

The Positive Power of Pets & Emotional Support Animals (ESAs)

1. The Positive Effects of Pets on Mental Health

Numerous studies show that animals can have powerful emotional and physiological benefits. Here are just a few of the proven effects:

- Reduced stress: Petting a dog or cat lowers cortisol levels and blood pressure.
- Increased oxytocin: This 'bonding hormone' increases when we interact with animals.
- Decreased loneliness: Pets provide comfort and reduce feelings of isolation.
- Improved mood: Pet ownership is linked with reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Encouraged routine: Caring for a pet creates structure, which can support stability and mental well-being.
- Physical activity: Dog owners especially benefit from increased exercise and outdoor time.

2. Understanding Emotional Support Animals (ESAs)

Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) provide therapeutic benefit through companionship. While they are not trained to perform specific tasks like service animals, they are recognized under certain legal protections.

ESAs are protected under the Fair Housing Act (FHA). This means:

- Landlords must make reasonable accommodations for tenants with ESAs, even in 'no pets' housing.
- No pet deposits or fees can be charged for ESAs in most cases.
- A letter from a licensed mental health professional is typically required.

ESAs are NOT considered service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), so they:

- Do NOT have public access rights (e.g., restaurants, stores, or planes).
- Are not required to wear special vests or ID.

3. Tips for ESA Owners

- Always have an up-to-date ESA letter from a licensed mental health provider.
- Be respectful and clear when communicating with landlords or housing staff.
- Be honest — misrepresenting a pet as an ESA can harm legitimate ESA users.

4. Helpful Links and Resources

- [Fair Housing Act details](#)
- [ADA and service animals](#)
- [National Service Animal Registry](#)
- [Research on animals & mental health](#)

Share your success story with me: tamiwest@tamiwest.com



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