No Need to Worry!
Canine assisted interventions for anxiety disorders

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Div 17 Sec 13 Human-Animal Interaction

No need to worry: Canine assisted interventions for anxiety disorders.
Summary of Considerations for APA Ethical Standards
Competencies in Animal-Assisted Interventions

Submitted by the Human-Animal Interactions Ethics Workgroup

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Anxiety

Managing Your Mental Health

What is anxiety?

33,510 views • Jul 7, 2014
Canine-Assisted Psychotherapy

• Conducted by a trained, licensed mental health clinician, who is competent in their licensing scope of practice as well as therapy animal welfare and AAT competencies.

• Includes a canine with an industry recognized therapy dog certification (Pet Partners, Therapy Dogs International etc)

• Goals are measurable and objective, planned and structured.

• Document, document, document!
Examples of interventions (not necessarily anxiety specific)


Piper, L.J. The practice of animal assisted psychotherapy. E Street Lane Publicaitons

- Th. comments on client-TD relationship
- Th. encourages Ct. to play with TD in session
- Th. engages TD in performing tricks
- Th. encourages Ct. to touch and or pet TD
- Th. encourages Ct. to express distress / concerns to TD
- Th. encourages Ct. to engage the TD in performing tricks
- Th. develops specific activities that involve TD
- Th. allows TD to engage spontaneously with Ct.
- Ct., TD and TH. engage outside of traditional therapy environment, i.e take a walk.
- Th. asks Ct. to command TD in some manner
- Th. encourages Ct. to make up stories involving TD
- TH. asks questions based on the Ct.-TD relationships, i.e. ”if Paisley was your best friend, what would she know about you that nobody else knows?”
- Spontaneous interactions between Ct. and TD are reflected upon by Th.
- Th. shares specific stories about TD’s history with Ct.
Who is a good AAT client?

• Does not have an intense fear of dogs
• Has no history of harming animals
• Has not been harmed by a dog
• No animal allergies
• No cultural prohibitions about being with dogs
## Benefits & Risks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Risks</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Break the ice</td>
<td>• TD can exercise free will and disrupt process</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Build rapport</td>
<td>• TD can refuse to engage, or walk away</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Give Th. and Ct. a shared interest</td>
<td>• TD can injure Ct.; Ct. can injure TD</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Foster trust</td>
<td>• Ct can experience intense grief and loss when terminating therapy or if TD dies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Offer comfort</td>
<td>• Zoonotic diseases</td>
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<td>• Provide comic relief</td>
<td>• Maintaining welfare of both Ct. and TD is double stressful for Th.</td>
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<td>• Can help to teach Ct. skills</td>
<td>• TD welfare requires Th to make sufficient time for breaks and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Foster / teach empathy</td>
<td>• Peer judgments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decrease heart rate &amp; blood pressure</td>
<td>• Legal liability – you need extra liability insurance. Get it. Volunteer agency cert does not cover work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increase oxytocin</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Improve peer-to-peer relationships</td>
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Anxiety Interventions in the office

Goal: Reduce anxiety

Objectives:
1. Bring Ct. into the present moment, into here-and-now awareness = P
2. Activate Vagus nervous system response = V
3. Defuse / distract Ct. from ruminating, i.e. “change the channel” of their thinking = D
4. Create new coping skills = C

- Vagus nerve stimulation - V
  - Cold weather
  - Gargling, humming, om-ing
- Teach Ct. signs of canine anxiety to foster empathy and problem solving = P, D, C
- Petting or grooming while listening to a song = P, D, C
- Share what helps your dog when they are anxious (food distraction, pacing, playing, removing threats etc) and transfer ideas to the Ct.’s life = C
- Go for a walk = P, V, D, C
- Learn a new trick together = P, D
- Ask Ct. for stories about other dogs they knew or know = P, D
- Ask Ct. how it feels to be accepted and welcomed by dog (unconditional positive regard) = P, D
- Match breath with animal = P, V, D, C
Matching breath with the therapy cat
Anxiety Interventions clients can do at home

• Vagus nerve stimulation
  • Cold water or weather
  • Gargling, humming, om-ing
  • Match breathing with animal
  • Exercising / being outdoors
• Petting or grooming while listening to a song
• Go for a walk
• Learn a new trick together
• Petting / snuggling while watching TV
• Volunteering with dog, or at a dog rescue
• Join local dog park (exercise and socialization for both human and animal)
Take aways

• Canine assisted psychotherapy (CAP) is a dynamic, effective evidence based treatment for anxiety.
• We need more evidence based research, so please conduct some 😊
• AAT should only be executed by a therapist who is competent in their licensing scope of practice, animal assisted therapy and animal welfare.
• AAT should only be executed by a canine with an industry recognized certification, who is healthy, enjoys interacting with clients, and is allowed to take breaks and say ‘no thank you’.
• AAT poses liability risks that should be mitigated by human training, canine training, best practice standards, evidence based interventions and ample liability coverage.
• AAT can be done with other animals besides canines. Pet Partners recognizes dogs, cats, equines, rabbits, guinea pigs, llamas and alpacas, birds, miniature pigs, and rats
• Training is available through HAI, AAII, Pet Partners and other organizations.
References & Useful Resources


American Veterinary Medical Association https://www.avma.org


Animal Assisted Interventions International https://aai-int.org

Animal Assisted Play Therapy (Rise Van Fleet) - https://www.facebook.com/groups/AnimalAssistedPlayTherapy/


Human Animal Interaction APA Div 17 Sec 13 https://www.human-animal-interaction.org/

International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations https://iahaio.org


Pet Partners https://petpartners.org/


Therapy Dogs International https://www.tdi-dog.org/default.aspx