

PET PARENTHOOD; ADOPTING THE RIGHT PET FOR YOU!

From Lassie to Rin-Tin Tin, Flicka to Mr. Ed, Winn-Dixie to White Fang, Black Beauty to Garfield, companion animals both in the cinema and in real life have played an important role in our lives. Our animal companions offer us unconditional love, beauty, joy, loyalty, devotion, forgiveness, empathy and comfort. They amuse and entertain us. They comfort and console us. Their presence is soothing and therapeutic and the mere act of petting an animal calms us down. According to numerous studies, pets can decrease our blood pressure, cholesterol levels and even triglyceride levels. They improve our heart rate and decrease loneliness, anxiety, depression and fear. Blood pressure is reduced and resistance to disease is heightened.

They improve our emotional as well as spiritual health and well being. They improve the quality and longevity of our lives. We live in a highly technological and impersonal world with little real contact or communication with others. For many of us, our animal companions are our sole or primary link with the natural world from which we have all evolved. and as such, bring to us the solace, upliftment, beauty, respite, refreshment and rejuvenation we receive from contact with Nature. They also help us to recognize what is truly important in life. There is nothing synthetic or manufactured about them – they are genuine and exactly who they appear to be and, in turn, they allow us to be who we really are. They accept us exactly as we are -unconditionally and without judgment or blame.

We learn so much from our animal companions. They serve as our friends, teachers, guides, companions, healers, helpers and beloved family members. Through their companionship we learn spontaneity and to “live in the moment” rather than dwelling on the past or fearing the future. They teach us much about life and death, illness and infirmity and the aging process. Through them, we learn a great deal about selflessness and compassion.

The decision to adopt a pet is life transforming and is, in many ways, similar to adopting a human child. The emotional and spiritual bonds that are forged between a family and their new pet are powerful and profound and last throughout one’s entire life. The sentient creature will, more than likely, come to be regarded as a beloved family member, and will require loving care from the beginning of the relationship until the animal’s inevitable death. The pet will share many of life’s greatest and most significant events and occasions with his new family as well as the daily tasks and routines and vacations and holidays. Many beautiful and meaningful experiences and memories will be created and shared. No one will ever know you better and love you more than this pure-hearted, vulnerable creature...

Before adopting an animal companion and becoming a “pet parent”, it is important, in fact, imperative to consider the many obligations and responsibilities associated with incorporating a pet into one’s life and home. Among the many factors to be considered before adopting a pet are one’s lifestyle – do you have time to take good care of a pet each and every day of the pet’s life? Do you work long hours away from home – leaving the pet to his own devices and potential boredom and destructive behaviors? Are you able

to provide an environment and “safe space” for your new pet? No matter how much your children want a pet and proclaim their willingness to care for it, are you prepared to supervise and assume ultimate responsibility for the pet’s well being and care? Are you prepared to provide a pet with a healthy comfortable space to sleep, healthy and nutritional food, regular exercise? Do you have a budget that can accommodate the spaying and/or neutering of a pet, vaccinations, regular visits to the veterinarian, grooming, proper dental care, toys, crates, bowls, accessories he requires? When you leave town for business or pleasure, do you have a reliable and safe place to board the animal or serve as a pet sitter and caregiver? Do you plan to take your animal companion with you on vacations? If so, you must make certain that they are welcome and well accommodated whether by hotel/motel/ or to friends and acquaintances with whom you may be staying. Can you afford prescriptions and other medications for your animal if the need arises? You must be aware your animal is as susceptible to illness, injury and accident as humans are. Before adopting a pet make certain he is in good health by having a reliable veterinarian check him thoroughly.

Before adopting a pet, make certain you conduct careful research and study the characteristics of the animal you are considering and its needs. Read and visit web sites pertaining to the type of animal you desire and how much care and attention this pet will require and how much time and energy your lifestyle permits to accommodate these needs. Discuss the adoption thoroughly with your family members and make certain each understands his or her own responsibilities in regard to caring for the new pet. Consult with your family and friends or acquaintances who may have a similar pet along with a local veterinarian whom reliable contacts have recommended to you. Word of mouth and referrals can be very helpful.

Find as much information as you can about the amount of time and money required for the care, training and socialization of the pet you are considering. Once you have decided whether to buy an animal from a reputable breeder or to save the life and rescue an animal from a shelter or rescue organization, prepare your home for the new addition. Puppy or kitty-proof your home by removing potential health hazards and by instructing children in particular to be gentle and very careful when holding and interacting with the animal. The need for them to be gentle, kind and compassionate should be heavily emphasized and enforced. By having a pet, children can learn much about compassion, sensitivity, responsibility and respect for all living creatures.

The adoption of an animal companion should never be made in haste or impulsively. Careful thought, consideration and research are the prerequisites of sharing a long, happy, healthy, rich and rewarding life with a loved animal companion!

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