

5 Gifts Your Pet Brings You Today and Every Day

One of the greatest honors you could bestow on your animal companion today is to recognize and appreciate the gifts he or she brings to your life not just during the holidays, but every day of the year. Want even more meaning and joy in your life? Make it a goal to do this in the New Year.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- 2023 is almost in the rearview window, which means it's time to relax, reflect, and refresh; thankfully, furry family members have a way of reminding us to grab some joy not only on Christmas Day, but every day of the year
- The gifts we receive from our animal companions include the art of living in the moment, nourishing close bonds, and offering forgiveness
- If you're looking for a way to make a real difference in 2024, consider adopting or fostering a pet from your local shelter or rescue

As we wrap up 2023, I think it's important for our hearts, souls, and psyches to take a few moments to reflect on what went right in our lives during the last 12 months and give thanks.

For those of you with animal companions, I know they appear at the top of your gratitude list. Our pets offer a quality of comfort and acceptance that's often impossible to find elsewhere, and in an increasingly uncertain world, they provide a buffer against feelings of anxiety, loneliness and isolation.

5 Ways Pets Earn Our Thanks Every Day

1. **They constantly communicate with us** — Close, connected relationships evolve from clear, consistent communication. When communication is untrustworthy or used in harmful ways, the relationship breaks down. Our pets speak to us constantly through their body language and behavior. It's our job to learn the language they speak, and to communicate clearly to them what we expect and appreciate about their behavior.
2. **They thrive in simplicity and consistency** — Our furry family members are at their best when we provide them with consistency in the form of healthy nutrition, plenty of exercise, structure to their daily routine, and lots of love. These are the simple things in life that form the foundation for a balanced, less stressful, more joyful existence.
3. **They never break their bond with us** — Our animal companions stay connected to us no matter how bad we feel or behave. They're right beside us every step of the way, every minute of the day. During times when we feel ignored or disengaged from the world, our pets offer unconditional connectedness.

4. **They offer forgiveness** — Most of us can remember a time when we ignored our pet, or lost patience and spoke too sharply. We also remember that our loyal companion forgave us the very next second. Our animal friends don't hold grudges. They don't punish themselves or us by clinging to past insults. They offer instant forgiveness and an open heart.
5. **They help us stay present** — Humans tend to spend a lot of time feeling regret for something in their past or feeling anxious about the future. It's not time well spent, but most of us are inclined to live in the past or the future rather than the present. Our pets, by their example, help us to stay present — to live for today. Our animal companions experience each moment as it arrives with enthusiasm and joy, and so can we if we follow their lead.

Why Not Start 2024 With a New Furry Friend?

If you want to bring more joy into your life next year consider **adopting a homeless pet** from your local shelter or rescue organization.

If you're able to offer a shelter pet a new forever home, you'll find your life enriched in countless ways. The unconditional love and loyalty of a dog, cat, or other animal companion can alleviate depression, ease loneliness, lower blood pressure, and give you a reason to get up in the morning.

In addition, there are few things as warm and comforting on a cold winter evening as a cat asleep in your lap. If one of your goals for the new year is to lose weight and get in shape, a dog who loves to walk or run outdoors can be just the incentive you need to start exercising regularly.

There are countless benefits to being a pet parent, and when you know you saved your furry companion from an undetermined fate, it makes the bond you share that much stronger.

Other Ways to Help Homeless Pets

If you're not able to provide a permanent home for a pet but are interested in making a real hands-on difference in the lives of homeless animals, there are many ways to help, depending on your time, resources, and talents.

Many people volunteer at a local shelter for a certain number of hours each week or month, while others have pets in need come to them, by serving as **foster families** for animals awaiting adoption. Pets are fostered for a variety of reasons, including:

- An overflowing shelter
- An animal with special needs — she might be pregnant or nursing, or recovering from an injury, illness, or surgery
- A kitten or puppy still too young to be adopted
- A pet showing significant stress-related behavior (pacing or hiding, for instance)
- An animal who has never lived in a home or had much contact with people who needs to be socialized to a home environment

Fostering triggers a positive domino effect. The more people willing to open their homes to foster pets, the more pets local shelters can accommodate, and for longer periods. This gives each animal the best shot at finding a new home.

Merry Christmas from all of us at bark&whiskers!
