

## RESOURCE SHEET

From Full Episode #4: Living Well with Pets and Chronic Illness, **AiArthritis Voices 360** - the official podcast of the International Foundation for **Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis (IFAA)**

*Co-Hosts:* Georgia Grace, from Making Lemonade with Georgia Grace, book written by Georgia's owner, Kelly Conway. Both Kelly and Georgia live with various chronic illnesses.

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### Introduction

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In episode 4 of AiArthritis Voices 360, host Tiffany is joined once again by IFAA co-founder, Kelly Conway, along with special furry co-host Georgia Grace as they dive into the topic of animals and pet ownership. In this episode, Tiffany and Kelly discuss the differences between Emotional Support, Service, and Therapy animals, and how these differences are relevant to those in our community. They also mentioned some resources to help others who are chronically ill and living with pets - OR for those who have chronically ill pets. Below you will find some of those resources.

Also, please submit YOUR tips and resources, which may be added to future resource updates. [You can submit your suggestions here.](#)

## **Service Animals, Emotional Support Animals, Therapy Animals - What's the Difference?**

- **Service animals** are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples can include things like pulling a wheelchair, guiding a person who is visually impaired, alerting a person who is having a seizure, or even calming a person who suffers from significant stress disorders. ***The work or task a service dog does must be directly related to the person's disability.***

In the United States, service dogs may accompany persons with disabilities into places that the public normally goes. This includes state and local government buildings, businesses open to the public, public transportation, and non-profit organizations open to the public. The law that allows a trained service dog to accompany a person with a disability is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We will continue to update this resource with information from countries around the world, or find links to connect those outside of the US with resources. [If you have any suggestions, submit your comments here.](#)

- **An emotional support animal** is an animal (typically a dog or cat though this can include other species) that provides a therapeutic benefit to its owner through companionship. The animal provides emotional support and comfort to individuals with psychiatric disabilities and other mental impairments – ***including depression and anxiety.*** The animal ***is not specifically trained*** to perform tasks for a person who suffers from emotional disabilities.

Depending on where you live, the rules will vary. This is very important for those who travel, especially to other countries. Unlike a service animal, an emotional support animal is not granted access to places of public accommodation. Under the federal Fair Housing Act (FHA), an emotional support animal is viewed as a "reasonable accommodation" in a housing unit that has a "no pets" rule for its residents. This includes hotels. We will continue

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collecting information to update this section. In the meantime, you can visit [Mobility International USA](#) for more information.

- **A therapy animal visitations** to hospitals, nursing homes, and facilities or any place where Therapy Dogs are needed. regulation, testing, selection, and registration of qualified dogs and handlers.

Pets must go through rigorous testing to earn their therapy animal status, but if they can, they can bring joy to many people outside of the immediate home. To learn more about therapy animals, including licensing your pet, visit [Therapy Dog International](#).

## **Pros and Cons - Chronic Illness and Pets**

While most pet owners will agree, the pros far outweigh the cons! But when you are living with a chronic illness like autoimmune or autoinflammatory diseases, the immune system is compromised. Therefore, pet owners should be aware of any potential complications that may occur.

### **Pros**

- Health benefits including:
  - Decreased blood pressure
  - Decreased cholesterol levels
  - Decreased triglyceride levels
- Decreased feelings of loneliness
- Increased opportunities for exercise and outdoor activities
- Increased opportunities for socialization
- Studies have shown that the bond between people and their pets can increase fitness, lower stress, and bring happiness to their owners

### **Cons**

Some diseases, including “zoonotic diseases”, can be passed from pets to humans, especially to those with a weak immune system. This includes zoonotic diseases which are infectious diseases spread to humans by animals. Because of the close connection between people and animals, it’s important to be aware of the common ways people can get infected with germs that can cause disease. These can include:

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- Direct contact: Coming into contact with the saliva, blood, urine, mucous, feces, or other body fluids of an infected animal. Examples include petting or touching animals, and bites or scratches.
  - Indirect contact: Coming into contact with areas where animals live and roam, or objects or surfaces that have been contaminated with germs. Examples include aquarium tank water, pet habitats, chicken coops, plants, and soil, as well as pet food and water dishes.
  - Vector-borne: Being bitten by a tick, or an insect like a mosquito or a flea.
  - Foodborne: Each year, 1 in 6 Americans get sick from eating contaminated food. Eating or drinking something unsafe (such as unpasteurized milk, undercooked meat or eggs, or raw fruits and vegetables that are contaminated with feces from an infected animal).

Anyone can become sick from zoonotic diseases, but some people are at more risk than others. These include children under 5, adults older than 65, and people with weakened immune systems.

**Ways to protect oneself from zoonotic diseases include:**

- Stay safe by washing hands, keeping pets clean and helping to maintain good health.
- Treat for fleas/ticks and mosquitos.
- Try to avoid scratches from animals which can lead to cellulitis.

## **Tips for Caring for Your Pet**

When living with AiArthritis diseases, a persons' mobility may be compromised at times. For example, walking a pet or lifting a heavy litter box may become challenging. Some tips mentioned in this episode include:

- Hiring a pet walker, or asking a neighbor or friend to help in times of need.
- Using furniture with rollers to move heavy items, such as dog food. There also are some delivery services for groceries, or pet items, where the delivery person can assist.

[What tips do you have to share? Submit them now and you may see them right here on this resource!](#)



Making Lemonade with Georgia Grace

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/georgiathecavalier>

Find the Book [HERE](#)

In honor of our end of year annual **Charity TALK to Impact AiArthritis**, donate to IFAA any time and any amount in December and you can have a chance to win a PAWtographed copy of this book or calendar! **Donate Today**

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