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The Human-Animal Bond Keeps Us Healthy!

by John H. Manley, DVM and Elder Care Board Member

As a practicing veterinarian for over forty years, I have witnessed how very strong the human-animal bond can be on many occasions. It is especially demonstrated when the pet owner and the pet have been separated by hours or frequently days. The joy that is displayed by both the owner and pet is truly heart-warming. This is especially recognized when a dog is reunited with a person. I'm sure most people have witnessed such a happy reunion. But, did you know that cats also display great happiness when their owner comes to take them home? I have even witnessed a cat running into its owner's outstretched arms when it sees they are being reunited. You cannot help but smile and feel happy for them.

Why do humans own pets? In both men and women, the most common answer is enjoyment and companionship. Protection, service, and therapy are also important reasons why some pet owners choose to own a pet.

Most people are not aware of the health benefits of pet ownership. In the past 20 years, there have been numerous studies performed that have identified several health benefits of pet ownership. Studies have indicated that pet owners, especially cat owners, have better cognitive function on average than those that do not own pets. Other studies have indicated that dog owners have better physical function than non-dog owners. One study found that dog owners, on average, spent 22 minutes



more per day walking than non-dog owners. Dog owners also averaged 2,260 more steps per day than non-dog owners. They also had fewer times of inactivity per day.

This exercise has been known to lower the risk of high blood pressure, type II diabetes, and high

cholesterol. The companionship of a pet has been found to be beneficial in the reduction of loneliness and anxiety.

Pet owners frequently said to me that their pets were the reason for them to rise from their bed in the morning and start their day. I believe the responsibilities of pet ownership gave them a purpose and is good for self-esteem.

Several studies have documented that the presence of pets in the household, helps to lower blood pressure and decrease heart rate,

regularize breathing, and relaxes muscle tension. At least one study has found evidence that pet owners have better survival rates following a heart attack than non-pet owners.

If you do not presently own a pet, but would like to have a pet, I encourage you to do so. If you don't feel up to having an energetic puppy, you might adopt a more mature dog from a pet rescue service. You can find them on the internet. We have at least two organizations in Bartlesville that place animals in homes. They are Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) and Washington County SPCA.

Car Tips for Caregivers - New POV

by Angie Thompson, Development Director

Are you recently tasked with providing transportation for someone with health issues? And using a vehicle to transport them around town, or on a long trip? There are many new features in today's vehicles which make car shopping exciting for some. But when searching for a vehicle that suits the needs of someone with physical limitations, it requires a different point of view - a **Caregiver's** point of view.

Considerations When Choosing a Vehicle

Caregivers may consider basics like budget, mileage, reliability, and desired features or technology. But also consider the more specific needs of passengers: who will be riding with you and what accommodations are needed to ensure their comfort and safety and provide them appropriate accessibility and convenience.



Common Features Caregivers May Find Helpful in a Car

- Ample cargo space for hauling equipment and other items
- Low floor but higher seats for an easier time getting in and out
- Spacious interior with plenty of room in the front and back seats
- Power doors that can open by pressing a button on the remote and a touch-activated back door for easy loading and unloading (some rear doors lift by placing your foot under the bumper)
- Remote start to heat or cool the car before entering
- Power windows and locks with child safety locks in the back

Salespeople offer excellent advice and can recommend cars that fit specific needs. A salesperson might offer suggestions not previously considered and have a better idea of what type of cars work best in different situations.

Tap into your caregiver's mindset and begin seeing car features from a different perspective - from the person's point of view you are transporting!

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July is UV Safety Month

by Tracy Stuckey, APRN, MSN, Bohon Clinic Director

Studies show that long-term exposure to bright sunlight may increase the risk of cataracts and growths on the eye, including cancer. UV rays reflected off sand and water can cause eyes to sunburn, potentially resulting in temporary blindness in just a few hours.

In support of UV Safety Month this July, the American Academy of Ophthalmology reminds the public of the importance of shielding eyes from the sun's harmful rays with 100% UV-blocking sunglasses and broad-brimmed hats.

Protect yourself from the sun:

- Slip on a shirt
- Slop on sunscreen
- Slap on a hat
- Wrap on sunglasses to protect the eyes and skin around them

Wear sunglasses that block UV rays:

UV-blocking sunglasses are important for protecting the delicate skin around the eyes, as well as the eyes

themselves. The ideal sunglasses should block 99% to 100% of UVA and UVB rays. Labels that say "UV absorption up to 700 nm" or "Meets ANSI UV Requirements" mean the glasses block at least 99% of UV rays.

Sunscreens labeled with Sun Protection Factor (SPF) as high as 100+ are available. Higher numbers do mean more protection, but many people don't understand the SPF scale.

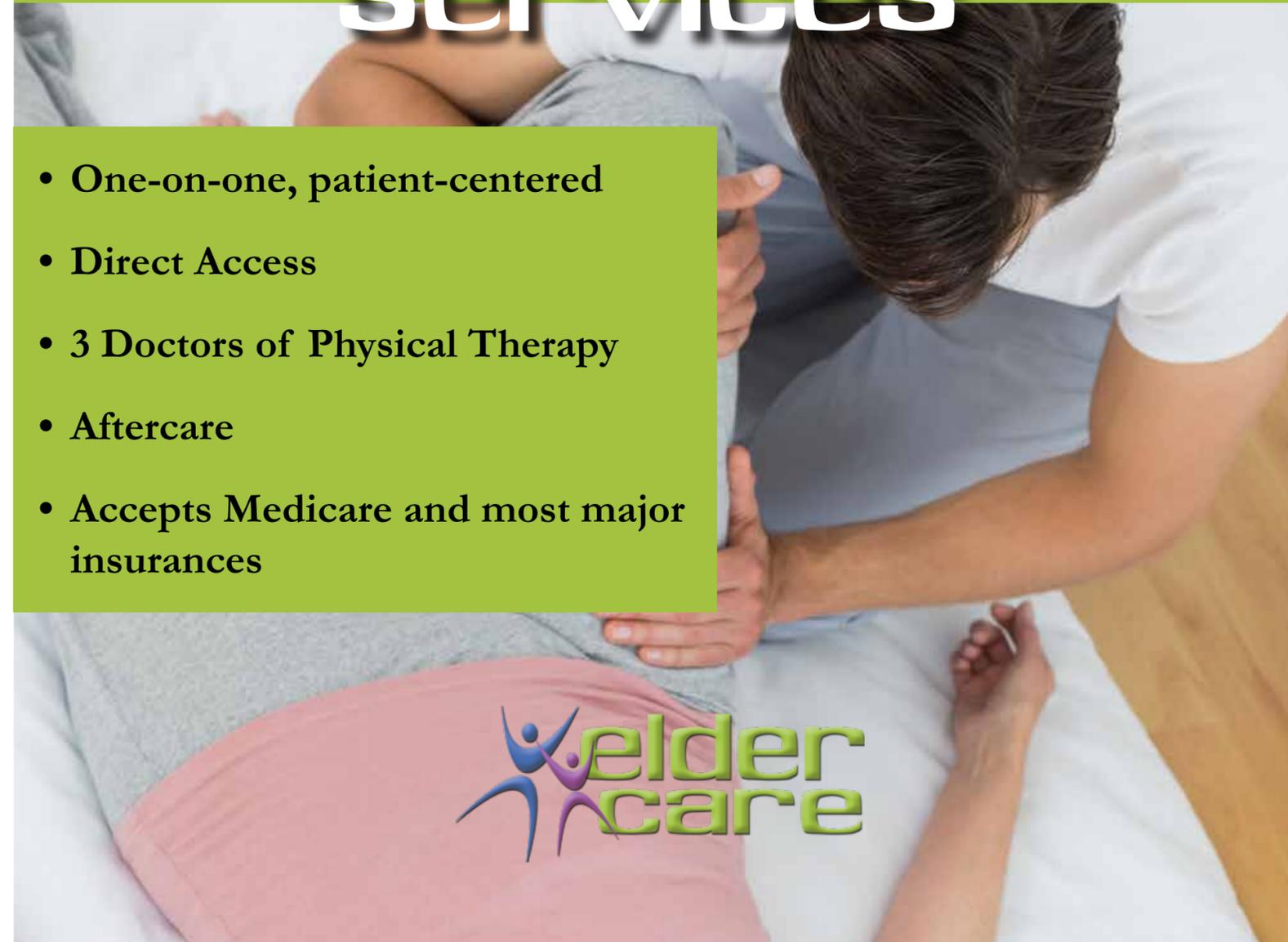
Protect by the SPF numbers:

SPF 15 suscreens filter out about 95% of the harmful UV rays, SPF 50 sunscreens filter out about 98%, and SPF 100 filters out about 99%. The higher you go, the smaller the difference becomes. Something else to think about - your lips are also exposed. Don't forget to use lip balm with sunscreen.



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Major Garden Needs for July through September

By Betty Turner, Washington County Extension Master Gardener, guest contributor

It is easy to kill plants with kindness and most often giving plants too much to drink is the problem. Tips for watering plants follow.

Plant more native plants which, once established, are mostly drought tolerant, require little care, are mostly disease free, and survive well during hot weather. Natives also attract native insects which pollinate plants. Most native plants bloom only four weeks. When one quits blooming others begin their bloom, providing color throughout the growing season. Plants requiring less water should be grouped together in the garden to avoid overwatering them when watering plants that require more moisture.

Mulch creates an attractive landscape, controls weeds, prevents erosion, and retains soil moisture. Maintain a 2 to 4-inch mulch layer around trees and other plants, but keep mulch an inch away from touching a tree trunk or plant stems.

Water lawns and other plants during morning hours so foliage will dry in the daytime wind and sunshine. Avoid afternoon irrigation because some water will evaporate into the air. Plants watered in evening or nighttime hours remain wet through the night which can cause fungal problems like mildew and black spot on susceptible plants. Water flowerbeds by drip irrigation and water goes directly into the soil without running off or wetting plant foliage.

By first of May mow warm season lawns 2-3" high to shade the roots and reduce moisture evaporation. At the beginning of spring mowing, mow grass 1-1.5" high. The taller grass reduces weed seed germination and soil retains moisture longer.



Frequent, shallow watering encourages shallow rooting, soil compaction, thatch accumulation, and weed seed germination. Shallow roots require more frequent irrigation during hot weather. In July retraining these lawns can begin by watering longer which allows moisture to go deeper and grass roots grow longer. Enough water should be applied in one application to wet the soil to a 6-inch depth. If water begins running off after 15 minutes and an automatic sprinkler is used, go to the next circuit, running each one for 15 minutes. After all circuits have watered, repeat each circuit again for 15 minutes. It may take three or four rounds to water to a 6-inch depth. Once the moisture reaches that depth, turn the lawn's

automatic system completely off. Do not water again until you see "foot printing" and a blue-gray appearance in the turf.

Even with mowing grass 2-3" high, it may take a month to develop longer roots with deep watering, therefore, the homeowner should water deeply a couple of times a week for at least a month. Once deeper roots are established, the lawn should look healthy for several weeks without added irrigation and yield a smaller water bill. Bermuda lawns require less irrigation as they are especially tough and withstand seasonal heat well.

One additional tip because September will soon be here. Do not apply nitrogen after September 15, as this may increase Bermuda grass susceptibility to winter injury and spring dead spot disease development.

More details of these topics are available at <https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets>.

Living a Balanced Life!

By Marilou G. Bork, LCSW

When we live in balance, we feel better, we're healthier and we enjoy life more. Being in balance requires taking care of ourselves. Yet, often we don't do what we should do to feel the way we want to feel. We sabotage our best laid plans. The root of these sabotages, often learned in childhood and buried deep, can be very powerful. A fear of not being enough can drive a person to work to exhaustion and ignore all other parts of their life. People-pleasing and saying "yes" too often can wreak havoc with our peace of mind.

In my life I usually know what's good for me: eat right, exercise, visit with friends, have some personal "me time", handle necessary chores, keep my space somewhat clutter free and organized, and refrain from over committing myself. Yet, I don't always do what's good for me. Sound familiar?

If we know to do "good" but do the opposite, what's going on? If we can see a pattern in the ways we sabotage ourselves then it is possible to create a healthier pattern and reweave our lives.

Do you ever say "yes" to something and immediately regret doing so? We could pick up the phone and call back as soon as we realize "no thank you" is a better, healthier response. But we don't want to upset anyone so we continue to displease ourselves for an evening or perhaps a year or two.

We also may become aware at some point in our lives that we are always striving to be more and do more. This internal, tiny voice is saying we just aren't quite enough the way we are. And since we can never achieve this imaginary, idealized self, there is no end to the striving. Even when we take a break, we can't relax and enjoy ourselves, the tiny voice is telling us "can't rest, better get back to work."

At times, the trick is finding the right balance and being mindful of how we're feeling in all areas of our lives. Giving ourselves permission to relax, play and have fun brings joy into our lives.

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Find a healthy balance in life by

- Discovering what truly helps us feel good
- Becoming healthier and reducing stress
- Becoming aware of what interferes with doing what helps us remain joyful
- Avoiding behaviors that are not life-giving

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