

Medicating With Dogs: Surviving PTSD - The Healing Power of Canine Companions

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a debilitating condition that affects millions of people around the world. It is a mental health illness triggered by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event such as war, natural disasters, accidents, or abuse. Those who suffer from PTSD often experience intrusive memories, heightened anxiety, depression, and a constant sense of danger. While traditional treatments like therapy and medication exist, there is a growing recognition of the therapeutic benefits of medicating with dogs to help survivors of PTSD.

Dogs have long been known for their loyalty, companionship, and unconditional love towards humans. However, their role in supporting individuals with mental health issues is becoming increasingly recognized and studied. Numerous scientific research and anecdotal evidence show that dogs can provide immense emotional support, comfort, and relief for people suffering from PTSD.

The Healing Power of Canine Companions

Dogs offer a unique form of therapy that complements conventional treatments, allowing individuals with PTSD to experience relief and overcome the challenges they face. Here are some reasons why medicating with dogs can be highly beneficial:

Medicating with Dogs: Surviving PTSD

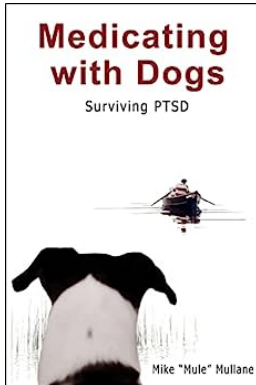
by Arthur Schopenhauer (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting: Enabled
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- **Emotional support:** Dogs have an extraordinary ability to sense emotions and provide unconditional support to their owners. They can provide a calming presence during times of distress and offer a non-judgmental ear to listen. Their companionship can alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation, helping individuals with PTSD feel understood and loved.
- **Sense of safety:** Dogs are known for their exceptional ability to detect danger. For individuals with PTSD, who are often hypervigilant and constantly on edge, having a dog by their side can create a sense of safety and security. Dogs are attuned to their owner's emotions and can alert them to potential danger, helping survivors feel protected.
- **Grounding and mindfulness:** PTSD often causes individuals to feel disconnected from their surroundings and even their own bodies. Dogs provide a grounding element, as they need routine care and attention. Caring for a dog promotes a sense of responsibility, routine, and purpose, which can help individuals regain a sense of control over their lives. Dogs also encourage mindfulness, as their presence encourages survivors to focus on the present moment and engage in calming activities like walking or petting.

- **Reduced anxiety and stress:** Dogs have been shown to reduce anxiety and stress levels in individuals, even in non-PTSD populations. Their presence releases oxytocin, a hormone associated with bonding and stress reduction. The physical act of petting a dog has a soothing effect, bringing about a sense of calm and relaxation. Dogs can help regulate heart rate and blood pressure, alleviate panic attacks, and provide comfort during anxiety-inducing situations.
- **Improved social interaction:** PTSD can often lead to social withdrawal, making it difficult for survivors to interact with others and form meaningful connections. Dogs act as social facilitators, attracting attention and serving as a conversation starter. Walking a dog in public can encourage social interactions, helping individuals reintegrate into the community and combat feelings of loneliness.

Choosing a Service Dog or Emotional Support Animal

When considering medicating with dogs, it is essential to assess specific needs and determine the best type of canine companion for each individual. There are two main categories of dogs that can assist those with PTSD:

1. **Service Dogs:** These dogs are highly trained to perform specific tasks that mitigate an individual's disability. They undergo extensive training to learn how to assist their owner with daily activities and mitigate certain symptoms of PTSD. Service dogs can provide practical support, such as guiding their owners during panic attacks, interrupting nightmares, or creating a physical barrier between their owner and the surrounding environment.
2. **Emotional Support Animals (ESAs):** Unlike service dogs, ESAs do not require specialized training. They provide emotional support and comfort simply by being there for their owners. ESAs can be helpful for those

individuals who may not require specific tasks but still benefit from the therapeutic presence of a dog.

The Legal Rights of Individuals with Service Dogs or ESAs

It is important to note that in the United States, service dogs and ESAs have different legal rights. Service dogs are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and are allowed to accompany their owners in public places, including restaurants, stores, and airplanes. On the other hand, ESAs are typically permitted in housing under the Fair Housing Act, allowing individuals to live with their emotional support animals even in places with no-pet policies.

However, it is essential to understand the specific laws and regulations surrounding service dogs and ESAs in your country to ensure you receive accurate information and properly advocate for your rights as a dog owner.

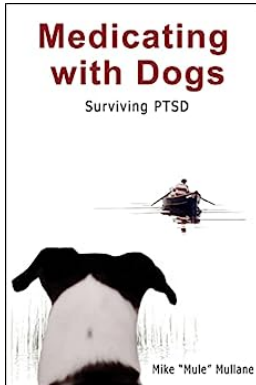
Medicating with dogs provides invaluable support and companionship to individuals surviving with PTSD. The healing power of these loyal animals goes beyond simple emotional comfort, as they can assist in grounding, promoting mindfulness, reducing anxiety, creating a sense of safety, and improving social interactions. Dogs offer an alternative approach to traditional treatments, acting as a vital tool in helping individuals overcome the challenges posed by PTSD and ultimately begin to heal.

If you or someone you know is struggling with PTSD, consider exploring the possibility of medicating with dogs. These amazing creatures have the ability to change lives and provide the love and support needed to survive and thrive.

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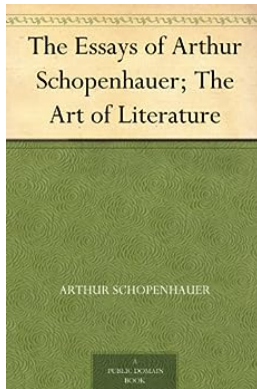
A memoir about surviving the aftermath of trauma.

Medicating with Dogs, Surviving PTSD is a memoir about the aftermath of trauma. Mike Mullane flew 212 combat missions during the Vietnam War. He returned to the states only to discover he had brought the war home with him. Deep in denial, he waited for his symptoms to fade away. After a decade, he covertly saw a psychologist. The diagnosis was Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He left and never went back, unwilling to label himself crazy.

During the ensuing years he was slowly worn down and hemmed in by his self-imposed isolation, guilt, anger, flashbacks, insomnia, and nightmares. He waged a futile effort to avoid his triggers, exaggerated startle reflex.

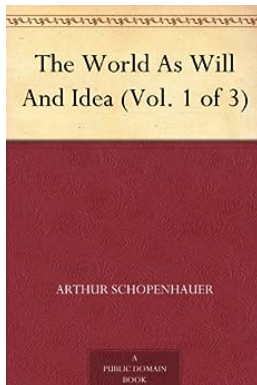
He resorted several forms of self-medication, all of them ineffective, all them self-destructive—except one. He filled his life with dogs. They surrounded, protected, comforted, and gave him moments of peace. They helped him get through prolonged bouts of depression and pulled him back from the siren song of suicide.

Medicating with Dogs is an honest portrait from inside the mind and soul of someone living with PTSD, It was written so that others who battle PTSD alone can avoid the mistakes he made. It is also intended to help those who care about someone with PTSD and who struggle to understand them.



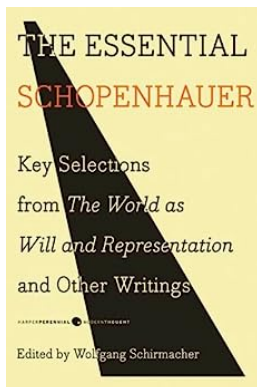
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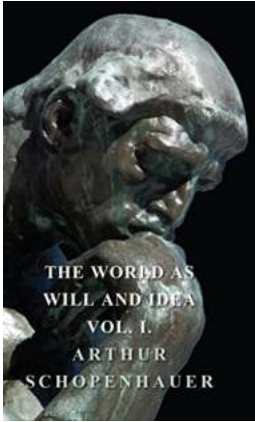
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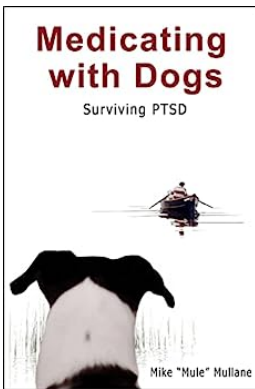
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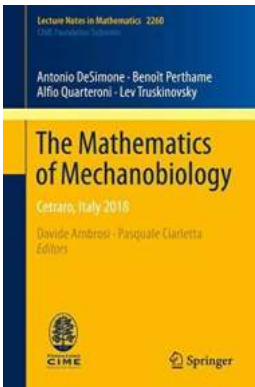
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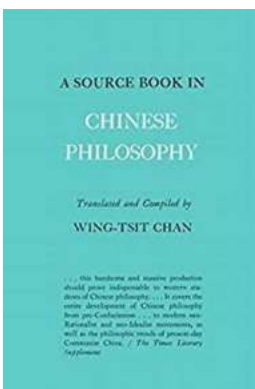
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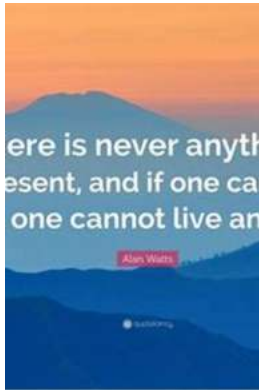
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