

## Petting A Furry Fluff Ball Has Stress Reduction Benefits

By World Health Net



According to Washington State University just 10 minutes of interacting with a dog or cat was enough to produce a significant reduction in the major stress hormone levels; findings were published in AERA Open.

Colleges and universities can be stressful in itself without factoring in works, bills to pay and other pressures, as such some universities have instituted “Pet Your Stress Away” programs which are designed to let students interact with cats and dogs to help alleviate some of the stress.

In addition to helping improve moods these programs have been demonstrated to have stress relieving physiological benefits. *“Just 10 minutes can have a significant impact,”* said Patricia Pendry. *“Students in our study that interacted with cats and dogs had a significant reduction in cortisol, a major stress hormone.”*

249 students were involved in this study who were divided at random into 4 groups: one with hands on interaction with cats and dogs for 10 minutes; another that observed other people petting the animals; one group watched a slideshow of the same animals; and another groups that was waitlisted as control. While waiting the students were quiet without their mobile devices, reading materials, or other stimuli but were told they would have animal interaction soon.

Salivary cortisol samples were collected from each participant at several points during the day starting when they woke up. Students who directly interacted with the animals were found to show significantly less cortisol in their saliva after interaction; the same results were found even after considering some may have had very high or low levels to start with.

*"We already knew that students enjoy interacting with animals, and that it helps them experience more positive emotions," Pendry said. "What we wanted to learn was whether this exposure would help students reduce their stress in a less subjective way. And it did, which is exciting because the reduction of stress hormones may, over time, have significant benefits for physical and mental health."*

The team is continuing this work by investigating the impact of a 4 week long animal assisted stress prevention program; preliminary results are positive, with a follow up study showing that these findings hold up, and final results will be published in the near future.

Materials provided by:

Note: Content may be edited for style and length.

This article is not intended to provide medical diagnosis, advice, treatment, or endorsement.

<https://news.wsu.edu/2019/07/15/study-demonstrates-stress-reduction-benefits-petting-dogs-cats/>

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2332858419852592>

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/07/190715114302.htm>