



PAWS A WHILE

HUMANE SOCIETY OF TUOLUMNE COUNTY

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Some Tips on Feeling Grrreat This February and Throughout the Year, as well!

“Don’t tell me the sky’s the limit when there are footprints (and possibly paw prints) on the moon!”

Can you believe it’s already February and how quickly time flies? If you haven’t done so already, it’s not too late to set your annual goals, create healthy habits, and find ways to get what YOU want out of life. To help, we’ve come up with a few tips to help you get on track:

1. Set Realistic (and obtainable) Personal Goals

Especially with today’s environment, setting realistic and achievable goals for your physical and mental wellness is an important step toward kick-starting your best year yet. Setting goals triggers positive behavior changes and keeps you focused on the steps you need to take to make those changes. And remember to keep your goals visible by writing them down to post on a place where they are visible or create a motivational wallpaper for your phone screen or computer.

2. Help Someone

There is a saying, “If you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody.” It’s so

simple....you can help by focusing on doing something for someone else.

It's as easy as giving your time through volunteering in your community or by supporting a cause or charity, like the HSOTC, that aligns with your own beliefs or experiences. It could even be offering to cook a meal for a friend who may be feeling a bit overwhelmed by life. Helping another person will give you a warm fuzzy feeling that is guaranteed to put a smile on your (and their) face as well!

3. Say Thank You

Did you know that being actively thankful can improve your health? Studies have found that people practicing gratitude reported experiencing higher levels of positive emotions, feeling more alert, alive, and awake, enhanced joy and pleasure, and sensing more optimism and happiness.

Given that a lot of us are spending more time at home these days and not seeing a lot of people (except for our teleconferencing sessions), sending a text message to show others how thankful you are for things they do can go a long ways. Those simple words of encouragement can make a person's day (or week). Try it and see what happens.

4. Write a Not-to-Do List

Not-to-do lists are often more effective than the standard to-do lists, and the reason is simple – what you don't do determines what you do...DO!

Set up your not-to-do list by adding anything that keeps you from achieving your goals. List out any actions or behaviors that contribute to you feeling stress, disappointment, regret or overwhelmed. Add any distractions that you want to avoid, including using your phone, spending time on Facebook or wasting time randomly surfing the internet (yes, we all do it!). And finally, place your list in a prominent spot so you can see it daily.

5. Set up your Environment for Success

With many of us working from home, design your work environment in a way that contributes to meeting your goals and avoiding distractions. Turn off notifications on your computer and mobile phone and consider how noise impacts on your work. Make sure there is good light and if natural light isn't an option, bring in an ambient lamp. Also consider getting some greenery into your work space to help create an environment that feels welcoming, inspiring, fresh, and colorful (just remember to water the greenery!). And, try to avoid sitting for long periods of time glued to your desk or computer. Make an effort to walk around, stretch, and get some fresh air during the work day. And, if you have a furry friend, make sure they join in!

And last but not least, find your own special way to relax! We all need a way to quickly de-stress, so figure out what works best for you and make it your go-to when you get overwhelmed.

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Eight Things Your Senior Dog Will Thank You for Doing

As our dogs age, their bodies change and their needs will start to differ. While they'll always be our baby puppies, our senior dogs are going to have some special needs. They become more sensitive physically and mentally, their bodies and minds start to change, and they



will need some extra help living out their golden years in happiness and health. If you're wondering how you can make life better for your aging pup, consider these eight tips.

#1 – More Beds

Senior dogs generally spend more time sleeping than their younger selves, so giving them some extra beds and blankets to lie on will be much appreciated. The softer the better, because as our dogs age, their bodies become stiffer with arthritis and hard surfaces will be painful to lie on.

#2 – Stairs and Ramps

Just like people, age brings stiff joints and decreased mobility. Our dogs still want to be by our sides wherever we go, so helping them get up and down stairs, in and out of the car, and more can really make life easier for them. Using a ramp or steps to help your dog get around will save their bodies and make being near you an easy task.

#3 – Diet Changes

Just like people, a dog's nutritional needs will change over time. Older dogs need different amounts of certain nutrients than young dogs and puppies, and they need less of others. Work with your veterinarian to decide which diet is best for your senior dog. You might not need to change your dog's food, but you'll likely change the amount and any supplements you're giving them. At this age, proper dental health is vital, as your senior may already be suffering silently from periodontal disease.

#4 – Keeping Active

Just because your dog is old in body doesn't mean they are in mind! Your senior dog will still want to spend time with you. You might not go on backpacking trips or play Frisbee as long as you used to, but keep tossing your pup's favorite toy and going on walks as long as your dog can do so without pain. Being active will also help keep your dog's body and mind functioning well. The more active they are, the healthier they'll be.

#5 – Extra Comforts

As our dogs age and their bodies change, these changes will bring about more sensitivity. Your dog will be more susceptible to hot and cold weather, so make sure you're able to keep them cool during summer and warm during winter. Fans will help with heat while coats will help with cold. Your dog will need a little extra help staying comfortable, but it's an easy task.

#6 – Mobility Assistance

As mentioned earlier, age often brings arthritis and other ailments. Keeping your dog active will help maintain their mobility throughout their old age. This keeps their muscles and joints used to moving and prevents atrophy and muscle fatigue. Canine joint supplements might also be recommended by your veterinarian to help with any pain your pup might be experiencing.

#7 – Increased Veterinary Care

As your dog ages, you're likely going to be visiting your veterinarian more often. This is because so many ailments come with age. Joint pain and mobility issues, weakened immune systems, and other age-related illnesses often set in during your dog's senior years. You'll also want to switch to regular check-ups more often if your veterinarian recommends it, as certain ailments such as cancers and organ diseases should be detected as early as possible.

#8 – Weight Control

In the same way your dog will need different nutrients in their senior years, they're going to need different amounts of calories as well. Weight change is very common in senior dogs. They are either getting too many nutrients and calories and become overweight or are struggling to maintain a healthy weight because their muscles are weakening and they are becoming thinner. Work with your veterinarian to make sure your dog maintains the appropriate weight.

There are many more things to keep an eye out for as your dog ages, including good dental care to avoid gum disease, a diet that fulfills all of his unique nutritional needs, and watching for other common issues of aging from liver disease to diabetes to more difficulty fighting off illnesses. Though it may sound like a

lot of work to care for your dog as he hits the senior years, such devotion has its own special rewards, including knowing that you've done everything you can for a companion that has been dependent on you from day one.



1. Seven Facts You Need to Know to Protect Your Pet's Oral (and Overall) Health!

Does your cat's bad breath keep the two of you from snuggling? Do you wish you could give your dog a breath mint?

Contrary to popular belief, "doggy breath" is not normal. In fact, it could be one of the first signs that your furry friend may

be developing dental disease.

What is dental disease?

Dental disease is a painful condition that occurs when bacteria, plaque, and tartar build up on the teeth and get trapped beneath the gum line. The bacteria can be absorbed into the bloodstream and wreak havoc on other major organs throughout the body. Here are seven facts you need to know so you can be an advocate for your pet's oral as well as overall well-being:

1. **Dental disease begins early in life.** By the age of three, most dogs and cats have some degree of dental disease. The early signs of dental disease in pets include bad breath, yellow tartar buildup on the teeth, and red and swollen gums. Early detection of your pet's dental disease is vital. If left untreated, it will progress to cause chronic pain and inflammation. To detect dental disease before it negatively affects your pet's quality of life, Dental evaluations as part of your pet's regular preventive care exam should take place at least once a year.
2. **Dental disease causes significant, chronic pain in pets.** When dental disease is discovered later, after years of tartar, plaque, and bacteria buildup have caused infection, inflammation, and diseased teeth, your pet has already experienced significant, chronic, life-changing pain. However, animals are experts at hiding signs of pain, so the pain may go unnoticed by you. Instead, you may see that your pet is increasingly irritable and lethargic and has a decreased appetite — changes you may attribute to your pet's advancing age or other lifestyle factors.
3. **Anesthesia makes dental evaluation and treatment safer and less stressful for your pet.** During your pet's dental procedure, veterinarians and technicians use sharp, sterilized instruments. Animals don't like to hold still while X-rays are taken and these sharp instruments are used to clean their teeth. Placing your pet under anesthesia during the procedure allows your veterinarian to make a more accurate diagnosis and decrease the chance of complications. Your pet will rest comfortably while the veterinary team safely performs a thorough and proper dental cleaning.
4. **Removing plaque from teeth beneath the gum line is vital.** In fact, it's even more important than scaling the portion of the teeth we can see. Bacteria thrive under the gum line, causing infections deep in the tooth root and jaw that can spread throughout the body and affect other organs, such as the heart and kidneys.
5. **Your veterinarian may create a personalized pain protocol to keep your pet comfortable.** Although your pet will be anesthetized during a procedure, numbing medications will decrease the amount of general anesthetic needed and can last up to eight hours after the procedure, allowing your pet to rest in comfort. Your veterinarian can tailor your pet's prescription pain medication to match the procedure so they'll recover peacefully at home.
6. **Homecare is an essential part of taking care of your pet's oral health.** Brushing your cat or dog's teeth every day will promote good oral health and prevent potentially expensive surgeries down the road. It's easier than you think: There are

even special pet toothpastes flavored like beef, chicken, fish, and peanut butter. (Note: Never use human toothpaste, which can contain ingredients like xylitol that are toxic to animals.)

7. **Not all pet dental products are created equal.** If you aren't able to brush your pet's teeth as often as you'd like, consider using other dental products designed to help maintain your pet's oral hygiene. Be sure to look for products approved by the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC). Products that aren't approved by the VOHC, or those that are too hard to bend or break easily — can easily fracture your pet's teeth.

Remember, maintaining oral health is crucial to keeping cats and dogs healthy and happy,



February Pet Holidays

It's a sweetheart of a month and here's a list of Pet Holidays celebrated!

Month-Long Celebrations

- Pet Dental Health
- Dog Training/Education
- National Cat Health
- Responsible Pet Owners
- Spay/Neuter Awareness

Day Celebrations

- February 3 – Doggie Date Night and National Golden Retriever Day
- February 14 – Pet Theft Awareness Day
- February 20 – Love Your Pet Day
- February 22 – Walking the Dog Day
- February 23 – National Dog Biscuit Day
- February 25 – World Spay Day

Are You Ready For Pet Parenthood?

If you have a pulse, it's pretty likely that you melt at the sight of cute puppies and kittens. If no one were looking, you might just sweep up a few in your arms and run for the hills, right?

We get it.

Not only are pets achingly adorable, they can also enrich your life – when you look at that little face, you imagine the little guy or girl becoming your new best friend forever and ever. However, just because pets are cuddly and sweet doesn't necessarily mean you should get one...at least, not right now.

We'll tell you what your parents told you when you were a kid begging for a dog: having a pet is a huge responsibility and it might not be one that you're ready for at the moment. And because adopting a pet is not a decision you can easily undo, you should consider a few important things before you start thinking of cute names for your new best furry friend (BFF).

The Here and Now

There's no such thing as a short-term pet adoption, so before you dive head-first into pet parenthood, think about whether or not your daily life can realistically accommodate another living thing's needs day in and day out.



- **Cost** – According to the ASPCA, you'll spend more than \$1000 in just the first year of owning a dog or cat. And that doesn't take into consideration unexpected medical needs if your pet happens to develop any serious health issues.

If your furry friend should need surgery or special meds, that could mean a sizeable amount of cash, which could be a bit of a challenge if you're living on a ramen noodles budget. So, if you don't have a steady paycheck and extra cash flow, having a pet will likely drain your financial resources.

- **Time** – Pets require a serious time commitment. Dog owners must make sure they're home to walk and feed their pup at least twice a day. And if you get a puppy, you'll also have to commit to time upfront to house-train your new little buddy.

Most college students and young professionals spend huge amounts of time away from home, and leaving a new pet alone for long stretches isn't a good idea. Just like you, they get lonely and sad when left alone. Also, be sure to consider your travel habits – if you go on lots of trips, you'll have to find a reliable pet sitter, which will be another cost factor to consider.

- **Living Situation** – You might like cats more than you like most people, but what if you have a roommate? Oh, he's allergic? Oh, she can't stand cats? Looks like your new kitty is now the most unwelcome roommate in the house. Here's the thing – even if your roomies give you the thumbs up for a pet when you ask, there's no guaranteeing they'll be so excited once that little animal starts chewing their shoes or peeing on the kitchen floor.

When you have a new pet, there's no telling how they'll react to their new surroundings. And though you might be on board to put up with whatever adjustments have to be made in order to keep the pet, your fellow apartment or house dwellers might not be so patient. If it gets bad, you may even be put in the position of having to choose between finding your pet a new home or finding one yourself.

What's to Come from Being a Pet Parent

Your current lifestyle could very well be perfectly suitable for a pet, yet you also have to think about the future. At this stage in your life, things can change on a dime, so really consider what life could have in store for you in the next few years.

- **Moving** – When you're young, picking up and moving is a fairly frequent occurrence. You probably don't have a ton of stuff, so no big deal, right? Well, when you've got a pet, moving can be a big deal. Whether you just head across town or to a new city, this change can be a scary and anxiety-inspiring upheaval for a cat or dog.

The environment would also change if your significant other moves in with you. If your rescue cat has gotten used to just you and a new person is suddenly added to the home, there could be some fall-out. So, if you know you'll be changing living situations sooner than later, it's best to wait till you're more settled.

- **Work** – As you probably know first-hand, younger individuals don't often stay in the same job (or even the same career) for too long. And each time you switch gigs, your life may change a bit, which will impact your pet's life too. When your dog is used to being walked every day at six and suddenly you're not home till eight, there might be trouble.

So, Are You Ready?

You've read our concerns and think that you're ready to take on the responsibility, right? Great! As one last test, we recommend fostering a pet first. Given that cats and dogs have an average lifespan of about 12 years, fostering is a great way to try out the role of pet parent before committing for the long haul. If you have trouble taking care of an animal for a couple of weeks, you'll know that now might not be the best time to adopt.

Another good solution is to adopt an adult dog or cat. Sure, the babies are so cute it hurts, but they're usually more difficult to care for and can get into a lot more trouble. Getting a pet who's had a couple of years to adjust to the world already may be the best solution for you.

Whatever you decide to do, make sure that you've give the decision the time and consideration it deserves. Bringing home a pet should not be an impulsive choice that you make on a whim because you see a sweet pair of eyes staring at you. You and your future

BFF will be much better off if you wait to adopt until you're truly ready for pet parenthood!

**YOU CAN HELP US CONTINUE TO SAVE
ONE MORE ANIMAL AT A TIME.**

