



American Heart Association®
Healthy Bond for Life™

BEST FRIEND FRIDAYS



**SUMMER 2022
ACTIVATION GUIDE**

#BestFriendFridays

ACTIVATION THEMES

LESS STRESS. LOTS OF LOVE.

Best Friend Fridays™ celebrate our pet companions who are always there for us – helping us handle stress and boosting our physical and mental health. Having a pet is a **Healthy Bond for Life™** that may help you live a longer, healthier life! At work or at play, pets are the best. Take time each Friday to celebrate your pets and all they add to your life and post a photo or video using **#BestFriendFridays**.



HEALTHIER OUTCOMES, UNLEASHED

- **The fur factor:** dog owners tend to have better health outcomes than non-dog owners.¹
- **Many studies show** the positive health benefits of being a pet parent. You might even live longer.⁴
- **Pets are beneficial for recovery** and survival after a cardiovascular event, so ask your hospital about pet therapy.⁵
- **Dog ownership is associated** with a lower risk of depression and can help prevent chronic disease such as diabetes.⁷



GET A PET – AND GET MOVING

- **Pets help us get more exercise**, reduce stress, boost mood, and lower blood pressure and cholesterol.⁸
- **Owning a pet may change habits** that can lead to weight loss. Case in point: dog parents are 34% more likely to fit in 150 minutes of walking a week than non-dog owners.ⁱⁱ
- **Walk the walk!** You'll both get exercise and you may find yourself socializing with other dog owners in your area.⁹
- **Pets can give kids an incentive** to spend more time outside, raising fitness levels and lowering the risk of disease risk later in life.¹⁰



ANIMAL MAGNETISM

- **When we see, touch, hear or talk** to our companion animals, we feel a sense of goodwill and joy. At the same time, our stress hormones are suppressed.¹¹
- **Scratching those fuzzy ears helps** you know you're not alone, and that bond helps you stick with healthy habits.¹²
- **Studies find that owning and walking a dog** helps ease people out of isolation or shyness. With the pandemic, this is more important than ever.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Not able to have a pet right now?** Try volunteering at a local animal shelter, pet-sitting for a friend or taking your neighbor's dog for a walk.



LUCKY DOG: BEST FRIEND FRIDAYS™

- **Talk to your employer** about celebrating Best Friend Fridays.
- **Why participate?** Because pets bring calmness, reduce stress and increase productivity.
- **When a dog joins a collaborative setting,** group members rank their teammates higher in terms of trust, team cohesion and camaraderie.¹³
- **In a survey of pet parents,** 37% say they would sacrifice vacation time and even take a pay cut to bring their pet to work.¹⁴
- **Advocate for pet friendly work** policies like volunteer opportunities, animal therapy days, provide bereavement leave, paw-ternity leave, dog walking services and pet insurance.

For more information on the American Heart Association's **Well-being Works Better™** workforce well-being platform, visit heart.org/workforce.



HORSES HAVE HEART

The American Heart Association's **Healthy Bond for Life™** encourages the bond between people and animals for better health, well-being and, potentially, a longer life. Companion animals can help you get more exercise, lower blood pressure and cholesterol, cut stress and boost happiness.³ That's why we launched **Horses Have Heart** — a nationwide community celebrating the love of horses for good health and well-being.

For as much work as goes into caring for a horse, it is important that riders also take care of their own mental and physical health. With small, simple steps toward improved lifestyle habits, we can help you take care of yourself as well as you take care of your horse. Share photos of your horse and start your own fundraiser at heart.org/horses to help people you know live longer, healthier lives.



PET HOLIDAYS SUMMER 2022

Need some content inspiration? There are plenty of pet themed days to take advantage of all summer long.



DATES

- **June 5 – 11:** Pet Appreciation Week
- **June 8:** National Best Friends Day
- **June 20 – 24:** National Bring Your Pet to Work Week
 - Join the AHA in celebrating Bring Your Pet to Work Week by having employees submit photos of their pet at work with them, or by reaching out to local media and influencers to share a photo using #BestFriendFridays
- **July 4:** Patriotic pets for 4th of July
- **July 10:** National Kitten Day
- **August 5:** Work Like a Dog Day
- **August 7-13:** International Assistance Dog Week
- **August 8:** International Cat Day
- **August 10:** Spoil Your Dog Day
- **August 23:** International Blind Dog Day
- **August 26:** National Dog Day

SO MUCH MORE THAN COMPANIONS.

Pets can be beneficial to your health in many different ways. They can help raise your fitness level. They can help lower stress, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. Best of all, they can boost your overall happiness and well-being. And we've got the science to prove it!¹⁵

So don't put your health in the doghouse. Carve out five minutes every Friday to celebrate your pets and all the ways they help make your life better.

Here are some great articles and videos to read and watch (hopefully, with your pet).

ARTICLES

- 5 Ways Pets Help Mental Health While Working from Home
- Best Friend Fridays Infographic
- Do dog owners live longer?
- Enjoy a Day Off from Your Home Office
- Keeping Weight Off Your Pet Is Important
- Move More with Your Pet
- Owning a Pet Can Change Your Life
- Pets are the new WFH #Coworkers
- Pet Friendly Work Policies

VIDEOS

- Adopting a dog could be your heart's best friend
- Best Friend Fridays — Pets are good for your health
- Do dog owners live longer?
- Take a moment to lower your stress
- 16 Science-Backed Reasons Adopting a Dog Could Be Good for Your Heart





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LESS STRESS. LOTS OF LOVE.



Best Friend Fridays™ celebrate our pet companions who are always there for us — helping us handle stress and boosting our physical and mental health. Having a pet is a **Healthy Bond for Life™** that may help you live a longer, healthier life! (And we've got the science to prove it.)

PETS CAN HELP YOU:

- Deal with stress
- Get more exercise and meet fitness goals
- Feel less lonely and isolated
- Lose weight
- Lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Recover after a health event



Owning a dog can help prevent chronic conditions such as **DIABETES** and **DEPRESSION**, and simply petting a dog **HELPS LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE.**

DURING THE PANDEMIC

According to a Rover survey



53%

of U.S. adults got a new dog



32%

got a new cat



14%

got both

93%

said their "pandemic pet" improved their mental and/or physical well-being.



PETS MAKE WORK BETTER

80%

said it made working from home more enjoyable, and they were able to bond with their pet more during this time.

40%

of pet owners feel anxious about leaving pets at home if they go back to work in person.

44%

would consider changing jobs for a pet-friendly workplace.

37%

would give up vacation time and take a pay cut to bring their pet to work.

Having a pet around while working can help:

- Reduce stress
- Increase productivity
- Improve employee satisfaction, teamwork and collaboration

At work or at play, pets are the best.

Take time each Friday to celebrate your pets and all they add to your life and post a photo or video using **#BestFriendFridays!**



Learn more about Healthy Bond for Life's Best Friend Fridays at

heart.org/pets



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Pets? Let's!



Get moving more with your pet.

Studies show that pets are good for your health! Not only do pets offer companionship and stress relief, but pets can keep you active — which is good for your heart and overall health.

Good for you. Good for them.

Remember, pets need physical activity too. Keeping active with them benefits you both!

- **Play fetch** It's a classic for a reason. Grab that tennis ball or Frisbee and get out there. Don't forget to keep moving.
- **Bike with a furry passenger** Have a pet carrier on your bicycle? Show your pet the sights — you supply the pedal power.
- **Pets & poses** Invite your puppy to join you for yoga — after all, she already knows puppy pose and down dog. It's a great answer when cooler fall temps keep you inside.
- **Indoor obstacle course** Too cold out? That's no obstacle. Create a fun obstacle course for your pet using household objects and boxes. Chase them through, so you get moving too.

Pets keep you motivated.

Let's face it — sometimes you might not feel like going for a walk. Your pet can encourage — even demand — that you get out there!

Great health, inside and out.

Playing with your pet, indoors or outdoors, can help you reach healthy goals. Try to get outside when the weather is nice — nature has its own health benefits, and your pet will love it.

- **Fit in 150+** Get at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, preferably spread throughout the week. A brisk walk with the dog counts!
- **Move more, sit less** Get up and move throughout the day. Pets welcome playtime — grab that cat toy and start some active fun.
- **Add intensity** Moderate to vigorous aerobic activity is best. Increase your time and/or intensity to get more benefits. Jog or run with your pet.
- **Add muscle** Include moderate — to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity at least twice a week. (Soon you'll have no trouble lifting those heavy bags of food for your golden retriever.)

Harness health benefits.

Horses may not cuddle in your lap, but they're healthy too. Riding is great exercise, and time spent around horses is good for your well-being.

Learn more about the healthy bond with pets. Visit heart.org/pets.

COMPANY SAMPLE EMAILS

EMAIL SUBJECT:

Show us a pic of your favorite 4-legged co-worker.

BODY:

Let's celebrate **#BestFriendFridays** with the American Heart Association. Healthy Bond for Life celebrates the special bond between people and pets that can lead to better health, well-being and longer lives. Dog parents, for instance, are more likely to reach their fitness goals than those without canine companions. Healthy Bond for Life encourages more pet ownership as a unique approach to building happier minds and healthier hearts.

Participate by posting pictures using **#BestFriendFridays** every Friday this summer. Here are some ideas:

- 1) Share a picture of your pet while you work.
- 2) Post a picture with your pet playing outside or on a walk.
- 3) Share a picture of how your pet helps you stress less.

Learn the health benefits of pet ownership at heart.org/pets.

ABOUT HEALTHY BOND FOR LIFE™

The American Heart Association's **Healthy Bond for Life™** encourages the bond between people and pets for better health, well-being and, potentially, a longer life.

Pets can help you get more exercise, lower blood pressure and cholesterol, cut stress and boost happiness. (We've got the science to prove it.)

Your pet is more than a companion:

- **Owning a pet may change habits** that can lead to weight loss.^v
- **Patients with cardiovascular disease** see benefits too.^{vi}
- **Dog owners are more likely** to fit in the recommended physical activity than those who don't have a dog.^{vii}
- **Dog owners tend to have better health** outcomes than non-dog owners.^{viii}
- **Many studies show positive health benefits** of pet ownership, and some studies even suggest that pet parents tend to live longer than non-pet owners.^{ix}

Pets help you create healthy habits — and dogs especially might have the most positive influence.^x

Learn more at HealthyBondforLife.heart.org.





³ Glenn N. Levine, Karen Allen, Lynne T. Braun, Hayley E. Christian, Erika Friedmann, Kathryn A. Taubert, Sue Ann Thomas, Deborah L. Wells, and Richard A. Lange and on behalf of the American Heart Association Council on Clinical Cardiology and Council on Cardiovascular and Stroke Nursing. "Pet Ownership and Cardiovascular Risk: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association," *Circulation* 11 (Jun 2013)

⁴ Mwenya Mubanga, Liisa Byberg, Christoph Nowak, Agneta Egenvall, Patrik K. Magnusson, Erik Ingelsson, Tove Fall. "Article number: 15821 (2017) 10.1038_s41598-017-16118-6.ris," *Scientific Reports* 7. Levine, et al.

⁵ <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIRCOUTCOMES.118.005342>

⁷ Cindy Lentino, Amanda J. Visek, Karen McDonnell, and Loretta DiPietro. "Dog Walking Is associated With a Favorable Risk Profile Independent of a Moderate to High Volume of Physical Activity," *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* (September 2012)

⁸ Psychological Health, Well-Being, and the Mind-Heart-Body Connection: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association | *Circulation* (ahajournals.org)

⁹ Stephen M. Colarelli, Amanda McDonald, Matthew Christensen, Christopher Honts. "A Companion Dog Increases Prosocial Behavior in Work Groups," *Anthrozoos* (February 9, 2017)

¹⁰ Christopher G. Owen, Claire M. Nightingale, Alicja R. Rudnicka, Ulf Ekelund, Alison M. McMin, Esther M. F. van Sluijs, Simon J. Griffin, Derek G. Cook, and Peter H. Whincup. "Family Dog Ownership and Levels of Physical Activity in Childhood: Findings From the Child Heart and Health Study in England," *American Journal of Public Health* (September 2010)

¹¹ Levine, et al.

¹² Levine, et al.

¹³ <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0317/pages/how-to-be-a-pet-friendly-employer.aspx>

¹⁴ <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0317/pages/how-to-be-a-pet-friendly-employer.aspx>

¹⁵ <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/full/10.1161/CIR.0b013e31829201e1>

¹ Dhruv S. Kazi. "Who Is Rescuing Whom? Dog Ownership and Cardiovascular Health," *Circulation* Vol. 12, No. 10 (Oct 2019)

⁸ Reeves, et al.

³ Stephen M. Colarelli, Amanda McDonald, Matthew Christensen, Christopher Honts. "A Companion Dog Increases Prosocial Behavior in Work Groups," *Anthrozoos* (February 9, 2017)

⁴ Glenn N. Levine, Karen Allen, Lynne T. Braun, Hayley E. Christian, Erika Friedmann, Kathryn A. Taubert, Sue Ann Thomas, Deborah L. Wells, and Richard A. Lange and on behalf of the American Heart Association Council on Clinical Cardiology and Council on Cardiovascular and Stroke Nursing. "Pet Ownership and Cardiovascular Risk: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association," *Circulation* 11 (Jun 2013)

⁵ Levine, et al.

⁶ Levine, et al.

^{vi} Yu-Tzu Wu, Robert Luben, Andy Jones. "Dog ownership supports the maintenance of physical activity during poor weather in older English adults: cross-sectional results from the EPIC Norfolk cohort," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 71:9.

^{vii} Dhruv S. Kazi. "Who Is Rescuing Whom? Dog Ownership and Cardiovascular Health," *Circulation* Vol. 12, No. 10 (Oct 2019)

^{iv} Mwenya Mubanga, Liisa Byberg, Christoph Nowak, Agneta Egenvall, Patrik K. Magnusson, Erik Ingelsson, Tove Fall. "Article number: 15821 (2017) 10.1038_s41598-017-16118-6.ris," *Scientific Reports* 7.

⁸ Bruce Headly, Fu Na, Richard Zheng. "Pet Dog owners' Health: A 'Natural Experiment' in China," *Social Indicators Research* 87 (July 2008)

Help us lick heart disease and stroke.

We look forward to seeing your pet posts using **#Best Friend Fridays**.

Questions?

You'll find the answers on our website at **HealthyBondforLife.heart.org**.

