

Can therapy dogs be beneficial for children with autism spectrum disorder?

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About 1 in 150 children are affected by an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a group of neurodevelopmental disorders characterized by difficulty with language, communication, and social interaction. A critical review of several published studies evaluating the potential for therapy or assistance dogs to help children with ASD overcome some of these challenges is published in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, a peer-reviewed journal from Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers.

Interactions with therapy dogs, or the introduction of an assistance dog into a household with a child who has an ASD, may help the child develop emotional attachments and interaction in a social setting based on simple and predictable patterns, without having to interpret [verbal cues](#). The enhanced capability for social interaction they would achieve may then carry over to interpersonal communication and relationships.

In the article "Use of Assistance and Therapy Dogs for Children with [Autism Spectrum Disorders](#): A Critical Review of the Current Evidence," Alessandra Berry, PhD and coauthors from Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome, Italy, describe the body of published study results as encouraging. They emphasize the need for larger, better designed studies in the future to confirm and build on these findings.

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

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