

New Articles

by Froma Walsh, PhD



1) Human-Animal Bonds I: The Relational Significance of Companion Animals

The importance of human-animal bonds has been documented throughout history, across cultures, and in recent research. However, attachments with companion animals have been undervalued and even pathologized in the field of mental health. This article briefly surveys the evolution of human-animal bonds, reviews research on their health and mental health benefits, and examines their profound relational significance across the life course. Finally, the emerging field of animal-assisted interventions is described, noting applications in hospital and eldercare settings, and in innovative school, prison, farm, and community programs. The aim of this overview paper is to stimulate more attention to these vital bonds in systems-oriented theory, practice, and research. A companion paper in this issue focuses on the role of pets and relational dynamics in family systems and family therapy.

Walsh, F. (2009). Human-Animal Bonds I: The Relational Significance of Companion Animals. *Family Process*, 48, 462-480.

2) Human-Animal Bonds II: The Role of Pets in Family Systems and Family Therapy

The vast majority of pet owners regard their companion animals as family members, yet the role of pets in family systems and family therapy has received little attention in research, training, and practice. This article first notes the benefits of family pets and their importance for resilience. It then examines their role in couple and family processes and their involvement in relational dynamics and tensions. Next, it addresses bereavement in the loss of a cherished pet, influences complicating grief, and facilitation of mourning and adaptation. Finally, it explores the ways that clients' pets and the use of therapists' companion animals in animal-assisted therapy can inform and enrich couple and family therapy as valuable resources in healing.

Walsh, F. (2009). Human-Animal Bonds II: The Role of Pets in Family Systems and Family Therapy. *Family Process*, 48, 481-499.

3) Editorial for this Special Section in *Family Process* by the editor.

Imber-Black, E. (2009). Snuggles, My Cotherapist, and Other Animal Tales in Life and Therapy. *Family Process*, 48, 459-461.

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