

# *Why dogs make great companions for people with autism*



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They say dogs are man's best friend, and people with autism are no exception. Over the years, research has shown that canine companions positively influence the lives of autistic individuals, helping them to navigate everyday interactions and maintain a happy lifestyle.

Let's take a look at some of the reasons why having a dog can benefit autistic and non-verbal people.

## **7 benefits of dogs for autistic and non-verbal people**

### *1. A new best friend*

Building relationships and understanding social situations can sometimes be tough, but a dog is an instant friend that never judges. These positive interactions with a dog can give autistic children the confidence they need to try making friends with other people.

### *2. Sensory support*

Almost like a hug or weighted blanket, the pressure of a dog's head on an autistic person's lap can help them to feel more relaxed in moments of sensory overload.

### *3. Overcoming fear and anxiety*

Dogs are a constant presence, which can offer a calming focus for people with autism. They have been known to help autistic adults and children overcome fear of visiting the dentist, getting vaccinations, or starting a new school.

### *4. Playing games*

Dogs are always excited to play games like fetch or hide and seek, which can be great for helping autistic children to learn about taking turns and sharing with others.

### *5. Reducing household stress*

In a survey of 100 families carried out by the University of Lincoln, it was revealed that dogs don't just reduce stress for autistic individuals, but the rest of their household too.



## *6. Better mood*

Dogs are unconditionally loving and can have a mood-boosting effect on everyone around them. After spending time with a dog, people with autism are more likely to be relaxed, happy, and talkative.

## *7. Opening new opportunities*

Autistic individuals often live by strict routines, but a dog can encourage them to come out of their comfort zone and try new things. Many dogs have introduced their owners to the great outdoors, and even fitness training.

## **Autism assistance dogs**

Family pets of course make great companions, but charities like Autism Dogs specially train autism assistance dogs to help transform the lives of autistic people and their families. Autism Dogs, in particular, is the most qualified programme of its type, and the only one run by autistic people.

Autism assistance dogs are trained to help with:

- *Promoting healthy sleep*
- *Improving eating and exercise patterns*
- *Reducing the frequency and severity of meltdowns*
- *Language development*