



American Heart Association.
Healthy Bond for Life™

BEST FRIEND FRIDAYS™

SUMMER 2023
**COMPANY
TOOLKIT**

#BestFriendFridays

Unleash the amazing power of pets.

Looking for a way to improve your team's health, mood and well-being? Look no further than our furry friends. Having a pet is a **Healthy Bond for Life™** that may help your employees lead a longer, healthier life.

Best Friend Fridays™: a fun, easy program





The American Heart Association continues to look for innovative ways to foster strong minds and healthy hearts.

Best Friend Fridays is an initiative that recognizes our pet companions who are always there for us. (And loyalty is just the beginning: Read on to learn all the ways that pets promote physical health and well-being.) At home or even joining as coworkers, pets are the best!

The program is easy to kick off and promote. Just invite your team members to celebrate their pet(s) each Friday. Employees can post a photo or video on social media using the hashtag **#BestFriendFridays**.

What you'll find in this guide

Want a sample email to send? Or a social post that you can cut and paste? You'll find it all in this guide.

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LESS STRESS. LOTS OF LOVE.

Best Friend Fridays™ celebrate our pet companions who are always there for us — helping us handle stress and boosting our physical and mental health. Having a pet is a **Healthy Bond for Life™** that may help you live a longer, healthier life! (And we've got the science to prove it.)



PETS CAN HELP YOU:

- Deal with stress
- Get more exercise and meet fitness goals
- Feel less lonely and isolated
- Lose weight
- Lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Recover after a health event



Owning a dog can help prevent chronic conditions such as **DIABETES** and **DEPRESSION**, and simply petting a dog **HELPS LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE.**

DURING THE PANDEMIC

According to a Rover survey



53%

of U.S. adults got a new dog



32%

got a new cat



14%

got both

93%

said their "pandemic pet" improved their mental and/or physical well-being.



PETS MAKE WORK BETTER

80%

said it made working from home more enjoyable.

44%

would consider changing jobs for a pet-friendly workplace.

37%

would give up vacation time and take a pay cut to bring their pet to work.

Having a pet around while working can help:

- Reduce stress
- Increase productivity
- Improve employee satisfaction, teamwork and collaboration

Learn more about Healthy Bond for Life's Best Friend Fridays at

heart.org/pets



At work or at play, pets are the best.

Take time each Friday to celebrate your pets and all they add to your life and post a photo or video using **#BestFriendFridays!**

Your new BFF: Best Friend Fridays™

Everyone wants a happy, healthy workforce. And pets have a role to play.

Pets can benefit your employees' health in many different ways. They can help raise fitness levels. They can help lower stress, blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar. Best of all, pets can boost people's overall happiness and well-being. We have the science to prove it!

Best Friend Fridays celebrates all that's great about the companionship of pets.



Did you know?



Having a pet may change habits that lead to **weight loss**.



Some studies even suggest that people with pets tend to **live longer** than those who don't have pets.



Interacting with pets can give us a sense of **goodwill** and **joy**, and **reduce our stress hormones**.



Do you have a pets-in-the-workplace policy? Consider this: When a dog joins a collaborative setting, group members **rank their teammates higher in terms of trust, team cohesion and camaraderie!**



Mark your calendar

These are great days to invite your employees to post about their pets, or to welcome pets into the workplace:

- **June 4-10:** Pet Appreciation Week
- **June 8:** National Best Friends Day
- **June 19-23:** National Bring Your Pet to Work Week
- **July 10:** National Kitten Day
- **Aug. 5:** Work Like a Dog Day
- **Aug. 6-12:** International Assistance Dog Week
- **Aug. 8:** International Cat Day
- **Aug. 10:** Spoil Your Dog Day
- **Aug. 23:** International Blind Dog Day
- **Aug. 26:** National Dog Day

And don't forget the "**dog days**" of summer – officially **July 3-August 11**.



Spreading the word

Use these handy templates for your internal communications.



SAMPLE EMAIL

Subject: Show us a pic of your favorite four-legged co-worker!

Copy:

Let's celebrate **#BestFriendFridays** with the American Heart Association. It's all part of their Healthy Bond for Life™ initiative, which celebrates the special bond between people and pets. Enjoying the company of pets can lead to better health, greater well-being and longer lives.

Join in the fun by posting pictures on social media using **#BestFriendFridays** every Friday this summer! Here are some ideas:

- Share a picture of your pet while you work.
- Post a picture with your pet playing outside or on a walk.
- Share a picture of how your pet helps your stress levels.

Learn the health benefits of enjoying pets at heart.org/pets.

SAMPLE INTRANET MESSAGE

Share a pic of your pet: #BestFriendFridays

Copy:

Our pets are always there for us. In fact, according to the American Heart Association, pets can even improve our health and well-being!

So let's recognize our faithful companions this summer, as part of the American Heart Association's **Best Friend Fridays** program.

Find a Friday to post a picture of your pet on social media with the hashtag **#BestFriendFridays**. Any picture will do: at home, out for a walk, or perched on your shoulder (if you have a bird or iguana).

Learn the health benefits of enjoying pets at heart.org/pets.

SAMPLE COMPANY SOCIAL POST

T.G.I. Best Friend Fridays

Copy:

Thank goodness for pets! At [company name], we are proud to join the American Heart Association in celebrating **Best Friend Fridays™**, which recognizes how pets improve our health and well-being. All summer long, our employees are posting pictures of their furry friends and faithful companions. **#BestFriendFridays #HealthyBondForLife**





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Pets? Let's!



Get moving more with your pet.

Studies show that pets are good for your health! Not only do pets offer companionship and stress relief, but pets can keep you active — which is good for your heart and overall health.

Good for you. Good for them.

Remember, pets need physical activity too. Keeping active with them benefits you both!

- **Play fetch** It's a classic for a reason. Grab that tennis ball or Frisbee and get out there. Don't forget to keep moving.
- **Bike with a furry passenger** Have a pet carrier on your bicycle? Show your pet the sights — you supply the pedal power.
- **Pets & poses** Invite your puppy to join you for yoga — after all, she already knows puppy pose and down dog. It's a great answer when cooler fall temps keep you inside.
- **Indoor obstacle course** Too cold out? That's no obstacle. Create a fun obstacle course for your pet using household objects and boxes. Chase them through, so you get moving too.

Pets keep you motivated.

Let's face it — sometimes you might not feel like going for a walk. Your pet can encourage — even demand — that you get out there!

Great health, inside and out.

Playing with your pet, indoors or outdoors, can help you reach healthy goals. Try to get outside when the weather is nice — nature has its own health benefits, and your pet will love it.

- **Fit in 150+** Get at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, preferably spread throughout the week. A brisk walk with the dog counts!
- **Move more, sit less** Get up and move throughout the day. Pets welcome playtime — grab that cat toy and start some active fun.
- **Add intensity** Moderate to vigorous aerobic activity is best. Increase your time and/or intensity to get more benefits. Jog or run with your pet.
- **Add muscle** Include moderate — to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity at least twice a week. (Soon you'll have no trouble lifting those heavy bags of food for your golden retriever.)

Harness health benefits.

Horses may not cuddle in your lap, but they're healthy too. Riding is great exercise, and time spent around horses is good for your well-being.

Learn more about the healthy bond with pets. Visit heart.org/pets.

“Fur”ther resources

Learn more about how the American Heart Association embraces the love we have for our animal companions, and how pets can improve our health and well-being. Visit heart.org/pets.

Horses Have Heart

Harness the health benefits of horse riding, which can promote cardiovascular health and reduce stress. The American Heart Association's Horses Have Heart initiative encourages the many benefits of caring for and riding horses. Learn more at heart.org/horses.



More reading. (And viewing.)

Check out some of these other resources:

ARTICLES

- 5 ways pets help mental health while working from home
- Move more with your pet
- Pets are the new work-from-home #coworkers
- Pet-friendly work policies



VIDEOS

- Best Friend Fridays – pets are good for your health
- Adopting a dog could be good for your heart
- Do people who have dogs live longer?



Help us lick heart disease and stroke.

We look forward to working with you on **Best Friend Fridays**.



Questions?

This research-backed toolkit is just one of many American Heart Association resources that encourage health in the workplace and beyond. Visit heart.org/workforce to learn more.

