PET THERAPY

Animals – especially dogs – are being recognised as an important source of emotional and physical comfort, especially for the elderly and children. Since the 1970s, North American hospitals and long-term care, assisted-living and mental-health facilities have used Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) to help reduce feelings of isolation, loneliness or stress. 'Pet therapy' can involve almost any type of animal – usually dogs but sometimes cats, and even guinea pigs, rabbits, ferrets, pot-bellied pigs or birds. Pet therapy can be used as an additional therapy for people in many different circumstances, including elderly people in nursing homes or chronically ill people who are hospitalized. For example, in a typical nursing home scenario, a pre-screened, certified therapy dog or cat will be brought to the facility by the owner, usually once or twice a week, at a scheduled day and time.

During each visit, the pair may spend time with each person, usually for 10-30 minutes each. During that time, patients can feel, touch, pet, hold, cuddle, and talk to the animal. Often, the mere presence or sight of the pet can bring a smile or a sense of joy.

The interaction with a pet provides an opportunity for patients to express affection and emotions and to enjoy the sense of touch. A pet's unconditional love instills a sense of well-being and self-esteem in many patients. Through regular visits, patients often form a bond with the pet and with the volunteer.

TRUE OR FALSE

ACTIVITIES

● *Decide if the following sentences are true or false and correct the false ones.*

1. Animals are considered a valid support for children and the elderly who feel lonely. **T** **F**
   ....

2. Only dogs are suitable for pet therapy. **T** **F**
   ....

3. Pet therapy can't be carried out in a nursing home. **T** **F**
   ....

4. Time spent with the pet can vary from 10 minutes to 2 hours. **T** **F**
   ....

5. Pet therapy is mainly based on the sense of touch to communicate calmness and comfort.
   ....

6. Pets help patients recover their self-esteem and peacefulness. **T** **F**
   ....

VOCABULARY

● *Read the text again and find the English equivalents of the following Italian terms.*

1	Salute mentale	....	6 Coccolare	....
2	Isolamento	....	7 Programmato	....
3	Furetto	....	8 Senso del tatto	....
4	Porcellino d'India	....	9 Autostima	....
5	Solitudine	....	10 Legame	....