

# MARCH NEWSLETTER

## How Pets Impact our Mental Health



Therapist Olivia and her dog Rascal running on the East Coast Trail

Pets are the best! Currently about 58% of Canadian households have at least one pet- and the numbers continue to rise. For years the correlation between pets and having positive mental health impacts has been undeniable. So much so that animals have been included in multiple forms of therapy such as equine therapy and stress reduction therapies. Animal therapies show the best results when paired with a comprehensive treatment plan.

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However, pets do not have to be certified therapy or service animals to have positive impacts on our mental health.

One of the most impactful mental health benefits owning a pet provides is companionship. Your pet (dog, cat, lizard, horse, chickens, etc.) helps create feelings of belonging, unconditional love and acceptance while decreasing loneliness. This in turn can boost your mood by releasing serotonin and dopamine. We know that increased social support helps mitigate depression and depressive symptoms, owning a pet does the same. This is particularly evident in elderly populations as well as in youth who have experienced bullying or who feel out of step with others. It has been shown that in retirement homes that regular visits from therapy animals increased cognitive functioning and decreased symptoms of depression.

Individuals with Alzheimer's disease and dementia have been noted to respond particularly well to pets. Research conducted at the University of California found that Alzheimer's patients experience less stress and display fewer anxious outbursts when they share their home with a dog or cat. Interestingly, being exposed to a vibrant aquarium or fish tanks also has notable calming effects. In one study, people at an Alzheimer's facility who dined in front of aquariums ate more, acquired better nutrition, and were less prone to pacing. They were also more attentive and less lethargic. Frequently challenging behaviours demonstrated in Alzheimer's patients arise from the stress experienced by the primary caregiver. Pets have demonstrated their ability to alleviate this stress.

Pets also have been attributed to increasing their owner's physical activity, most notably dogs. This tends to come from creating a structured routine that is required for the daily care of a pet. The most significant finding in multiple studies, including those released by the American Heart Association, is that owning a pet (dog) increases heart health.

## Meet the Clinics Pets!



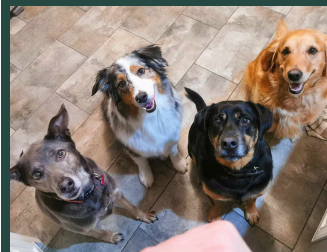
**Maisie**

Owned by  
receptionist Leah



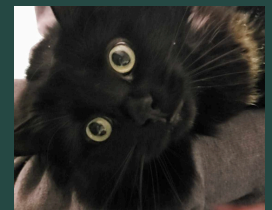
**Maple**

Owned by  
chiropractor Ashley



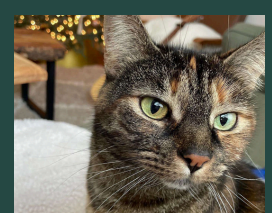
**Gracie, Silver,  
Duke & Esther**

owned by  
massage therapist  
Andrea



**Flash & Ebony**

Owned by massage therapist Madison



**Carrot & Turnip**

Owned by chiropractor/owner Bri



**Loomis, Reggie & Dolly**

Owned by massage therapist Matt



It has been shown that owning a dog lowering blood pressure, reducing stress, encouraging exercise, and potentially decreasing the risk of cardiovascular disease; the simple act of petting a pet can even help lower blood pressure and improve overall well-being.

To get these positive benefits doesn't mean you have to own a pet. Visit your friends, volunteer at a local shelter or consider pet sitting. Ultimately, spending time with any animal you like goes a long way and can help make you the best version of yourself!

## The Psychology of Tattoos

Tattoos have a interesting and deeply rooted history. A practice that began over 5,000 years ago is still very popular today. A study conducted by Narrative Research found that as of March 2024, 33% of Canadians have a tattoo, interestingly within that 33% it was found women are slightly more likely to have body art then men (38% women to 28% men, respectively).



There are many reasons as to why someone would want a tattoo but the most popular is the formation of a narrative identity. Essentially having moments of your life story expressed through body art, making many tattoos deeply personal and interwoven with how we view ourselves. It appears several studies that analyzed tattooed participants identified that there are 4 overarching themes of tattoos.

## Identity: Expressing the Unique Self

Most people feel that their tattoos represent a part of themselves. This is consistent with researched needs for uniqueness for many this is a major motivator for getting a tattoo. People often spend time designing their body art to be incredibly personal to represent their individual story.

## Affiliation: Belonging to a Group or Family

Many use tattoos as a way to show their belonging and connection to extended groups or families. Often it symbolizes the profound impact a group has had on an individual's life story. It has been found that sharing similar tattoos can increase feelings of connectedness to a community or larger identity. An example of this is the semicolon tattoo that is recognized as a symbol for someone who has survived their struggle with mental health challenges including depression and suicidal ideations.

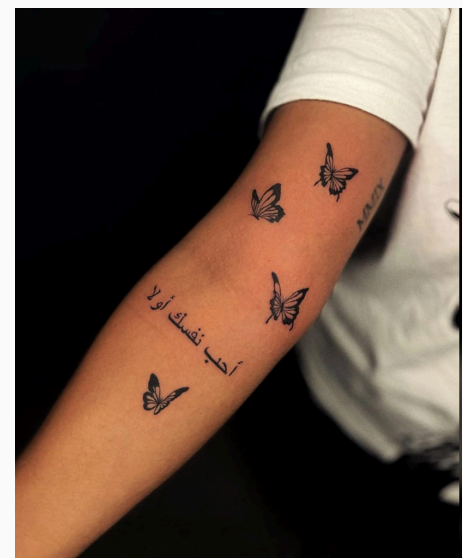


## Reminiscence: Remembering or Honouring events that Molded the Narrative

Tattoos can be a significant reminder of past events that speak to their impact on the person's life story. It can be positive or negative experiences that they felt have changed or shaped who they are in the present. Most people find that depicting these events on their bodies give the events a sense of meaning and permanence. For some these tattoos may include script or words that are particularly meaningful, such as the words 'love, Nan' in a late grandmother's handwriting.

## Resiliency: Surviving Difficult Times

Tattoos can also be a celebration of perseverance and survival of life-changing events. It is interesting to note that tattoos can be a way of coping with trauma and that they can help bring difficult chapters in life to a close. A study conducted in the United States found that this is true for many sexual violence survivors whose tattoos were a pathway for them to regain control and autonomy over their bodies and environment. Tattoos were able to act as a non-traditional form of healing.





## Stigma and Stereotypes: Bridging the Gaps

“You will never be seen as a professional...” Many tattooed young people have heard some variation of this. It is a stronger viewpoint that tends to be maintained by older generations, a stigma that is slow to fade. It seems that older generations tend to see tattoos as less formal, irresponsible and for some, mutilation of the body. These perspectives tend to be rooted in much older views that go beyond their generation. When we look back at history tattoos were associated with sailors, criminals, ‘freak show’ entertainment, gang members and marginalized groups such as Indigenous people. Anyone who identified with any of those communities was viewed as undesirable, or rebellious and by proxy so were tattoos. Interestingly, these perspectives have been pushed to the side for younger generations views which tend to be more accepting of those who are visually different than ourselves.



Six Inuit women with traditional face tattoos, Kakiniit .  
Archival photo from *Telling Our Stories*



Maud Wagner, 1907  
Circus Performer

Younger generations seem to have a more positive perception of tattoos. This may be because they are more likely to have tattoos themselves, but also associate tattoos with art and the telling of a personal story . It can also be attributed to a higher likelihood of growing up with parents who are tattooed. This would make tattoos a normal part of their lives from the very beginning.

What we know is that the social acceptance of tattoos is increasing with every generation and within a short period of time it will be difficult to find any adult without a tattoo.

## Announcements, Updates, This & That

### Tax Free Therapy

Please note that therapy is now a tax free service in unregulated provinces (Newfoundland). If you have questions regarding how the removal of HST will impact you and the cost of therapy please connect with Olivia through email. You can also contact national or provincial licensing bodies such as the CCPA and the CRPO.

### Insurance Coverage for Therapy

Telus health has now been approved for therapy services! If any clients have had difficulty using their insurance in the past please let Adrianne or Leah at the front desk know.

### Snow Day Give Away

Align Chiropractic and Wellness doing a give away everyday we're closed due to snowy weather. What's up for grabs? A 60 minute massage session!

*How to enter:*

- 1) Follow Align Chiropractic and Wellness on Instagram @alignchironl,
- 2) tag a friend in the comments when the giveaway is posted (extra tags equals extra entries!)
- 3) Share the post to your story and tag @alignchironl so we can see it!

## Hot Tip for St. Patrick's Day and Everyday

Room temperature drinks that are supposed to be cold are kind of a bummer. Especially if you want them right away. A hot tip that comes from Caribbean locals is to wrap your can or bottle in a wet paper towel and pop it in the freezer (or outside in the snow) for a few minutes. It will be cold in no time!

