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Image created on
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I Am Not Alone

First Prize (Tie)

Man's best friend has been known for centuries as the loving, furry dog. Humans have created a strong, unique bond exclusive to canines. The characteristic of caring makes this partnership desirable. A person yearns for the free-zone a dog provides, free from judgement, criticism, rejection, punishment, evaluation, and unsolicited advice. The hormone oxytocin is increased by canine interaction, which is associated with decreasing stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances and social isolation. All humans benefit from animal interaction, and the use of animals in therapy is growing. An example of an individual impacted by these conditions who benefits from canine interaction is one with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). My research explores the effectiveness of Animal Assisted Therapy in reducing symptoms of PTSD in Military Veterans. Veterans with PTSD experience flashbacks that impact their daily functioning. With the company of a dog, this Veteran can move past his bothersome memories and experience happiness again. He longs to care for the dog, which decreases his trauma-inflicted anxiety, loneliness, stress and anger. The dog encourages him to trust and feel safe again. Dogs help Veterans regain their self-confidence, self-esteem, and improve their overall self-worth. Veterans long for the canine, as the bond between them is not only the key to escape from desolation and resentment but also a faithful friendship where both can rejoice and replenish.