

Inside Trauma



A Word from the Editor



Therapy is often thought of as conversing with a therapist in a treatment room with a box of tissues and unwanted emotions. But with modern problems comes modern solutions. Talk therapy isn't always the best mode of treatment and clients can be better suited to therapy outside of the therapy room. For example, Animal Therapy with dogs, cats and horses has a multitude of benefits. Other alternative therapies can closely align with hobbies and interests of the client, for example gardening or sport. Particular clients work better in different scenarios, for example males tend to open up more when doing something physical like sport, and people with intellectual disorders such as autism respond better with animal therapies and non-verbal communication, such as swimming or music. In this seasons newsletter the discussion will be about alternative therapies and how they work, benefits and disadvantages will be discussed along with hypnosis and its therapeutic benefits.

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Inside Trauma Newsletter

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Animal Therapy explained:



Animal therapy is not a new concept but to some it may be thought provoking: how do you 'do' therapy with an animal? Assisted by a Therapist of course, activities such as grooming, feeding, walking, patting, nursing and even riding can be activities commonly used during the therapy process. The idea behind this mode of therapy is that it is a distraction outside of the normal thought processes of the individual, gives focus and purpose, and the animal can illicit positive hormones such as oxytocin. A bond can also be formed and this can help the client to realise their worth, that love in non-judgemental, can lessen feelings of loneliness, give the client something to look forward to and a sense of purpose or duty to the animal that they may be lacking in their lives. It can help relax the client if they have anger issues or anxiety issues or struggling with issues of past trauma. And the Therapist gets to see how they react with other subjects in the real world. The animal also loves it too! The focus isnt on the client and their emotions and this can ease the pressure some clients might feel. It would also help with clients who struggle to open up.

There are three different types of therapy animals:

- Therapeutic Visitation Animal: these are family pets whose owners volunteer to share with others.
- Assisted Therapy Animals: these animals are generally dogs whose duty are to help people with physical problems, an example is seeing eye dogs



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Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened. – Anatole France

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- Facility Therapy Animals: these animals live on site with the patients such as group homes or nursing homes.

All of these therapy animals undergo suitability and temperament checks before becoming a suitable candidate for the client.



Potential disadvantages to animal therapy include allergies, fear of animals and hygiene, but if managed correctly and monitored by a trained Supervisor, all of these issues can be dealt with.



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AUSTRALIA

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*If having a soul means
being able to feel love
and loyalty and
gratitude, then animals
are better off than a lot of
humans. – James Herriot*



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What type of clients are suited to animal therapy?

This kind of therapy can be used for almost anyone! Although it is sometimes the preferred or advised mode of therapy for others. Animal Therapy has been said to improve patients with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Depression, Anxiety, the elderly, Dementia patients, eating disorder patients, hospitalised children, addiction recovery patients and social anxiety.



Therapy and Self Care

Oftentimes, therapy and self-care are seen as two separate activities, however, they are very much one of the same! Self-care is doing something for yourself that is rewarding and enjoyable, so it might be having a sleep in, a massage, having a movie night, going for a walk and making more time for yourself. By self-caring, you are giving yourself therapy, external to a therapy room. Soothing and rewarding options for self-care can include, cooking, gardening, exercising, reading or volunteering. The key theme with these options is growth, development learning, and upskilling, which are successful attributes to a beneficial self-care method.

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Using Hypnosis for Trauma

Most people at some time in their lives are going to experience trauma, however some people have enough resilience and capacity to overcoming trauma without therapy (Zeig, 2017).

In New York, after the 9/11 incident most people that were trauma affected did not go to therapy for it. Some used alternative methods such as yoga to try to sooth themselves.

There are many different models for working with trauma. Some examples include behavioural, cognitive, experiential or somatic experiencing approaches.

When exposed to a traumatic event, people believe they experience a "close brush with death," or a significant flight-fight episode.

If symptoms are continuously experienced after a 6-month period they could be diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

There are three main symptoms of PTSD:

Intrusions: sudden memories that appear randomly of what happened in some of the re-lived horror. They are perceived as inescapable.

Social Withdrawal: This happens when people start moving away from activities that once gave them joy.

Hypersensitivity (or hyperactivity): Overacting in any given time.

These symptoms are considered to be a normal reaction to an abnormal event.

These symptoms function as a maladaptive protection process when someone has been to be exposed to a traumatic event.

Hypnosis can be used as part of a therapeutic process to increase the timeframe of recovery. Clinical hypnosis shares the focus of embracing personal strength, amplifying awareness and gaining control over your once uncontrollable thoughts.

As an example, when you go to watch a movie or play, the director does not come out and tell you to feel happy, or to laugh in a comedic scene. The same way they don't tell you to feel sad in a drama scene. You react effortlessly. In clinical hypnotherapy it works in a similar fashion, your resources and inner abilities are elicited to manifest so you can access your unique potential and strengths. You start to gain control of your thought processes and unconsciously adapt back to normalcy.

There are three main stages in hypnotherapy when working with trauma:

- Normalising [your reaction]
- Controlling symptoms [such as intrusive thoughts]
- Creating meaning [of your traumatic experience]

Utilizing your experience as a steppingstone to recovery can help you improve and understand your emotional reaction, and work with your body to deal with the adversity. Giving meaning to your traumatic experience can help with the healing process along with defining and understanding your own emotionality. Through the recovery process you can heighten your development of resilience which can further benefit you in the face of trauma.

Jefrey Zeig (2017). *5 Minute therapy tips, episode 24: Trauma.*

The Milton H. Erickson Foundation. Retrieved from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYn2cQfT3-g>.

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Trauma and Canine Therapy

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is reported as a high-risk factor with front-line responders. While there are many evidence-based interventions and approaches to reduce Trauma, pet therapy is showing prominence.

Dogs can promote connection in families by developing strong bonds, this companionship between a human and a dog is referred to as canine therapy: CT (Risley-Curtis 2010)

Relationship connections often provides the initial steps towards companionship. Dogs are much loved and owners (85%) admit that a dog is a member of their family. (Walsh 2009) What canine therapy does do, is assist both individuals and families to acquire skills to build relationships because they offer unconditional love, affection and bonding. (Walsh 2009)

Already dogs play an integral part of military personnel who have been impacted by severe trauma upon returning from deployment. Canine therapy has been found to be effective with military veterans suffering from PTSD (Palacion 2012)

Research shown that Canine Therapy helps with severe mental illness by decreasing anhedonia for clients with Schizophrenia also decreasing depression among elderly.

Trained Therapy dogs have shown an acute awareness over humans, of being able to sniff out who needs them by sensing the stress hormone cortisol.

Dogs are able to assist timid vulnerable human beings to connect. The benefits with these interactions are: -

1. Decreased stress
2. Increased activity and health
3. Improved communication
4. Learning ways to treat others and self
5. Unconditional love and empathy
6. Increased self-esteem
7. Reduced blood pressure
8. Elevated mood
9. Reduced Loneliness
10. Raised levels of oxytocin

There is a greater respect from the Medical fraternity and a growing support for canine connections. Dr. E. Greagan 2009, oncologist at the Mayo clinic reports: A pet is a "medication without side effects", they increase our quality of life.

Peter Horton

Founding Director of Trauma Centre Australia

