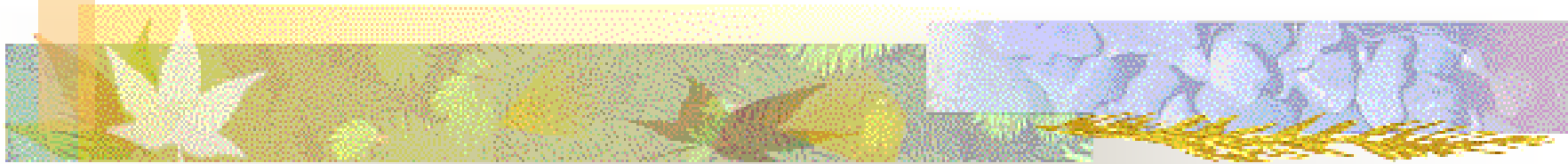


Innovations in Animal-Assisted Therapy

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Part A, presented by:

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Recommended Reading

- Chandler, C.K. (2017). *Animal-assisted therapy in counseling*. New York, NY: Routledge.



Selecting a pet for therapy work...

- For a university/college environment, dogs make the best therapy animals for counseling.
- Dogs are relatively easy to manage and care for.
- Fewer people are allergic to dogs, in comparison to other animal species.

Required Therapy Animal Characteristics

Must be:

Confident

Friendly

Well mannered

Well behaved around people and other pets

Obedient

Must not be:

Aggressive

Shy

Fearful

Easily startled





Handlers with Therapy Animals Should Be Evaluated

- Every person who works with a therapy animal should be evaluated as a handler with that animal.
- Best evaluation is offered by Pet Partners organization, www.petpartners.org
- Must complete a handler training workshop in person or on-line before handler-animal team evaluation.
- Must be re-evaluated every two years.



While working, animals should be

- Clean, well-groomed, healthy and parasite free.
- Quite and well-behaved.
- Given the choice not to participate.
- Given a place to rest.



When animals work they

- Sense emotions in humans and can find this stressful.
- Need breaks.
- Should not work more than two consecutive hours at a time without a very long break.
- Should not work more than four total hours per day – limit number of persons they work with.
- Should not work consecutive days.
- Should not be forced to do anything or interact with anyone they do not want to.



Safety

- Have clients use antibacterial hand gel before and after working with your animal.
- Never leave a therapy animal alone with a client.
- Never leave your therapy animal with someone you do not know or with someone who is not very familiar with your animal.
- Whenever possible, do not have your animal work with a client who may be contagious (air born virus, etc.).
- Screen all clients for their appropriateness for working with a therapy animal.



To provide effective and safe AAT counselors must

- Be knowledgeable on how to perform AAT.
- Understand how to effectively communicate with their animal in a kind and nurturing way.
- Be able to interpret their animal's behavior and communications.
- Be proactive in maintaining a safe and comfortable work environment for the pet.
- Set limits when necessary, tell people “no.”



Understanding Animal Communication

- Helps you provide for the needs of the animal.
- Helps you keep animals and people safe.
- Adds greatly to the benefits of AAT.



Benefit of Working with Animals

- Animal's presence can be calming and provide a sense of safety for client.
- Animal's behavior as a result of perceiving stress during human-animal interaction reveals things that can benefit client.
- Thus, AAT can facilitate quicker and deeper client recovery – and may assist a client to reach goals not otherwise possible.



The Science of Relating

During the human-animal interaction, similarities in hormonal responses mammals, both humans and animals, facilitate the transitional process:

- Social Response
System activation:
- Dopamine rises.
- Endorphins rise.
- Oxytocin rises.
- Stress response
system goes down.

- Stress Response
System activation:
- Adrenalin rises.
- Cortisol rises.
- Aldosterone rises.
- Social response
system goes down.

Daley Olmert (2009); Panksepp (1998, 2005); and Uvnäs-Moberg (1998, 2010).



Human-Animal Relational Theory (HART)

- Identifies and guides the processing of increased therapeutic opportunities that are presented during human-animal interaction that take place in animal-assisted counseling (AAC).
- It is based on existing scientific knowledge of human-animal interaction.
- HART created by Cynthia Chandler in 2015.



Therapy Animal's Primary Roles in HART

- Through activation of the, stress response system and/or social response system, a therapy animal plays two primary roles:
 - 1) Nurturer
 - 2) Emotional Distress Detector




Animal as Nurturer

- An animal will want to engage and possibly touch a person to give and receive nurturance – this increases various wellbeing hormone production in humans and animals associated with the social response system.



Animal as Emotional Distress Detector

- If an animal experiences that something in the environment is uncomfortable or threatening, including the behavior of a person or another animal present, the animal will respond with behavioral and maybe vocal signals.
- This includes animals signaling their perception of stress or distress in a person or other animal that may not be visually obvious.



Animals may naturally signal perception of stress in self or others -

- **Displacement Signals:** animal changes posture or body position, i.e. dog suddenly sitting up, horse backing away. Sometimes an animal will move toward and engage a client in nurturing when animal perceives a stressor in a client.
- **Calming Signals:** for dogs – rapid eye blinking, yawning, looking away, quick lip licking, etc.; for horses – blinking, empty chewing, turning away, etc.
- **Alerting signals:** animal vocalization or body language known to reflect alerting.

(Information Source: Chandler, 2017)



HART Construct of SHARM: Significant Human-Animal Relational Moment

- From a series of human-animal relational moments that are occurring when an animal enters the session, HART assist a counselor and/or client to identify and value the most significant human-animal relational moment (SHARM) or moments that occur during human-animal interaction.



A SHARM is valued on the basis of how its identification and processing:

- May reflect something important about the client's state during a session.
- May benefit a client by facilitating awareness, insight and adjustment for personal growth and healing.
- And, may reflect something important about the counselor's state during a session with a client.



Human-Animal Relational Process

- When a therapist or a client identifies a significant human-animal relational moment (SHARM), the moment is processed by the therapist and client; this is human-animal relational process (HARP).



HARTI

Human-Animal Relational Therapeutic Impact

- Impact is effected by how well a SHARM is recognized and processed either internally by an individual client and/or counselor, and/or externally via interactive dialogue between client and counselor.



HART: Relational Process of AAT

- In relating to the animal, a series of relational moments (RMs) occur.
- Identify the most significant human-animal relational moments (SHARMs), then processing may occur (HARP). The impact of the SHARM and HARP together is evaluated for impact (HARTI).

Summarized by the formula below -

- $SHARM + HARP = HARTI$



Reflect Relational Moments with Therapeutic Value (some example SHARMS):

- Greeting
- Acknowledgment
- Speculation
- Interpretation
- Comfort
- Assurance
- Check In



Greeting

- The therapist facilitates a greeting between client and therapy animal each time the client comes to the session where the animal is present.
- And, therapist comments on the animal's body language in response to the greeting and the meaning or value of this body language.

Greeting SHARM

Client feels nurtured.

Relaxed atmosphere.



Greeting SHARM

Client feels good about therapist from petting therapy dog.





Acknowledgement

- Animal alerts us when something needs attending - when it senses an emotional need. Alert can be a bark, whine, shift in body language, etc.
- Acknowledge to the animal and to the client that the animal is sensing something of importance to the client or to the therapist.
- Ask client if he/she knows what might need attention in the client.

Dog gets up from sleeping, walks over to client and places paw on clients knee.
Therapist and client acknowledge animal is communicating something that needs attention in client.





Speculation

- To wonder aloud or ask the client to wonder aloud about what the animal is thinking, feeling, or doing.
- Accuracy of speculation is not necessary for therapeutic benefit.
- This allows the client to project the client's internal state on to the animal and provides therapist with useful information about internal state of client.



Client or counselor can speculate about what animal is thinking or feeling.



Interpretation

- To interpret an animal's behavior or ask a client to interpret an animal's behavior to imply what the animal is experiencing or communicating. Striving for accuracy with interpretation.
- This interpretation is given to understand what an animal is experiencing as a result of interaction with a person, another animal, or other aspects of the environment.
- Animal's behavior often mirrors (reflects) what is going on in a client (or other person in session).

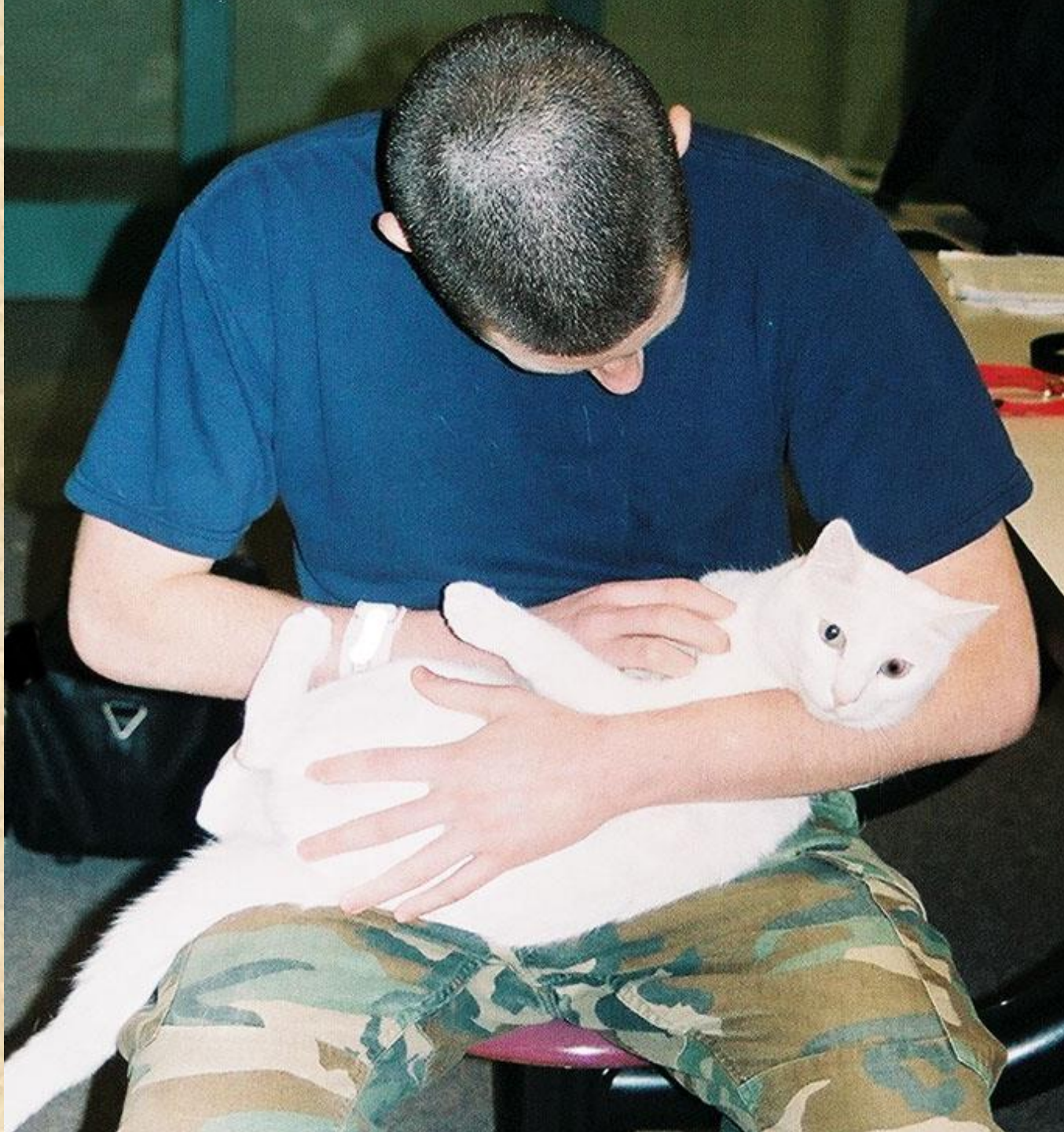


Interpretation of what an animal is communicating about its comfort or discomfort in a human-animal interaction can increase client self awareness.



Comfort

- The animal engages in physical comforting touch (being held, hugged, or petted), and the therapist comments or ask the client to comment on this interaction.
- The client's response will reveal the need and desire for the client to be comforted and nurtured.



Comforting
Interaction
With
Snowflake

Rusty provides comfort and security during play therapy





Assurance

- Assure the client regarding how the animal feels, maybe about the client.
- Or, assure the client about his/her self based on the behavior of the animal toward the client.
- There are 3 types of assurance SHARMS



Assurance SHARM: 3 types

- Sense of Safety: feel safer to engage or take risks when accompanied by animal, “I am safe.”
- Self-efficacy: feel more competent or confident from engagement with animal, “I am capable.”
- Self-worth: feel greater acceptance or sense of personal worth from engaging with animal “I am worthy.”



Brave therapy dog Dolly assures clients horses are safe to be with.

Client is more assured about participation in therapy activity when accompanied by a therapy animal





Check In

- The animal walks over to the client and nuzzles client's hand or sniffs the client's face.
- Therapist points out the animal is checking in to make sure the client is okay or the therapist is okay.
- Or, the therapist or client can check-in with the animal to see if animal is okay as a model or covert message for the client.
- Therapist comments on this, or ask the client to comment on this.

Horse checking in with client during equine assisted play therapy.





Therapy dog is checking in with client.



Increased Therapeutic Opportunity

- Many significant relational moments occur during human-animal interaction.
- A therapist must be observant and efficiently assess the potential therapeutic value of an RM that is being presented, and then facilitate processing of that RM with a client.

The End

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