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## The science behind animal-assisted therapy.

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### Abstract

Animal-assisted therapy is a complementary medicine intervention, typically utilizing dogs trained to be obedient, calm, and comforting. Several studies have reported significant pain relief after participating in therapy dog visits. Objective reports of reduced pain and pain-related symptoms are supported by studies measuring decreased catecholamines and increased endorphins in humans receiving friendly dog visits. Mirror neuron activity and disease-perception through olfactory ability in dogs may also play important roles in helping dogs connect with humans during therapeutic encounters. This review will explore a variety of possible theories that may explain the therapeutic benefits that occur during therapy dog visits.

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