

## 10 Top Reasons to Adopt an Older Dog or Cat

Throughout the years, my husband and I have rescued and adopted many older and senior dogs ranging in age from 4 to nearly 11 years old. Each has come to us with a different background and life experience. Some have been family pets; others were used to guard or protect their family or family's property; some have been dearly loved friends and companions; others have received little love, attention or affection. Many have been neglected, abandoned or abused through no fault of their own. These older dogs have lost their homes for various reasons: divorce or separation of their human "parents", the death or severe illness of their guardian, change in work schedule, the necessity of moving to a place where a pet is not permitted (i.e. nursing home or assisted living facility, and so on).

There are many reasons for dogs and cats to be surrendered to a shelter. It is a fallacy that these animals are in some way inferior or have health or behavioral problems. Each of the older dogs we have adopted has brought us great joy and deeply enriched our lives. There are many important reasons to adopt an older or senior dog or cat:

- 1). You can save the life of a deserving, sentient animal in need of a loving home, and you can feel good about yourself for rendering an act of kindness and compassion. Older dogs and cats are usually not considered as "adorable" or adoptable as puppies or kittens. Puppies and kittens have a much greater chance of being adopted than older animals. Therefore, older cats and dogs are much more likely to be euthanized than younger ones. The joy and fulfillment of rescuing an older cat or dog and providing him with quality of life are unparalleled.
- 2). You can experience and enjoy the gratitude, loyalty, devotion, unconditional love and patience of an older dog or cat, which are deeply rewarding. These animals somehow "know" and understand that they have been "saved" and desire nothing more than to be your best friend, to please you, and to earn your approval.
- 3). Older dogs and cats tend to be calmer and mellower than kittens and puppies. They are often obedience trained and socialized and require much less supervision and monitoring than puppies and kittens. They may forge a deeper bond with you than a younger pet.
- 4). When you adopt an older cat or dog, you know what you are getting. His personality and appearance have been developed. When you adopt a kitten or puppy, you can never be certain as to how large or small he or she will be or what he/she will end up looking like. When adopting an older cat or dog, you will be able to quite accurately assess his size, weight, personality, activity level, behavior, likes and dislikes, emotional make-up – all of which make it easier for you to determine if he/she is the right pet for you, your family and lifestyle.

5). An adult dog or cat is generally past the chewing and/or destructive phase of his life. Young pets can be both messy and destructive – chewing and scratching furniture, carpeting, artwork, draperies, knick-knacks and shredding towels and linens and other valuable possessions. Older dogs and cats are much less destructive and prone to get into harm's way. Their instincts and experience help them to keep out of dangerous situations. Puppies and kittens are notorious for getting into mischief such as ingesting toxic or unhealthy substances, chewing electrical cords, jumping off of furniture and window ledges, etc.

6). Adult dogs and cats are better able to concentrate or focus and may actually be much easier to train than kittens or puppies who may be hyperactive and easily distracted. The bonding that is forged during the training of an older pet may be even more meaningful and powerful than that developed with a young animal. Adult animals possess a maturity and range of experience that young ones simply do not have.

7). Most adult dogs and cats are already somewhat socialized. They obviously have developed the skills that have enabled them to survive a certain number of years. Kittens and puppies must be taught basically everything about life, while older pets have shared and learned from previous relationships and life experiences.

8). The first year of expenditures for a healthy adult dog or cat (and those adopted from reputable animal welfare and rescue organizations are almost always spayed/neutered, vaccinated and checked and treated for any health problems and so are generally in good health), is typically much less than for a puppy or kitten that requires frequent veterinary exams and vaccinations. Puppies and kittens may require frequent visits to the vet.

9). Adult dogs and cats are generally less active than youngsters. Of course, they require exercise and playtime and a healthy diet, but they do not need high maintenance activity, or extensive walking, running or playtime. An older dog or cat is likely to be content simply sharing quality time with you and enjoying your attention, interaction and companionship.

10). Adult dogs and cats are just as handsome and beautiful as puppies in their own way. They can make you feel young again and bring joy, fun and pleasure to your life. Their presence can actually improve your health and overall well-being and increase your longevity!

An older or senior dog or cat can make a wonderful addition to your life and your family. By adopting an older animal companion, you can learn much about life and the aging process – in so many ways comparable to our own. You can also teach your children respect, appreciation and compassion not only for our aging animal companions but also for our older human friends and family members.

## About Diane Pomerance

Diane Pomerance has a Ph.D. in Communications from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and is widely regarded as a pet expert. She is also a certified Grief Recovery Specialist. She has written seven books about animals including the Animal Companions Series and her new book, OUR RESCUE DOG FAMILY ALBUM ([www.animalcompanionsandtheirpeople.com](http://www.animalcompanionsandtheirpeople.com)). She created, established and currently directs the pioneering and flagship Pet Grief Counseling Program for the SPCA of Texas.