Mack is My Co-Therapist

Considerations for Animal-Assisted Therapy

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Co-Creative Coaching and Counseling
Adapted with permission from Debra Berger, Founder of Canine Assisted Therapy, Inc (CAT)

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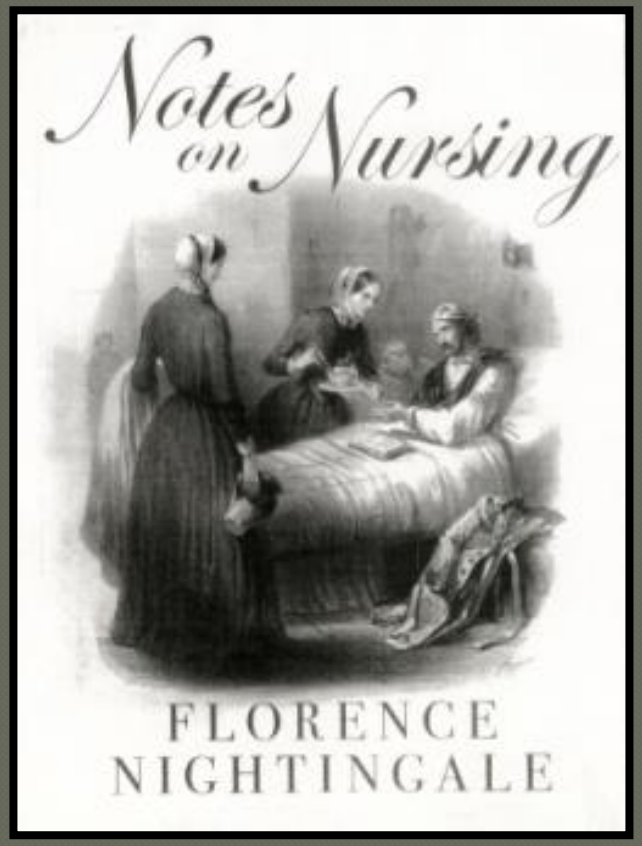
History of Pet Therapy

- Prehistoric cave paintings of wolves and humans around camp fires
- Egyptians were buried with their pets
  - Tomb walls were covered with drawings of their favorite pets.
- Ancient Greeks believed that animals had healing powers

History of Pet Therapy

- 1859 Florence Nightingale wrote about pet therapy in her Notes on Nursing."A small pet is often an excellent companion for the sick, for long chronic cases especially."
- 1919 – Animals were used in men's mental health in Washington D.C. and in WW2 for the treatment of "battle fatigue" now known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD.
- 1960 - Formal documentation of pet therapy began and the term "Pet Therapy" was coined. American Child Psychiatrist Dr. Boris Levinson wrote about a using a dog to facilitate work with a child.
- 1980 – Nursing literature addressed the use of animals as "nursing intervention resources".



Beginnings…

The Story of Jack

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Beginnings…

Jack was supposed to be Kalli's Dog

But

The night Kalli and Denny brought him home and Kalli went off to bed,

Jack had other ideas

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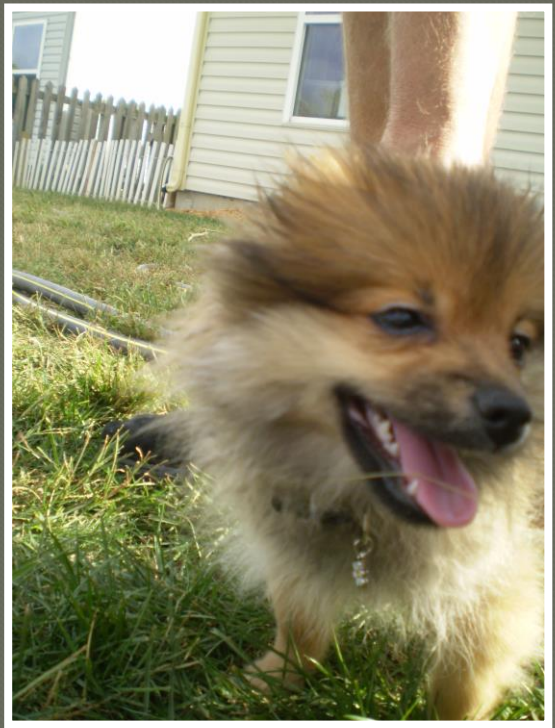
And along came Mack

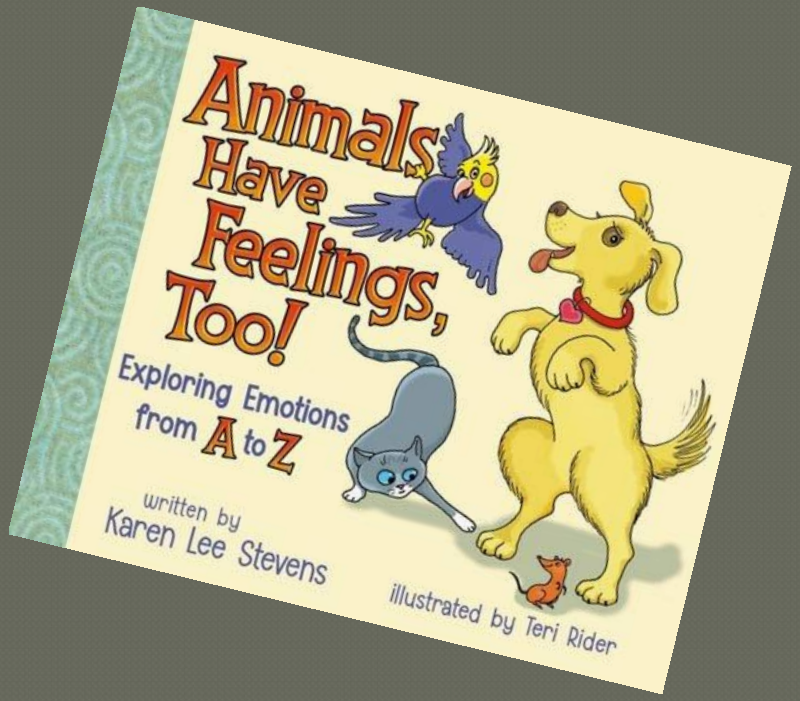


The Mission was Revealed

The Team Emerged

Animals as Helpers with Childhood Development

Cuddly Plush Animals



Stories and Metaphors for Learning Life Lessons

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Service Dogs, Working Dogs and Emotional Support Animals (ESA)

http://www.seeingeye.org

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Service Dogs

Animals Assisting with a Human Function

Service Dogs

- Assistance animals
  - ✓ Helpers (i.e. hearing, sight, seizure detection)
  - ✓ Visitation
  - ✓ Therapy programs (physical, mental, skill-building)

http://www.seeingeye.org

The Americans with Disabilities Act defines service dogs as "any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal who is trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability."

Service dogs are not considered pets!

Working Dogs
Animals as Partners in Work

- Search and rescue dogs
- Bomb detection dogs
- Police dogs

Working Dogs

- National Crisis Response Canines

Founded by Cindy Ehlers after the Thurston High School Shootings in 1998 and 911 in 2001
First HOPE Pets – AACR – to today's National Crisis Response Canines.

ESA – Emotional Support Animals

ESA are considered pets and are not covered by ADA laws but are allowed in certain housing situations and allowed to be uncrated in the cabin of an airplane.

The ES animals do not have to be dogs and do not need any special training but a person may be asked to leave if an animal is a behavioral issue.

Therapy Dogs

A *therapy dog* is a dog which has been specially trained to offer companionship, affection, and comfort. Therapy dogs are considered pets and are not covered by ADA laws.

Pet Therapy usually consist of Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA) and Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) In fact, Sigmund Freud had his own therapy dog, a Chow Chow named Jofi, who hung around the office during therapy sessions. Freud himself came to the conclusion that the dog had a relaxing effect on himself and his patients (Fine, 2010). *Image via* online.wsj.com

Uses of Pet Therapy

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Therapy Dog Programs – Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)

The casual "meet and greet" activities that involve pets visiting people.

Example of AAA:

Dogs visiting residents of a nursing facility. There are no set goals for the interactions.

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Therapy Dog Programs – Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)

A goal-directed intervention directed and/or delivered by a health/human service. AAT is designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, and or cognitive function.

Examples of AAT:
Individual with Cerebral Palsy grasping a brush and grooming the dog.

Encouragement to motivate an individual to come take a walk.

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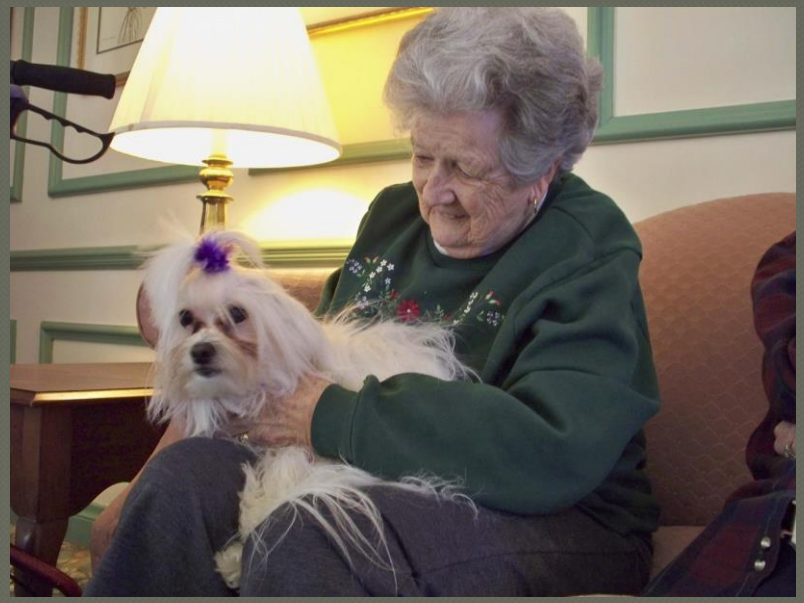
Therapy Dog Programs – Facility Animal

Facility Dogs either live at the facility or are brought regularly to the facility and provide therapy to individuals in that facility.

- Creates a more welcoming and relaxed atmosphere
- Decreases job stress and elevates mood
- Creates a sense of comfort with where the family may be staying within the facility
- Bonding experience for family, patients and staff

Benefits for Family and Staff

- Creates a more welcoming and relaxed atmosphere
- Decreases job stress and elevates mood
- Creates a sense of comfort with where the family may be staying within the facility
- Bonding experience for family, patients and staff



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Physical Uses

- Gross Motor / Fine Motor Skills
  - Grooming
  - Petting
  - Giving treat
  - Throwing ball/toys

- Range of Motion
  - Petting
  - Holding on to the dog while in motion (passive ROM)
  - Positioning of the dog and patient

- Ambulation
  - Walking with assistive device
  - Motivation to get to a particular spot

Emotional Uses

- Increased mood / decreased loneliness, depression and homesickness
- Stress reduction
- Motivation
- Decrease fears of the facility/future
- Relaxation of the environment
- Sense of ownership and being needed

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Benefits to Humans: Childhood Development

- Pets:
  - ✓ Provide a sense of security and self-esteem
  - ✓ Facilitate play, exploration, independence
  - ✓ Facilitate an understanding of life events and life-changing events
  - ✓ Promote responsibility, nurturing, loyalty, empathy, sharing, and unconditional love

- Animals in classrooms:
  - ✓ Motivate students to work well and learn
  - ✓ Improve behavior
  - ✓ Provide care-giving opportunities important to psychological development

Outcomes and Benefits of Pet Therapy

- Dog ownership is a significant contributor to the survival status of cardiovascular patients
- It has been proven to enhance the quality of life and increase survivability.
- Increased mood / decreased loneliness, depression and homesickness
- Decrease fears of the facility/future
- Stress reduction
- Motivation
- Relaxation of the environment
- Sense of ownership and being needed

Outcomes and Benefits of Pet Therapy

- Maintain a higher level of activity of living status “something to live for” significantly correlated with self care and personal health
- Increased socialization in patients with Alzheimer’s Disease
- Decreases loneliness, increases group cohesion and fosters therapeutic communication
- Enhances quality of life
- Unconditional acceptance
- Motivation

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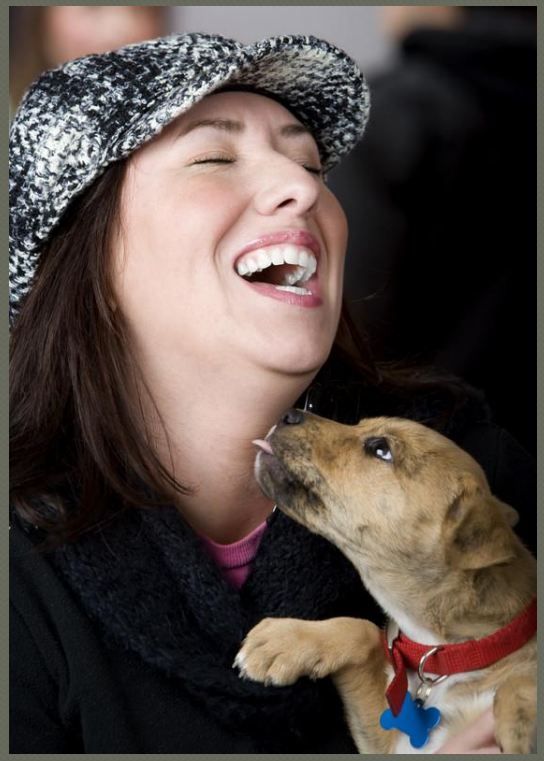
Outcomes and Benefits of Pet Therapy

- Detailed descriptive articles on the positive effects of pet therapy with correlated nursing goals in a variety of health care settings.
  - Decreases pain and anxiety during painful procedures
  - Releases endorphins and reduces the need for pain medication
  - Fosters trust and removes barriers of communication
  - Assist with patient and staff interactions
  - Lower blood pressure and heart rates
- Cited outcomes of using Pet Therapy in critical care:
  - Patients experience joy by being with the animal
  - Increased participation in activities when an animal is present
  - Improved patient mood after pet visitation
  - Decreased anxiety in the family and the patient

Outcomes and Benefits of Pet Therapy

In addition to the well-known benefits of unconditional love and acceptance, relaxation and slowed heart rate, one of the major reasons that AAT is so effective is that interaction with domestic animals significantly increases the oxytocin levels, particularly for women, as compared to other relaxation techniques such as reading (which results in decreased oxytocin levels) (Fine, 2010).



The Secret to “Pet Therapy”

“My therapy is quite simple: I wag my tail and lick your face until you feel good about yourself again.”

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THERAPY DOG ORGANIZATIONS

- Canine Assisted Therapy
  - www.catdogs.org
- Delta Society
  - www.deltasociety.org
- Humane Society of Broward County
  - www.humanebroward.com
- Therapy Dogs, Inc.
  - www.therapydogs.com
- Therapy Dogs International
  - www.tdi-dog.org

Applications

- Research supports AAT for:
  - Autism
  - Dementia
  - Depression
  - PTSD
  - Schizophrenia
  - Substance Dependence
  - Other mental illnesses and disorders in individuals, groups, family therapy, with children, adolescents & Adults – from inmates to the military

Modalities and Interventions

Therapy Animals can be added to proven therapy modalities
(Chandler, et. Al, 2010)

Animal Assisted Play Therapy ® (AAPT®) was developed by Risë Van Fleet by combining Play Therapy and AAT – www.iiaapt.org

Bonnie Martin – Pet Assisted Play Therapy - PAPT

Dr. Janet Courtney - Touch

Program Ideas

- Pet Friendly Therapy Sessions
- Groups/Retreats
- Training Groups for Ownership
  - Domestic Violence
  - Grief and Bereavement
  - Addictions
  - Self-Esteem

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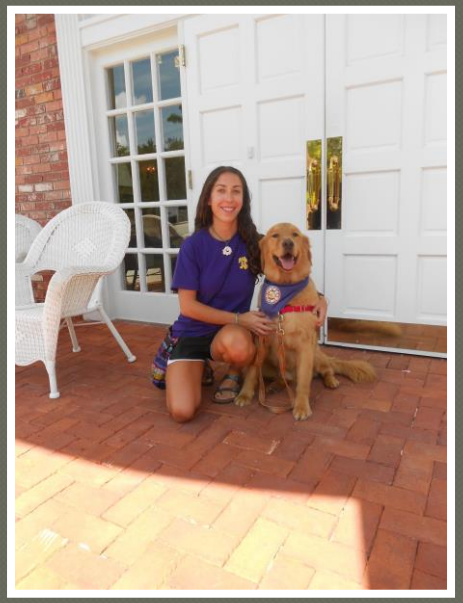
Bringing Pet Therapy to Your Facility



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Bringing Pet Therapy to Your Facility

Step 1: Site Assessment

To insure a safe Pet Therapy program, you need to familiarize your staff with basic safety and risk management information about AAA/AAT.

- Would your facility be challenging for a therapy team?
- What is the main objective of the Pet Therapy visits? Is it AAA? AAT? Both?

Bringing Pet Therapy to Your Facility

Step 2: Establish Guidelines for Pet Therapy

- What kind of animals are you going to allow?
- Where will these animals be allowed within the facility?
- Who will be receiving the Pet Therapy?
- Will a staff member be accompanying the therapy team during the visits?

Bringing Pet Therapy to Your Facility

Step 3: Establish Policies and Procedures

- Pre-Visitation: How will the animals be screened?
- What pet therapy organization(s) will the volunteers come from?
- Who and what will determine the suitability of the animal for your facility?
- What are the requirements for patient or resident participation in the program?
- What about a patient's personal pet?
- Procedure for incident reporting
- INFECTION CONTROL!

Bringing Pet Therapy to Your Facility

Step 4: Recruiting and managing Pet Therapy volunteers

- What is their certification?
- What training has the team had?
- Insurance
- Background screening
- Tracking of volunteer membership with the certifying organization
- Tracking of animal vaccinations
- Incident reporting

Therapy Dogs in Your Setting

- Typically, Recreational Therapy is the prime department to coordinate and use AAA/AAT but teams are also used in other areas such a mental health.
- If the handler is not well versed in your setting's population, assign a therapist to be with them.
- If the dog is a Facility Dog, then coworkers should know who is in charge of the animal. There should be a specific schedule for the animal and a "home area" where the dog can rest without stress.

Requirements for Volunteer Handlers

Volunteer training should include:

- HIPAA
- Infection Control Procedures
- General Policies and Procedures
- Assessing an approaching patients and residents
- Non-verbal communication from patients
- Dog “awareness” and reading their dog’s body language

Requirements for Animals

Requirements should include:

- American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen Certification
- Dogs should be at least 1 year old and have lived with the owner/handler for at least 6 months
- Well socialized to people, other dogs and exposed to a variety of environments
- Should be carefully evaluated for the appropriate temperament and personality and the evaluation should take place in an environment unfamiliar to the dog
- Temperament and training should fit the work that the dog will be doing
- Periodic re-evaluation of the dog

Ethical Considerations for Canine Co-Therapists

Number one consideration in any work must be:
Safety of client, canine co-therapist and you

- Therapists need training in a recognized animal assisted therapy program that addresses the ethical considerations of touch between children and canines.
- The canine co-therapist also needs extensive training specifically with each population to work with, i.e.: children, mentally ill, crisis, etc.. in sessions.

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Ethical Considerations for Canine Co-Therapists

- Include an Informed Consent that specifies the factors and boundaries involved in the inclusion of canines in therapy that all addresses the therapeutic variable of touch between the client and canine.

- The client and in the case of a child client, the parent are educated on the appropriate interactions of touch between the child and canine. The child specifically is taught how to pick up on the cues of the canine, and the therapist is trained to monitor all interactions.

- The therapist takes responsibility for prevention and handling acts of aggression—either by the client to the dog, or the dog to the client.

Ethical Considerations for Canine Co-Therapists

- The client's cultural background related to touch must be considered.
- The client's history related to touch and trauma must be an included factor.
- Therapist self-awareness regarding biases and countertransferences related to touch that may emerge during canine assisted sessions must be explored
- Document any significant incidents involving touch during the sessions, as well as consultation from peers and legal counsel regarding any ethical issues.
- Malpractice insurance must be secured which includes the canine's involvement in sessions. (NASW has such a policy)

From Dr. Janet Courtney's publication in process, with the expertise of Bonnie Martin.

CHECKLIST TO START YOUR OWN PROGRAM

- ❑ Waivers
- ❑ Liability
- ❑ 501(c)3
- ❑ Program Proposal
- ❑ Approval –Decision maker
- ❑ People Needed
- ❑ Budget
- ❑ Protocol
- ❑ Location
- ❑ Letters – family
- ❑ Pre and post measures
- ❑ Curriculum
- ❑ Type of animals
- ❑ Adoption Policies

Used with permission from
Amy Johnson, Unit Marketing Manager
Director of Animal Assisted Therapy Certificate Program
Director of Center for Human Animal Interventions
Oakland University, Rochester, MI 2008

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The Mission Continues…

Special Thank You to Marcella of
Wild Eyes Photography
www.**wildeyes**gallery.com

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