stress, loneliness and improving overall quality of life.

According to AmericanHumane.org, pet ownership is one of the most common ways that older adults interact with animals; 50% of adults over age 50 own at least one pet.

The cost of ownership? The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals estimates the (variable) average cost for a dog or cat at between \$700 and \$1,100 per year.

**Healthful companions**

Owning a pet provides a sense of companionship, which can reduce feelings of loneliness and depression.

It also can give seniors a sense of purpose and responsibility and a reason to get up and be active each day — which ultimately can help improve overall physical health.

Dogs, in particular, require frequent daily walks, which can encourage seniors to slip on their sneakers and interact with the world.

This activity can help seniors maintain a healthy weight, improve cardiovascular health and even reduce the risk of chronic disease such as diabetes and heart disease.

Pets can even improve our brains, supporting cognitive health by helping seniors stay engaged and focused.

### **Emotional support**

Pet ownership comes with a generous helping of emotional benefits for seniors.

Even the simple act of petting an animal can release endorphins and help to improve mood.

Pets can convey a sense of comfort and security, reducing anxiety and feelings of vulnerability.

### **What about...?**

Seniors often have two big questions: *Will my pet outlive me? Will a young pet be too active?*

Regardless of your age, planning for the inevitable should include your pet.

As for activity level, I often mention pet rescues like A Touch of Grey, which matches seniors with calmer, mature pets.

To learn more about seniors and pets, join me for a warmhearted "Senior Health Friday with Nurse Lisa" on March 10, when I welcome psychologist Dr. Joel Shuy and some furry friends from A Touch of Grey.

RSVP online at [OneSeniorPlace.com](http://OneSeniorPlace.com) or call 321-751-6771.

*One Senior Place is a marketplace for resources and provider of information, advice, care and on-site services for seniors and their families. Questions for this column are answered by professionals in nursing, social work, care management and in-home care. Send questions to [askOSP@OneSeniorPlace.com](mailto:askOSP@OneSeniorPlace.com), call 321-751-6771 or visit One Senior Place, The Experts in Aging.*

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