

TIMES PETS & US

The most fundamental lessons of life were once taught to us by our grandparents. But we don't live in such indulgent times anymore. In nuclear families, especially with a single child, a furry companion often helps inculcate sound values from a young age

PET and the single child



PIC: THINKSTOCK

In a changing society like ours with mostly nuclear families, a pet plays a larger role than in a traditional one. Children often feel lonely in such set-ups despite best efforts by parents. A pet often comes in handy in a nuclear family, especially with one kid.

EMPATHY

Empathy is the biggest lesson

to learn. But the time parents have with their child isn't enough to teach this valuable lesson. When a single child grows up with a pet in the house he/she learns to be more sensitive and caring. Ishita, mother of a four-year-old, says, "My son is four but he understands when my dog is in pain." Another quality that

these fur balls teach our children is to be observant. Pulkit has an 11-year-old daughter. "She knows exactly when the dog wants to go out for a walk or when is hungry," he says.

RESPONSIBILITY

That's another reason why a child should grow up with a pet. We all want to provide and

pamper our child. Everything that happens in a house is either for the child or keeping the child in mind. Charu Bhoj, mother of a six-year-old, says, "When I introduced her to the dog it was like she had a child of her own to take care off." Keeping a pet teaches the kid to be responsible about the needs of the pet. Giving the responsibly of basic pet

needs to the child like giving him/her food on time, taking the pet for walks or doctors' appointments make a child understand the importance of responsibility from a young age. And we know that whatever we learn in our tender years, stays with us for a long time.

LIFE & DEATH

The hardest part of being a parent is to teach our kids the concept of life and death. Keeping a pet teaches them this in the most realistic way possible. Being a pet parent makes you see the entire cycle of getting a young puppy or kitten home, taking care of the pet, seeing him grow up and then grow old, to one day losing him or her. This teaches us the entire cycle of life.

Having a pet is like having a best friend at home with you. A pet in the house becomes the stress buster for everyone and keeps your child occupied in the most constructive way. Taking care of a pet teaches us to be kind, selfless, caring and responsible. This builds your child's character making them better human beings in the easiest way possible.

— Swati Tandon, pet expert

COMET, THE GREAT

Our dog's name was Comet, an unusual name decided after a lot of brainstorming. Our Pomeranian came as a puppy and won the hearts of all. Initially, he had a problem adjusting to the new environment; he would wail loudly and yelp for his mother as he had been separated from her. We were all moved by his cries. My brother did everything to console him, even allowing Comet to sleep with him in his quilt. Slowly, Comet settled in and took an instant liking to my mother as she would give him his meals (milk and chappati). He soon got familiar with the sound of the chain as it signalled the time for his walk. He would start jumping with joy. Though small in size, he could be a terror. Any stranger or animal such as cow or pig would be barked at loudly.

One night at around 2 in the morning, we heard Comet barking himself hoarse. He continued barking for half an hour, but we did not bother to get up and investigate. Next morning, much to our surprise, we found that someone had tampered with the door of the terrace. Comet had frightened the thieves trying to break in. They had broken the lock with much skill. However, they had not thought they would encounter a ferocious dog in Comet. It must have attacked them. They had retreated and left the terrace door ajar. We applauded his courage. Comet stayed with us for 15 years. He passed away and the void has not been filled. His memories are still alive in our mind. No one can take his place. — Ruchi Sharma, New Delhi



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