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Dogs and Their Promising Roles in Sleep Disorders Therapy

Posted by Sree Roy | Jun 22, 2015 | Mental Health, Narcolepsy, Obstructive Sleep Apnea, REM Parasomnias, Sleep Treatments | 42 🐾 |

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In patients with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), nightmares, narcolepsy, parasomnias, and other sleep disorders, service animals may add a valuable, and currently underappreciated, treatment option.

By Mary W. Rose, PsyD, CBSM; Colleen G. Lance, MD; and Carlos H. Schenck, MD

As sleep specialists, we spend our patient contact time on issues related not only to adherence to the treatments we prescribe, but also on trying to understand the motivations and behavioral choices our patients make that affect their sleep. Part of this clinical endeavor is to further understand how we can use patient decision-making preferences to help guide and direct treatment, which at times can present a major challenge. In Western cultures, an increasingly prevalent patient choice is the practice of co-sleeping with pets.

It is the objective of this paper to describe not only the habits of co-sleeping, but also the use of service animals (SAs), usually dogs, and of emotional support animals (ESAs) as promising treatments of various sleep disorders, and to promote further interest in this area by sleep professionals. Not only are SAs apparently being more widely utilized for this purpose, but there may be other benefits to the treatment of sleep disorders that have been only initially explored. Dogs appear to be the most readily available and trainable SAs for most disorders. In recent years, there has been growing use of ESAs as well, who tend to be specifically used to provide support for psychiatric conditions such as panic anxiety and depression. Unlike SAs, these animals do not require formal training, nor are they legally protected for public access.

Historical Perspective

In order to properly understand the phenomenon of co-sleeping, we are best served by reviewing the history of our relationship with dogs and cats, as well as our (questionably unique) capacity of empathy for other species. Animal-human co-sleeping has a fascinating anthropological history. The earliest co-habitant of man was the dog. The domestication of the dog has been traced as far back as the Paleolithic era, about 31,000 years ago¹ to 32,100 years ago.² It is well-known that cultural patterns impact the sleep environment. In Western countries, the popularity of domestic pets has been increasing, and also rapidly expanding in westernizing cultures such as Japan. Over 70% of Americans own pets. Though most of the data on co-sleeping and bed-sharing lack large sampling or careful analysis, 60% of patients reported co-sleeping with their pets in one study.³ When a dog slept in the bedroom, it had a 57% chance of sleeping on the bed; 53% of co-sleepers reported sleep to be disrupted to some extent every night, but only 1% felt their sleep was disrupted more than 20 minutes per night. Yielding similar co-sleeping data, a recent abstract also suggested that 52% of patients sampled from a family medicine clinic indicated sharing a bed with a dog or cat; in spite of many patients reporting some disrupted sleep related to the co-sleeping, they also reported obtaining comfort and security.⁴

Sleep Professionals' Perspective

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in

Though the most common reaction of sleep professionals is to advise our patients against co-sleeping with pets, we fail to recognize that for many this is experienced the same as if they were told to stop sleeping with their spouse. Additionally, we automatically assume sleep disruption from co-sleeping with pets. However, this is not an evidence-based recommendation. Pets and/or SAs may truly be beneficial in the treatment of sleep disorders. Modalities discussed in this paper include: use of SAs to facilitate PAP use (and to diminish removal of the PAP at night); SAs to control nightmares in children; SAs to assist in narcolepsy therapy; and SAs to prevent wandering and injury in sleep walkers. Though dogs have certainly been used for years to assist patients with sleep disorders, most of this use was undocumented and did not involve formally trained SAs until the past few years. Currently, there are several trainers advertising the training of service dogs for this purpose, though there are no statistics on how many dogs are in use today for this purpose, how many trainers are available for this purpose, or clear guidelines on the training techniques and goals. Additionally, there is no universal requirement for who may train a dog or what the protocols should involve.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea

A case featured in a *Houston Associated Press* article in 1997 described a Chihuahua who would nudge or paw the patient when his PAP slipped off.⁵ There are several SA programs that include training of dogs for such purposes. However, as there is no registry of trained SAs, it is impossible to track how many have been trained for this purpose, what the training techniques are, or how effective they are. As discussed in the case study below, a SA was specifically trained to mitigate sleep walking, and to assist with PAP adherence, and has worked successfully for many years with our patient when all standard of care treatments had failed her. As most arousals that result in unconscious PAP removal appear to be brief, cuing from the dog with a paw touch seems to be just enough to successfully redirect the patient without waking him/her. Ideally, the SA would be trained to cue the patient, and in the case where the mask was removed, wake the patient to reposition the mask.

Nightmares

SAs may also be used to diminish nightmares and other anxiety and/or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) sleep-related disturbances. Approximately 50% to 70% of PTSD patients suffer from chronic nightmares.⁶ Nightmares are complex; there is no single treatment that is effective; the causes are multifold and often complex, requiring individualized treatment protocols; and the patient must be more actively motivated and therapeutically engaged than with pharmacotherapy-based treatments alone. Nightmares have been associated with fear of sleep,⁷ which in turn perpetuates hyperarousal and insomnia. In the Veterans Affairs Medical Centers system, SAs are being more widely used to diminish the impact of PTSD-related nightmares through training in which they immediately awaken the nightmare patient and provide comfort, a role that no medication has yet to accomplish (unreported observations). Dogs are also used to mitigate anxiety, which is often associated with insomnia, and to modify hyperarousal and hypervigilance, which in turn creates a more amenable mood state for sleep initiation, as well as a greater sense of safety in those who are uneasy in the dark and/or night and who tend to phase-reverse to dodge nighttime sleep.

According to cognitive behavioral theories, the nightmare is perpetuated consequent to the maladaptive belief that the only way to escape the nightmare's frightening consequences is through escape-avoidance. However, attempts to suppress unwanted thoughts prior to bedtime lead to intrusion of those thoughts into dreams.⁸ Desensitization through imagery rescripting and rehearsal is an effective strategy for diminishing the frequency and intensity of nightmares, suggesting that a proactive approach to managing these thoughts is highly effective.

Imagery rehearsal training (IRT) is a well-established technique for managing and helping overcome nightmares.⁹ It requires gradual exposure to the frightening nightmare material while being in a safe and nonthreatening environment (such as during the daytime and with daylight when the patient is relaxed and can review the content in a nonaroused state). This achieves desensitization as well as cognitive retraining. There is strong evidence from meta-analyses that image rehearsal in various forms (imagery rehearsal, exposure relaxation and rescripting therapy,¹⁰ and IRT with or without exposure to the original nightmare) has substantial benefits not only for reducing nightmare frequency, but with overall sleep quality, as well as for diminishing general PTSD symptoms (though the latter is not specifically targeted).⁹

The concept of diminishing escape-avoidance in order to maximize mastery over nightmares presents a conflict with the practice of training SAs to waken patients immediately when they appear to initiate the physiological symptoms of a nightmare. IRT encourages the patient to enter some level of discomfort into the nightmare imagery in order to gain mastery. If this is interrupted, it may perpetuate the escape-avoidance response and prevent mastery.

A combined approach of IRT with a SA might involve training the patient in the techniques of imagery rehearsal and training the dog to arouse the patient only when the patient reaches a heightened level or distressing arousal. This would allow achieving some level of mastery without perpetuating an escalated hyperarousal reaction. Additionally, it may be that for some patients the presence of the SA and the knowledge that they can more "safely" engage in IRT would make them more amenable to this treatment, and accomplish one of the necessary conditions of IRT, which is to be in a safe, reassuring environment.

There are multiple ways in which a SA may be effective in treating hyperarousal-related sleep disorders, with the dog providing an ongoing source of de-escalation of hyperarousal states. The dog thus serves as a constant and immediate cuing system. As noted earlier, dogs are also immediate warning signs that have no systemic negative effects (as might occur with medications).

Use of Family Pets for Nightmare Control

CatSleepDisorder



Author Rose finds that family pets, such as feline “Snicket” shown here, can diminish nightmares in children. Photo published with permission of child’s parent.

In the practice of one of the authors (MWR), family pets are often used for multifold reasons to diminish nightmares in children. The protocol involves the child sleeping with the chosen dog or cat and forming a narrative that involves nightmare rehearsal with rescripting to incorporate the pet into the modified nightmare scenario. Often the child will give the pet a designated magical power such as to fly with or to create a force field around itself and the child. As opposed to a more dramatic alteration of the nightmare, we opt for a progressive step-wise modification of imagery, with the exception of the pet’s power.

Children readily accept this concept and seem to effortlessly offer the power that they need their pet to possess. This provides the child with a conceptual escape route during a nightmare. The child’s nightmare in many ways mirrors the function of the fairy tale in highlighting developmental conflicts. This may be one reason why they can so readily identify the powers they would need to identify and overcome the adversaries in their nightmares. Their capacity for empathy and affiliation with their pets also allows children to easily identify with the pet and to imagine the powers they might attribute to the pet to assist them to modify and take control over the nightmare narrative.

Additionally, during an awakening, both the child and the pet remain together in the room and the pet can continue providing a sense of safety and protection against any lingering wake/sleep transitional monsters/threats that might have been perceived to come back into the waking world with them.

Narcolepsy

There are at least two agencies, Service Dog Academy in West Seattle, Wash, and PAWS’ Training Centers in four locations, that have trained numerous narcolepsy service dogs. Service Dog Academy reports having trained dogs to provide up to a 5-minute warning of an impending sleep attack so the patient can take precautions to minimize risk of injury during a fall. Dogs are also taught to place themselves in front of the patient to reduce the risk of falling onto a hard surface, to dial 911 from a specially designed phone, to fetch medication, and to cue patients to

take medications to mitigate their disorder.¹¹

The social and emotional effects of narcolepsy are known to be provocative for patients, and certainly an ESA may be as useful to these patients emotionally as are SAs for any chronic health condition.

Parasomnias

Several case examples have been provided in which the efficacy of pharmacotherapy or hypnotherapy of aggressive and injurious parasomnias—REM sleep behavior disorder, sleep walking (SW), sleep terrors—was not only confirmed by the patient and spouse, but also by their pets, who eventually were willing to co-sleep with their owners again, once the pets were convinced that the owners had reestablished calm sleep.¹² These pets not only had previously had their sleep disrupted, but at times had been injured from the owners' aggressive parasomnia behaviors.

Case Example: We worked with a 54-year-old woman with multiple sleep disorders including OSA, sleep walking, and severe restless legs syndrome. During the CPAP titration, she required a full face mask due to nasal obstruction, which proved difficult as she struggled with severe claustrophobia that was likely related to abuse and trauma during childhood. Major complaints included nightmares and SW-related injury, along with dangerous behavior such as leaving the home and becoming combative toward her roommates if they interfered with her nocturnal wandering.

Despite minimizing the triggers and being on clonazepam therapy, the patient's sleep walking continued. She left the home multiple times at night and sustained a leg fracture from falling. When her roommates attempted to redirect her, she responded with aggression. She was diagnosed and treated for OSA with CPAP but continued to have multiple sleep complaints, including no alleviation of SW episodes, frequent unconscious removal of her PAP at night, difficulty adjusting to the PAP mask, and continued nightmares.

The patient eventually located a SA program that was willing to undertake the training, which included teaching her dog multiple tasks: putting a paw on the patient's PAP mask if she attempted to remove it at night; gentle redirection of the patient if she did remove her mask and rose from bed; and blocking of the patient if she attempted to leave the room or house while sleep walking. Consequent to use of the SA, the patient saw multiple benefits that she did not acquire during her pharmacological and psychological treatments pre-SA. The patient's dog became not only a treatment provider for her sleep disorders but was considered by her to be a friend and a protector.

Summary

In several populations with sleep disorders, SAs may add a valuable, and currently underappreciated, treatment option. With some subpopulations, such as veterans, the significant overlap and high prevalence of sleep disorders such as OSA, REM sleep behavior disorder, and nightmares with comorbid PTSD could benefit substantially from such programs. Unfortunately, as there is no central registry for SAs, it is unknown exactly how many have been trained for specific disorders or how many requests for specialized training, such as for sleep disorders,

have been made. This should be a top priority. However, it is essential that informed and motivated sleep specialists provide some input to these programs to facilitate the target goals.

The greatest risk or cost of SAs and ESAs is nearly always noted by the handler to be the financial cost of caring for the animal. In most cases, the handler considers the dog to be not just a worker, but a pet as well. For many, as the dog is not just a medical tool, these costs are assumed as they are for pets. Accessibility is less frequently cited as problematic as businesses in the United States are increasingly adherent to laws regarding SAs.

One of the greatest benefits of SAs, particularly for medically complicated patients, is that they offer a nonpharmacological solution to treating a sleep disorder in a way that may augment or even replace other (currently standard care) treatments. With regard to comorbid PTSD, the dog also offers a skill that is nonreplicable pharmacologically, eg, the dog can cue the patient consistently 24 hours a day based on scent and/or subtle behavioral cues prior to the manifestation of distressing symptoms, as has been demonstrated with epileptic seizures, as well as with cataplexy.¹³ Though the value of these service animals may be difficult to prove in a controlled experimental study, subjective reports not only appear to be highly promising, but patients seem to report long-lasting benefit through many years of their dog therapy.

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Rose

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Hypersomnolence Australia on June 26, 2015 at 5:57 am

Trained service dogs could be of benefit to those with polysymptomatic idiopathic hypersomnia as an aid for waking, particularly in circumstances of emergency eg: fire and especially for those living alone.

Roberto Otero on July 13, 2015 at 6:49 pm

I have a question? I was diagnosed with Narcolepsy 4 years ago but recently another Dr says is not Narcolepsy that is Idiopathic Hypersomnia. My question has anyone heard of service dogs to help with HI? However I was not given any meds only to do another sleep test next week and then he will determine if it is N or HI to set a treatment.

Katen on August 10, 2015 at 8:39 pm

Could my yr old pt chiouwawa/shitzu be trained to wake me when an alarm rings, door bell rings or phone due to narkelepsy

Dr. Mary Rose on September 6, 2015 at 2:08 pm

Possibly, you should check with a local service dog trainer to see if they feel your dog is up for the job

Nikki on September 1, 2015 at 10:34 pm

Hi,
I have a son who has had night terrors since the age of before 2 and he is turning 13 in October. He jumps out of bed about an hour after falling asleep and usually comes out of his bedroom-yelling, confused and asleep. He will not be awoken and I do tell him lets go back to bed now and he complies rather well. Though it scares me because this occurs about every other night and I know it happens

this occurs about every other night and I know it happens sometimes that he is just sleep walking without the night terror- he has opened the garage door setting off the house alarm and he went into the garage in the night. Luckily the alarm awoke us. We have a 3 year old lab that usually sleeps in his room but is not trained to do anything to assist our son. It struck me tonight that possibly our dog could be trained to help somehow when he is in this state. Since he is not awake I don't know how though and

how I would train her. So I wanted to share if anyone had thoughts or ideas to try. I don't think its an easy fix but maybe something that would help. Thank you,
Nikki

Dr. Mary Rose on September 6, 2015 at
11:09 am

Yes, your lab can be trained....possibly. It is my understanding that labs make excellent service dogs. However, it depends upon your dog. It does sound like your son has night terrors these events are usually timed around the early part of the night and consolation is extremely difficult. Though children often "grow out" night terrors they can occur into adulthood. It sounds like he is sleep walking as well, so not experiencing night terrors, but actually moving around into different rooms. Night terrors and sleep walking tends to come out of slow wave (deep) sleep. It is important to keep in mind that sleep walking is extremely vulnerable to sleep loss, so make sure he is getting adequate sleep. You should consult a sleep disorders specialist, preferably one with a pediatric sleep background. Do keep alarms on at night and perhaps alarm his bedroom door. Make sure that windows are alarmed and best if he can sleep on a first floor and does not have any sharp corners on night stand etc that he could hit if he fell out of bed.

Depending upon where you live, there may be several organizations training service animals in your area. I recommend that you do a search online for local trainers. You will want to meet with them re: costs, philosophy on training, to identify your son's needs, and to understand the time commitment needed on your son's part. Additionally, you want to make sure you feel comfortable that the trainer is a good match for you and your son. My understanding is that there are no universal requirements for trainers so you will want to look carefully at their background and perhaps speak with

background and perhaps speak with people who have had service animals trained by them.

Karen on September 2, 2015 at 11:13 am

Wondering how I can get more info on a service dog. My son whom is 19 is showing more of a need to help with this problem. We want him to live a normal life. But he seems to be getting worse not better. I'm wondering what steps to get one. I'm assuming there is a huge expense involved also. Looking forward to hearing back. Thank you

Dr. Mary Rose on September 6, 2015 at 10:54 am

Depending upon where you live, there may be several organizations training service animals in your area. I recommend that you do a search online for local trainers. You will want to meet with them re: costs, philosophy on training, to identify your son's needs, and to understand the time commitment needed on your son's part. Additionally, you want to make sure you feel comfortable that the trainer is a good match for you and your son. My understanding is that there are no universal requirements for trainers so you will want to look carefully at their background and perhaps speak with people who have had service animals trained by them. Additionally I want to add that your son can lead a "normal life" Many of us have illnesses that range from annoying to seriously life threatening- but it does not define him- it is only a part of him. Even if it seems sometimes to control him or the opportunities he has, there are resources for him to take back that control and to feel "normal". Having a mom who is actively trying to help him gives him a good jump forward on that journey.

Dr. Mary Rose

Angie on September 8, 2015 at 5:44 pm

I am looking for some direction. I have had Sleep Related Eating Disorder (parasomnia) for the past 15 or so years. This article struck a chord because I have tried everything under the sun with no luck. Is there a place that anyone can recommend that I get in touch with that would have

experience in training a dog for my condition. I saw a case example however they did not specify where they sought this help. I do not care where this place is located, I am that desperate. I am also a Veteran. I have a lot of allergies too so it would have to be hypoallergenic. Thank you for your time.

Katina on November 28, 2015 at 4:42 pm

Hello

I have an 8 yr old child who suffers from sleep apnea. She also having lung issues and is being tested for cystic fibrosis. She sleeps on a Cpap, but at times gets choked and vomits while asleep and on the machine. She has started to sleep walk and is very restless when asleep. She does well when sleeping with our English Bulldog, but we are not allowed to have him at our apartment complex unless we can show paperwork of him being a service dog. Could you please give me info of an organization that will train our dog

Thank You

Ed on February 6, 2016 at 11:44 am

I have complex sleep apnea (both obstructive and central) that reduces my partial O2 pressure to 70%; low enough to cause cardiac problems (I start throwing PVCs). In order to cope with it, I use an ASV and it is important that my mask stays on. I have a toy Australian Shepherd who will paw or lick my face until I wake up when the mask is not on properly. I did not have to teach her this, she did it naturally; perhaps the change in the air exhaust triggers her to do it, but she definitely helps me. She is definitely a service dog, although I do not take her around in a harness.

Anne on February 29, 2016 at 12:44 pm

I have osa.I've been trying to find out about service dogs that could help me.

Christina Jubb on May 2, 2016 at 11:09 am

I have an auto-immune disease profile and have suffered from central sleep apnoea for nearly 4 decades. I first began to be ill when I was 24. I am now 67. CSA is just one of my problems. I have to be really careful to reserve energy and even then I am in bed by 7.30pm. Occasionally, I will have a small fit and fling myself out of bed – only waking up when I hit the floor – gasping for air. Could a dog help? I am allergic to some dogs. (I am sensitive/allergic to a lot of things). Help! Thank you

sensitive/energetic to a lot of things). Help! Thank you.

Meike Hartman on June 28, 2016 at 1:09 pm

I'm looking for a little more info on how these dogs can help with night terror's. My 27yr old son was in the military did not go out of country but developed ptsd from the job he was doing. He started having the night terrors while in the military he is now in college on medication but it is not helping if he goes to sleep he has the parallelizing demonic night terror's where you are between being awake and asleep you can see this figure standing over you sometimes sitting on you it's the same ending every time you can't move, scream or anything until whatever it is lets go and you keep telling yourself to wake up and try to move. Once you wake up your terrified and can't go back to sleep. How can the animal help you not fall into that state of terror or can they sense it and wake you up. He has been tormented by this for over 4 yrs now and is desperate he doesn't want to be on the medication he needs to focus in school.

Jeanne Fail on July 30, 2016 at 1:48 pm

My son suffers from sleep paralysis. He has an episode several times a week and even several times a night. Can a service animal help with this?

k. doyle on August 5, 2016 at 7:47 am

I am wondering if a co-sleeping dog could be trained to wake my husband or I if my daughter gets out of bed. She has taken to sleep-walking and running herself a bath. I am nervous that we wont catch her in time and she will get in and drown! would this be something a dog could help with?

louise on October 1, 2016 at 11:21 am

I have sleep apnoea and i fell asleep on sofa about 6 times and my dog kept licking my face to wake me, hubby came in and got my cpap to put on then my dog just curled up next to me, like he knew i cant sleep without it, hes never been trained to do it, is this instinct?

Holly Clark on December 12, 2016 at 7:14 pm

I have narcolepsy as well as acute sleep apnea and I have a service dog that has been well documented for these disorders. Teddy's story can be found on Google+ servicedog/animal awareness. It took yrs for Dr. Robert Zaaccagnini,Critical Pulmonary Care,to understand how this little dog new to alert before narcolepsy attacks. The

only explanation was he picked up on electrical changes in the brain such as dogs used for epilepsy. His theory was proven to be correct when Teddy alerted to another patient in a waiting room at the Cleveland Clinic. The patient had a grand mal within 7 minutes of Teddy's alert. His ability to assist with acute apnea has stunned Doctor's everywhere. As Dr. Steven Rosenblatt, Vice Chair, General surgery at Cleveland Clinic says, "as Doctor's we must always remember the field of medicine is ever changing and we must always keep an open mind to the possibilities of new treatments plans."

Jasmine Templin on March 8, 2017 at 8:44 pm

My name is Jasmine and im looking for a service dog for narcolepsy. I also have sleeping disorder like sleep walking ptsd depression night terrors Also anxiety disorder and get panic attacks in crowds. Well I hope that you can help me
Jasmine Templin

bill on March 9, 2017 at 7:57 am

SA (dogs) work well for RBD. anecdotal evidence (for me it works!).

Naomi on March 20, 2017 at 7:17 am

Wow! I'm glad I found this article. My dog woke me up by licking my arms in the middle of the night. I know this may not seem unusual but he "never" does that. Additionally he licked me and was watching my face until I was completely awake. It was when I acknowledged him and asked him what was the matter that he then settled down and went back to sleep.

This is the reason I googled if dogs can sense one having nightmares. I do suffer from anxiety so this is good to know!

Linda Behrens on April 19, 2017 at 5:05 pm

Is it possible to get a dog that will keep a person awake that has dementia so they're able to sleep better at night? Schedule is so important but a human isn't able to be with the person every single second and he drifts off to sleep often during the day.

Schedule of awake days and asleep nights is important to being able to cope! What's available in Northern California?

Kamara W. on November 18, 2017 at 11:09 am

About a month or so ago I did a stupid thing and watched a documentary on sleep paralysis.

I've been suffering from sleep paralysis for years. I go through periods where its so frequent I can't sleep through the night. After 2 or 3 nights of not sleeping exhaustion usually takes me and I finally sleep through the night.

I don't know what possessed me to watch this documentary, I think I believed seeing other people's experiences would help me feel less alone. It was awful it was more scary than comforting.

I kept thinking about their stories all day and it triggered another series of sleep paralysis that lasted a few days. It always happens in the morning right after my finance leaves for work at 4 am. A miracle happened after my partner and I adopted a dog; a 7 year old boxer.

We decided the bedroom would be the only dog free room in the house (other than the bathroom). My dog Paul decided to change that and jumped into bed with me the morning after a particularly stressful night. My fiancé had just left for work and I knew there was no way I would be able to fall asleep. He left the door open and Paul walked in and jumped up and snuggled in.

I have had the company of my dog in my bed every morning since that morning and have not awoken to sleep paralysis. Maybe its all in my head, but he brings me so much comfort.

My sleep paralysis always lessened when I had my partner in bed with me but it would still happen in the morning when he was gone, or when I'm trying to fall asleep at night and he'd have to shake me awake when I start making those familiar laboured breaths. But with my dog NOTHING! After my fiancé leaves, Paul takes his place and I feel peaceful and so relaxed.

If you suffer from sleep paralysis or any sleep disorder I would recommend sleeping with a cuddly dog.

Holly Clark on December 28, 2017 at 3:45 pm

I have a working dog. Teddy successfully completed 120hrs public access training many years ago. Unable to use CPAP after a suedo tumor cerebra caused damage to sinus wall causing inability to use forced air. Pulmonary specialist put me on O2 with nasal cannula. During rem sleep Teddy nudges me when I stop breathing enough to startle me to breath but not enough to pull from rem. If O2 drops below 85% he barks. I also have narcolepsy. Teddy alerts 5-7 minutes before attacks. Teddy has been videoed by Cleveland Clinic & pulmonary specialist Dr. Robert Zaccarragnini. They discovered Teddys ability is

similar to those of dogs used for seizures. He picks up on electrical changes in the brain. Now there's service dogs trained to help sleep disorders in TN & PA. There may be more. I only know of 2. Teddy has been welcomed at Cleveland Clinic many times along with many other hospitals and medical facilities. I am blessed to have Teddy. Don't give up if you need this option. Do your research.

Cheryl on January 20, 2019 at 8:25 am

Where can you get a parasomnia sleepwalking service dog

Rosina Lippi on March 3, 2018 at 4:03 pm

I have severe OSA (AHI 45), and have been on CPAP for more than ten years — and I still often take my mask off in my sleep. My dog wakes me when I do this, without any special training. My husband doesn't notice, but the dog does. He paws me until I wake up and put the mask back on.

It might just be that he doesn't like me snoring, but whatever the underlying motivation, he has been extremely helpful in keeping my sleep stable without choking and gasping.

I've been wondering how to get him classified as a medical alert dog, but thus far I haven't found any way to do that. I'm in the U.S.

Amy M Fowler-Farrell on March 14, 2018 at 4:57 pm

I recently lost my Dog after 11 years. He was a black lab/border collie mix. I specifically remember having horrible sleep paralysis episodes before we got him and now that he is gone, I am having episodes again. He never went to bed until I did, usually long after my husband, if I fell asleep on the couch, he was there with me. When I worked third shift, he would crawl in bed with me during part of the day and at night he slept in our room, first on his dog bed, but by morning he was always at my feet. I think this is a very interesting area of study. But personally, I am pretty convinced that having him around did something to control the anxiety that I hide so well when awake that I don't even know I am experiencing it, but causes havoc in my sleep.

Bridget on April 25, 2018 at 1:15 pm

There is such a thing as psychiatric service dogs which are used for both anxiety and depression, as well as PTSD. These dogs can be trained to remind their handler to take medications, alert to anxiety, wake their handler during

medications, alert to anxiety, wake their handler during nightmare/night terror episodes, stop disassociation...the list is endless.

Denise Thelen on May 6, 2019 at 6:54 am

Thank you for your post about Service Dogs helping with Rx reminders and awaking from sleep during my seizures (Psychiatric Service Dogs). Where can I find help to train our 5 month old puppy?

Maria Manriquez on April 27, 2018 at 4:29 am

My 9 yr old daughter sleep walks& has done so since she was around 2 or 3.As soon as she was able to sleep in a toddler bed,we just didn't realize it.She would always fall of her bed, sometimes that would wake us up.She has now been unlocking bolt door's & glass storm doors. I believe it happens when going to the restroom, well we have 3 restrooms,so if she doesn't come to my restroom, I don't wake up.Do I need suggestions on SA.

Patricia on July 27, 2018 at 10:14 am

My two white lab dogs I paid \$ 300 dollars apiece for woke me up in the night I have sleep apnea my dogs have died my mom too she taught them to wake me. how can I find a lab now to wake me up.

Barbara on August 3, 2018 at 12:31 pm

I have a six year old chawainer. Had her from 8 wks old. I have sleep apnea, she wakes me during nights by licking my face til I awaken and I believe it's because I lose my breath. She's never been trained to do this. I feel this is why she wakes me often. Not to go potty, she is paper trained for nights. Is the possibly a natural instinct she has?

Jasmine on September 12, 2018 at 4:39 pm

My name is Jasmine I have been looking for a service dog that does Narcolepey sleeping disorders night terrors anxiety panic attacks ptsd. I Deal with ADA A Non profit orginzeagent I have tried every where and got no where so were do I go to next.

Cheryl hodgkin on September 17, 2018 at 8:03 am

Looking for a source of sleep disorder service animal...

sleepwalking

Simps on November 14, 2018 at 2:47 pm

I am 63 years old and a widower so I live alone. My children are not in my area so I can't rely on them. I've

always sleep walked off and on for as long as I can remember. I would do it a few times and then it might not happen for another few years. It started again a couple of years ago and hasn't stopped for some strange reason. All the doctors I have gone to say that sleep walking is not a well understood phenomena and they all were more versed in apnea than walking problems. I see lots of questions here about using a service animals but not much in the way of solutions. Is this a viable option. I need to do something as I've tried locking myself to the bed but I just undo it without waking. I've fallen down my basement stairs a couple of times, caught myself walking outside about half a block from home, cracked a couple of ribs once and plenty of other small falls and bruises. I've tried sleeping pills but I still go on my little walks. I don't like taking them as I feel a hangover effect the next day and I'm not able to function properly until well into the afternoon. I'm keen to see if a service animal will help or not.

Jasmine on November 24, 2018 at 6:06 pm

well I can say that people that do need the service dogs that are on ADA they pass them by coz they cant pay for the dogs that could help people like me, I deal with ADA and I don't have to pay for the service dog.

Amanda on January 4, 2019 at 6:26 am

Hello I suffer from sleep paralysis specifically Old Hag Syndrome if anyone is familiar. During these events I cannot move physically, I become unable to speak or even move my mouth, I feel as though I cannot breath, my heart races and I am unable to wake myself for what feels like forever. I have suffered with this for as long as I can remember. Now that I am in my mid 20s and going through and intense nursing program while working full time. It seems the stress has really caused an increase in frequency. Do you think a service animal would be able to recognize or help with this?

Mf on January 10, 2019 at 8:28 am

Hello
Im surprised the article failed to mentioned regular insomnia (inability to fall asleep). I think particularly in people who are single I would think a dog could be great

1) one has a motivation to wake up at same time daily and walk out to the sun to walk it thereby helping with circadian Rhythm disorders 2) at night instead of one just watching tv early on and perhaps dozing off and later not been able to sleep or instead of been exposed to blue light and arousal from tv one can play catch or just play and walk the dog . I would think a larger breed can get one to move more through out the day more activity instead of

been a couch potato can be of much help with sleep. 3) Besides insomnia is a fear of not sleeping to some extent and often a sign of general anxiety and depression I would think having the company of an active dog would be of much help to those who live alone specially. Any thoughts ?

Denise Thelen on May 6, 2019 at 6:41 am

Hello – Will you please help me find the contacts I need for training our puppy to help myself with (REM sleep Grand Mal seizures) and my husband with (Sleep Apnea). This is very important to us. Thank You!

Ralph Quane on May 22, 2020 at 2:17 pm

I am very much into my senior years. When I down-sized my collected detritus, I ended up with a queen-size bed in a two-room apartment. Naturally, Casey, my Black Lab Retriever moved with me. Jumping off the bed was beginning to put too much weight onto the front right leg and paw. The dog adjusted to it and I did not. Enter some creative thinking: got rid of the massive bed and invested in a simple TRUNDLE BED. My mattress is about one foot above hers, but she rests beside me nonetheless. She nests with her many blankets as I do with mine. She continues to rest beside me and I can reach down a mere few inches in order to give her a “scritch” on head or rump. During the day when I’m about my busy-ness, she retreats to the bedroom and then basks in the freedom of either mattress. There have even been times when she quietly makes her way onto my mattress and positions herself between the back of the bed and me. She makes her way as close to me as possible ... within the distance of the palm of my hand which she positions on her head. By far, she more than make up for the the vicissitudes of my life and my blood pressure.

Adam Conrad on September 5, 2020 at 7:46 am

Great to see the technical terms and background about the efficacy of pet in curing sleeping disorders. My pets have always been a part of my evening winding down routine before bed. If I really suffer from insomnia then sometimes I sleep near the doggie bed on the floor!

SHIH TZU on February 15, 2022 at 9:59 am

My dog walks in his sleep, I have tried everything that I could find. Any suggestions on how I can safely treat him?

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