

50 Ways to Build the Bond with Your Pet

Laurel Lagoni, M.S.

1. Ask a friend to videotape you and your pet doing ordinary, everyday things -- playing, cuddling, taking a walk, sharing some quiet time in the evening.
2. Take pictures of your pet in a favorite place -- asleep on the window seat, sitting near the back door, waiting in the yard for your children to come home after school.
3. Set your alarm clock ten minutes earlier than usual and spend the extra time with your pet.
4. Make a plan to cover the costs of health care for your pet -- apply for pet insurance, set up a dedicated savings account, or acquire a credit card and use it just for your pet's needs and health care. (Learn about CareCredit at www.carecredit.com).Hire an experienced trainer to ensure your pet is a well-behaved addition to family events.
5. Include your pet in family routines and celebrations.
6. Take a family vacation to a pet-friendly destination.
7. Prioritize an activity and certain time of day to spend with your pet -- visit your horses over your lunch hour, walk your dog after work, watch the nightly news with your guinea pig cuddled on your lap.
8. Celebrate your pet's birthday or adoption anniversary.
9. Write a poem about your pet.
10. Include your pets in daily prayers or meditations.
11. Include stories and memories of your pets in your daily journal entries.
12. Include photos of your pets in your family albums.
13. Make a scrapbook about each of your pets.
14. Make a donation to an animal-related organization or charity in your pet's name.



15. Take time to find the veterinary team best suited to care for your pet. Visit several veterinary clinics and ask questions about topics that are uniquely important to you. These may include questions about their practice philosophy, how they handle emergencies, senior pet care, client support and communication, animal behavior modification, etc. Look for a veterinarian who is 'bond-centered', rather than making price comparisons the basis of such an important decision.
16. Find an experienced, safety-conscious groomer or invest in high-quality grooming tools and do it yourself.
17. Make a thorough study of any boarding kennel, doggie daycare, neighbor, or friend to whom you entrust your pet. Your pet's safety is the most important factor to consider when you plan to be away for any length of time.
18. Gaze into your pet's eyes. Allow yourself to send and receive feelings of love.
19. Feed your pets the best food you can afford to buy.
20. When it's in your pet's best interest, ask for a second opinion or referral to a specialist when your pet is ill or injured.
21. Be a positive role model for your children, demonstrating how people are responsible for their pets' quality of life.
22. Hire an experienced trainer to ensure your pet is a well-behaved addition to family events.
23. Make a keepsake print of your pet's paw, claw, or hoof. An animal print set in modeling clay is as individual as a child's fingerprint. Find high-quality print-making kits at http://www.veterinarywisdompetparents.com/products/claypaws_kits
24. If you're planning a move, a change in your marital status (remarriage or divorce), or welcoming a new baby into your life, consider the impact it will have on your pet. Make a plan that will ease your pet's transition into the new situation.

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25. If you're divorcing, hire an attorney to help you and your ex-spouse create a legal agreement about the custody of and financial responsibility for your pet. Honor the terms of your agreement.
26. Make end-of-life decisions about your pet's care long before your pet dies. These decisions are always difficult, but making them before you are grief-stricken by loss ensures you can honor your pet in ways that are important and meaningful to you. For example, ask yourself how you will want your pet's body cared for (burial, cremation) and inform yourself about the businesses who provide these services in your area. Think about what you might want to do to memorialize your pet (read a special poem, frame a special photo) and keep these items filed where you can easily locate them when the time comes.
27. If you can, be with your pet and say good-bye when he or she dies.
28. Have a funeral or memorial event so others who loved your pet can say good-bye -- and support you!
29. Cherish each day with your pet.
30. Tell your pet everyday how much he or she means to you and how grateful you are for their friendship.
31. Kiss your pet on the nose.
32. Brush your pet for at least five minutes.
33. Tell your co-workers a funny story about your pet.
34. Write down all the nicknames you have for your pet.
35. Join an animal-related organization and work for the betterment of animals in our world.
36. Gather your pet's discarded collars, water bowls, or toys and donate them (along with food and money when you can) to your local humane society or animal shelter.
37. Talk about your pet with reverence and respect, just as you would refer to a human member of your family.
38. Seek out and invest in specialized help when you need to make decisions on behalf of your pet. There is a growing community of 'pet experts' in our society who are ready and willing to consult with you. You can find attorneys who specialize in animal law and hospice workers who specialize in pet loss. Treat your pet like a member of your family by finding the best answers you can to your pet-related problems.
39. Manage your own stress every day so you don't take your frustrations out on your pet.
40. Get plenty of rest and relaxation so you're not too exhausted to care for or spend time with your pet.
41. If your work schedule is demanding and you can afford it, hire others to walk your dog, clean up the poop in your yard, or stay with your pets when you're out of town. Most animals do best when their daily routines are consistent and predictable. Even if your life isn't that way, you can take steps to create that for your companion animal.
42. Consider ***all*** your pet's needs, not just what they need to be cared for physically. Educate yourself about each of your pet's emotional and social needs, then make changes to ensure those needs are met, as well. For instance, some animals are highly social and thrive when there are other animals in their daily lives for companionship. Other pets are more easily stressed by the presence of other animals. Find out what your pet needs.
43. Get to know your pet's individual personality and preferences. Don't assume that all parrots are alike or that all golden retrievers need the same things.
44. Understand what makes your pet anxious or fearful and take steps to protect them when you can.
45. When you're walking, riding, or playing with your companion animal, let him or her set the agenda once in a while. Dogs like to stop and sniff even when you'd prefer to keep power walking. Take turns!
46. If you add a young pet to your family, stay connected with your aging pet, too. It's tempting to spend your active time with a young, energetic pet. But, your older pet still needs and wants to be with you! Vary your activities so all can participate!
47. Keep your pets, as well as their beds, cages, and stalls, clean and nice-smelling. Bad smells will make you want to avoid touching or handling your pet.
48. Don't be swayed by what others tell you to do when it comes to caring for your pet. Pet parenting is as individual and personal as parenting a child.
49. Ponder the spiritual meaning of the bond with your pet.
50. And, finally, remember that money doesn't make the bond between you and your pet stronger. Spend time with your pet instead of buying another treat or toy. And, if you can't afford the latest and greatest medical care for your pet, realize that treatment does not equal love. Provide the very best care you can honestly afford for your pet when he or she needs it. After that, simply love them each day until it's time to say good-bye.

"Manage your own stress every day so you don't take your frustrations out on your pet."

Simply Love Your Pet

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