

Pets as safe havens and secure bases: The moderating role of pet attachment orientations

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Abstract

We examined the extent to which a pet functions as an attachment figure. In Study 1, 165 pet owners performed a goal exploration task, assessing the number of life goals generated and confidence in goal attainment. In Study 2, 120 pet owners performed a distress-eliciting task while assessing blood pressure. In both studies, participants were divided into three conditions: pet physical presence, pet cognitive presence, and no pet presence. As compared to no pet presence, physical or cognitive pet presence increased the number of life goals generated and self-confidence in goal attainment and reduced blood pressure during the distress-eliciting task. The findings confirm the ability of a pet to provide a safe-haven and a secure-base and the moderating role of attachment insecurities.

Highlights

► Physical or cognitive pet presence reduced blood pressure during distress-eliciting task. ► Pet presence also increased number of life goals generated and confidence in goal attainment. ► These beneficial effects of pet presence were reduced by pet attachment insecurities. ► The findings confirm the ability of a pet to provide a safe-haven and a secure-base for its owner. ► The findings also confirm the moderating role of pet attachment insecurities.

Keywords

- Attachment;
- Human–animal interactions;
- Exploration;
- Stress;
- Cardiovascular reactivity;
- Pet;
- Human–animal bond