



Idaho State
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Introduction to the Ethical Application of Animal- Assisted Therapy

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Human- Animal Bond

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Pets and their People

Pets represent significantly meaningful relationships for many clients

(Staats et al, 2008)

About 67% of households include pets

(Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook, 2018)



80—90% of pet owners describe their pets as family members

(Overgaauw, Vinke, van Hagen, & Lipman, 2020)

Most common reasons motivating pet guardianship:

1. Social Support/Avoidance of Loneliness
2. Perceived Positive Impact on Health/Activity Levels

(Staats, Wallace, & Anderson, 2008)





THE HUMAN-ANIMAL BOND (HAB)

“A mutually-beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals”
(AVMA, 2017)

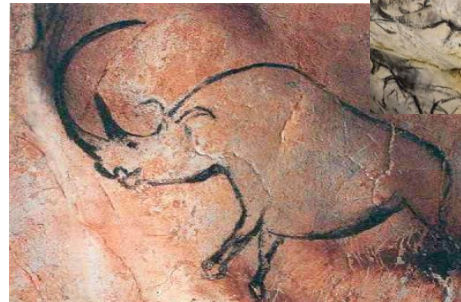
HAB: Not a New Phenomenon

Anthropological evidence reveals the significance of animals in human lives since before cave paintings (Fine, 2015).

Animals have been psychologically linked to our survival and in cultural myths/spirituality. Evidence exists that animals have been assisting human healers for thousands of years.

Biophilia Hypothesis linked to human origins.

However...The formal study and professionalized application of the Human-Animal Bond (HAB) is relatively recent.



PLETHORA OF CONFUSION



Many are curious about the role of Human-Animal Interactions (HAIs) in human wellness.

- Much confusion and misunderstanding occurs about the role of animals in human wellness.
- Terminology and taxonomy relevant to HAIs are still in development and will likely continue to evolve.
- Sensationalized and inaccurate media coverage and inaccurate professional writing contributes to many false assumptions and misunderstanding.

Many different applications of the HAI exist, each promoting unique wellness goals, and requiring different preparation.

HAIs are NOT:

A Panacea

One-Size-Fits-All

Universally Beneficial

Just about the Benefitting the Human

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Point of Clarification

Scope of General Counselors

Pets

(Relationships may be included in treatment *WITHOUT* animal attending sessions. Pets are not permitted in in-person sessions)

ESAs

(Requires specialized training in the ethical considerations associated with ESA letters. ESAs are not permitted in in-person sessions)

Outside Scope of General Counselors

Service/Assistance Animals

(Refer out to reputable service/assistance animal preparation and placement organization such as ADI, CCI, etc.)

Therapy Animals

(Requires Formal Coursework and Supervised Experience)

One Welfare Model

The One Welfare approach promotes the direct and indirect links of animal welfare to human welfare and environmentally friendly animal-keeping systems (Pinellos, Appleby, Scott-Park, Smith, & Verde, 2016)

- Human health/welfare and animal health/welfare are interwoven and interdependent
- Human-animal wellness/relationships are predictive of human-human wellness/relationships



One Welfare Research & Implications

(Jordan and Lem, 2014; Ascione & Shapiro 2009; Ascione et al, 2007)

Issues Animal Welfare Indicate Issues in Human Welfare

- Animals often act as indicators of human health and welfare
- Evidence of strong link between animal abuse, family, and social violence
- Those who mistreat and abuse animals are more likely to mistreat and abuse vulnerable people around them

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One Welfare Research & Implications

(Jordan and Lem, 2014; Ascione & Shapiro 2009; Ascione et al, 2007)

Improving Animal Welfare Improves Human Welfare

- Individuals who treat animals humanely also tend to treat other people humanely (Europeanlinkcoalition, 2016)
- Abuse of vulnerable individuals can be reduced and prevented by improving animal welfare among the perpetrators of abuse
(Europeanlinkcoalition, 2016; Gibbons et al., 2015; Ascione & Shapiro, 2009)
- Non-violent animal handling teaching programs can reduce violent **attitudes** and behaviors towards other people (Gibbons et al, 2015)
- Case studies using the OneWelfare approach show promise for reducing and/or preventing crime and violence at the community level, particularly domestic violence and abuse towards vulnerable others (RSPCA 2007).
- Responsible/Humane pet relationships are cited as a motivator to avoid substance use and other behaviors that may result in arrests for at-risk youth (Jordan & Lem 2014)

Science vs Sensationalism

Increased attention towards HAB has both advantageous and potentially harmful consequences. Although specific kinds of human-animal interactions have empirical support:

- Not all human-animal relationships are healthy or beneficial
- HAB is an additive intervention, and is ineffective as a stand-alone treatment for mental health concerns
- All human-animal interactions carry unavoidable risks, some of which are serious
- Current demand for professionalized HAB is growing faster than most provider's competence



Suggestions for Providers

- Understand that HAI+HAB will continue to play a role in human healthcare practices
 - Understand current terminology/taxonomy/roles of helper animals
 - Understand the basic tenets of what constitutes therapeutic human animal relationships
 - Mutuality, Consent, Intentionality, Competence
- Understand potential risks associated with HAB+HAI in healthcare and human services
 - Develop a formal written policy for on-site animals (service, therapy, etc.) as well as a formal written policy for ESA letters
 - Develop credible and accurate handouts, psychoeducation, recommendations, and other resources related to positive pet relationships, available for all clients or guests

Help educate clients, colleagues, and other systems about all of the above and advocate for **appropriate** HAB+HAIs



Promoting Healthy HABs

Awareness of healthy, mutually-beneficial human-animal relationships may enhance the practice of all counselors, not just those who practice AAT.

Counselor Conceptualization

HAB Principles & OneWelfare Model



Clinical Practice/Advocacy

Relational Learning & Self-Awareness

Humane Husbandry

Humane Training

HABs in Sessions/Treatment

What can we learn through healthy HAB relationships?

Healthy & mutually-beneficial relationships

- Bodily autonomy, boundaries, mutuality, and consent
- Accurate empathy & perspective-taking
- Frustration tolerance and healthy conflict resolution
- Emotional Regulation Skills & Problem-Solving Skills
- Improve health of relationships with other people

Healthy Stress Management & Self-Care Practices

- Specific therapeutic skills and metaphors on subsequent slides

Understand/Appreciate our connection to the natural world

- Biophilia
- Belonging within ecosystem
- Conservation, husbandry, and stewardship



Promoting Healthy HAB in Counseling Environments

- Web Presence
 - Acknowledging OneWelfare Model and the Importance of HAB
- Psychoeducational Flyers/Posters
 - OneWelfare and 5 Freedoms Graphics
 - ADA/AVMA/DOJ Fact Sheets
 - "Red Flags" for Training Professionals
 - Recommended Local Professionals + Reduced Cost Pet Care Resources
 - Human + Animal Relevant Psychoeducation Concepts
- "Coffee Table" and Bibliotherapy Books
 - My favorites:
 - Dog Knows: Learning How to Learn From Dogs by Sindhoor Pangal
 - Doggie Language by Lilli Chin
 - Laminated Information Fold-Outs on Human-Dog Safety by Colleen Pelar
 - Animals in Translation by Temple Grandin
 - The Other End of the Leash by Patricia McConnell
 - Don't Shoot the Dog: The New Art of Teaching and Training by Karen Pryor





CHAPTER 2

Taxonomy of Experiences, Approaches & Animals

Human-Animal Interactions (HAI)

Potentially beneficial interactions between humans and animals, specifically relevant to health and wellness

(AVMA, 2021)

Human-Animal Bond (HAB)

Animal- Assisted Interventions (AAI)

Certain Conditions Must be Met, but No Training or Evaluation Required

Training and Evaluation Required of Animal and Human Handler

Any mutually-beneficial, non-exploitative experience between a human and an animal.

May be direct, indirect, observational, or interactive.

Examples: Relationships with pets, interactive experiences with familiar or unfamiliar animals, observational experiences with wildlife, etc.

Animal Assisted Therapy

Goal oriented, delivered by licensed healthcare professional

Animal Assisted Education

Goal oriented, delivered by professional educator

Animal Assisted Activities

No treatment goals, delivered by volunteer

Up-and-coming Category: Animal Assisted Special Programs. Will likely include Animal-assisted Crisis Response, Prison animal programs, reading dog programs, diamond model of service

TAXONOMY MATTERS: APPROACHES

Animal-Assisted Interventions (AAls)

Broad term that is now commonly used to describe the intentional involvement of various species of animals in diverse manners beneficial to humans. Includes Animal Assisted Activities, Animal Assisted Therapy, and Animal Assisted Education.

Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)

Specially prepared paraprofessionals or volunteers provide opportunities for motivation, education, or recreation to enhance quality of life in a variety of environments in partnership with an animal meeting certain criteria that is evaluated and registered through a therapy animal organization.

Pet Partners and InterMountain Therapy Animals currently recognize 9 species as eligible for evaluation:
Dogs, horses, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, llama/alpacas, cockatoos/African grey parrots, and potbellied pigs.

Examples: Therapy animal team visits to hospitals, nursing homes, college campuses, etc.

Animal-Assisted Education (AAE) & Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)

Appropriately credentialed human service or educational professionals direct/deliver goal-directed professional interventions, in which an animal meeting certain criteria is an integral part, within their scope of practice.

Animal Assisted Therapy

Designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, or cognitive function. Animal-assisted therapy is provided in a variety of settings, and may be group or individual in nature. The process is documented, evaluated, and directly linked to treatment goals.

Animal Assisted Education

Planned and structured intervention with specific academic or educational goals. The process is documented, evaluated, and directly linked to curriculum or learning outcomes.

(AVMA, 2021)

TAXONOMY MATTERS: THE ANIMALS

Companion Animal

A personal pet of any species which functions as companion to a human caregiver

Working Animal

Animals are specially trained to perform work functions that assist a human
Might simultaneously offer companionship in some cases

Emotional Support Animal (ESA)

An animal of various species (excluding venomous animals or wildlife), supported by a physician or mental health professional based upon a disability-specific need. Does not perform specific tasks (FHA, 1986).

Therapy Animal

A specially trained and evaluated animal, meeting specific criteria, which is included as an integral part of a goal-directed treatment process which must be directly relevant to a person's overall treatment plan.

Service/Assistance Animal

Any dog that is individually trained to do perform specific tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Including physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability (ADA, 1990).

Other Working Animals

Animal of various species that is specially selected, trained, and prepared for a working role. Examples include, but are not limited to: herding dogs, flock guards, pack/draft animals, military working dogs, police dogs, FEMA dogs.

	Species	Role	Training	Access Rights
Service/ Assistance Animal	Dogs only (rare exceptions for mini horses)	Performance of specific tasks directly related to a person's diagnosed disability	Advanced and intensive disability-specific, individual training and rigorous suitability and temperament evaluations. Typical 2+ years and \$25K Training.	General public access
Therapy Animal	Dogs, cats, horses, llamas/alpaca, guinea pigs, rats, rabbits, pot-bellied pigs, and some species of parrots	Engage the public and healthcare or human service clients in therapeutic human-animal interactions and interventions in partnership with a specially trained healthcare or human service provider	Must be trained to reliably perform basic obedience tasks and possess consistent and predictable manners and behavior in public and is formally evaluated through a recognized therapy animal organization	Only where invited
Emotional Support Animal (ESA)	Any non-venomous, domesticated species (no wildlife species)	A personal pet, prescribed by a healthcare provider, which provides comfort to a person with a verifiable mental illness	No formal training or evaluation of animal or human handler. ESA's do not perform specific tasks or behaviors	Housing situations only; <i>no</i> additional public access rights



CHAPTER 3

A Closer Look at Animal-Assisted Therapy



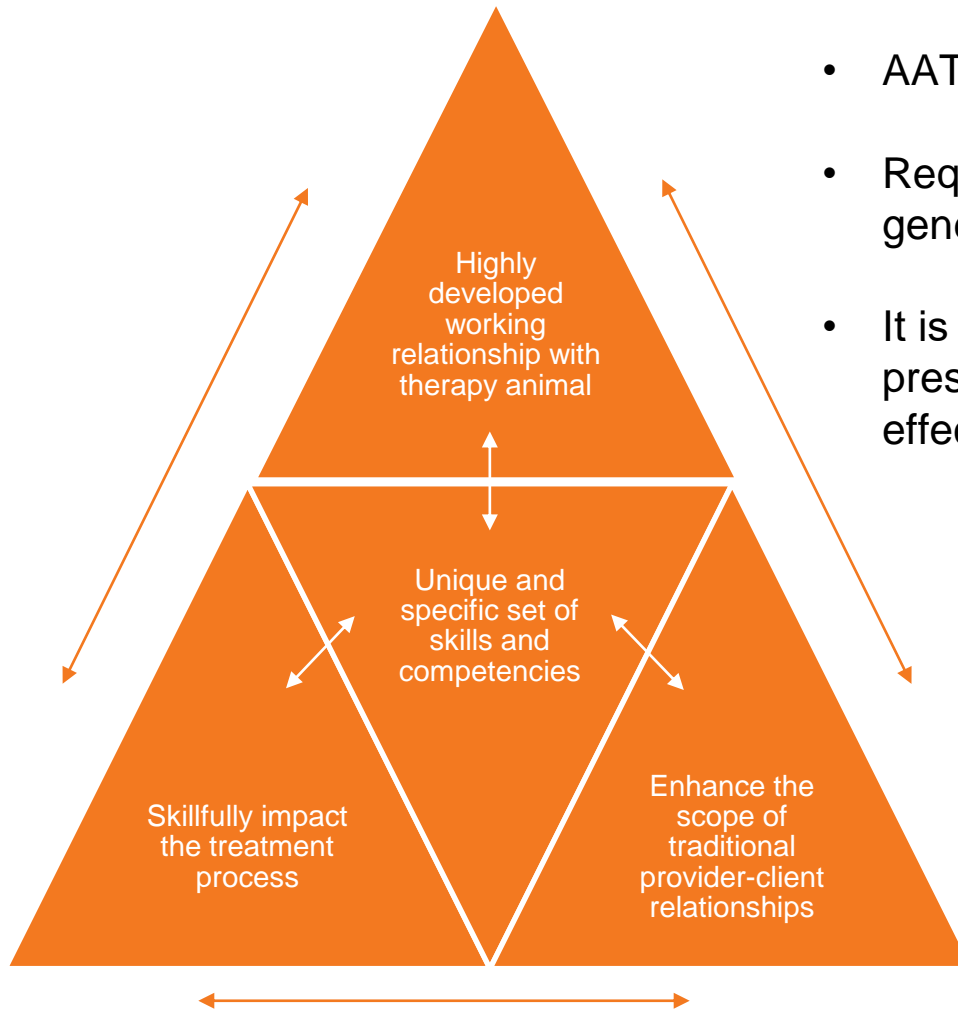
Animal Assisted Therapy in Mental Health

A sub-specialty within Animal Assisted Therapy which involves an appropriately trained, licensed/credentialed mental health professional.

- Specialized set of skills and competencies that allows mental health professionals to incorporate specially prepared and evaluated animals into the mental health process (Stewart, Chang & Rice, 2013)
- Together, the mental health provider and therapy animal influence the therapeutic process in ways that are beyond the scope of traditional provider-client helping relationships (Stewart, Chang & Rice, 2013)
- Considered a specialty area requiring formally evaluated coursework, training, and supervised experience (ACA, 2016)

AAT Model of Practice

(Stewart, Chang & Rice, 2013)



- AAT is complex and highly nuanced
- Requires long-term, intensive training *beyond* general healthcare training and love of animals
- It is the provider's skill, rather than the animal's presence or behavior, that impacts the effectiveness of AAT

Saki says: "Your training is the key to my helpfulness"



AAT and the Therapeutic Relationship



The Provider-Client Relationship

- The quality of the therapeutic alliance is the strongest predictor of treatment **SUCCESS** (Hovarth & Symonds, 1991)
- Requires client time, trust, and disclosure (Hovarth & Symonds, 1991)

AAI's Impact on the Therapeutic Relationship:

- Facilitates a unique positive impact on the client's perception of the quality of the therapeutic alliance (Barber, Connolly, Crits-Christoph, Gladis & Siqueland, 2009)
- The therapeutic rapport is built more quickly in the presence of a therapy animal (Fine, 2015)
- Creates trust through *transfer* and *modeling* (Stewart et al., 2013)
- Encourages disclosure and access to otherwise difficult or impossible topics (Reichert, 1998; Stewart et al., 2013)
- Offers a heightened level of genuineness and other core conditions (Stewart et al., 2013)

AAT and the Therapeutic Process



- Decreases need for verbal language (Stewart et al., 2013)
- Facilitates therapeutic metaphors (Stewart et al., 2013)
- Offers unique opportunity to incorporate therapeutic/safe touch (Fine, 2015)
- Results in elevated levels of the neurotransmitter Oxytocin *in both the human and the animal* (Chandler, 2012).
 - Pro Tip: Oxytocin facilitates social bonding AND counteracts some harmful stress hormones.
- Enhances 'here and now' experiences in therapy (Stewart et al., 2014)
- May help reduce burnout and vicarious trauma symptoms in counselors (Stewart et al., 2014)

Outcome Literature

AAT literature shows support for:

- Anxiety, depression
- Trauma/PTSD
- Autism Spectrum
- Developmental Disorders
- Severe mental illness
- Substance Use Disorders
- Mandated populations
- Interpersonal Challenges and Social Skills



Disclaimer: Star was thoroughly compensated with treats for the few second she wore this hat for this photo



Conceptualizing AAT Skills

- Safe, ethical, and effective AAT requires the skillful application of an extensively trained provider
- Both “Hard” and “Soft” Skills are required and must be demonstrated simultaneously and continuously in all AAT interventions
 - **Hard Skills – Animal Handling & Husbandry**
 - In-depth, species-specific ethological knowledge about animal
 - Ability to proactively predict, intervene, and modify animal behavior across a wide variety of situations and settings
 - Ability to assess & manage animal stress and fatigue
 - **Soft Skills – Mental-health Specific Facilitation**
 - Goes beyond facilitating a safe animal interaction – must be able to facilitate and interpret interactions in a therapeutically meaningful way
 - Able to translate or reframe unexpected occurrences into therapeutic interventions or teachable moments
 - Characteristics of effective AAI practitioners include (Stewart, Chang & Rice, 2013):
 - Flexibility
 - Spontaneity
 - Creativity
 - Willingness to work in “the here and now”

The Highly Developed Working Relationship

In AAT, the human-animal relationship serves as a model for healthy relationships with others and as a foundation of trust between provider and client. The provider-animal relationship is THE most influential factor in the effectiveness of AAT (Robino, 2019).

AAT Working Relationship

Mutual Trust
 Consent & Autonomy
 Cross-Species Communication
 Mutual Respect
 Appreciation
 Advocacy
 Humor & Joy
 Nurturing & Affection
 Responsible Power Dynamics
 Commitment to nonviolence

Therapy Animal Bill of Rights

(Howie, 2015)

Provides gentle training to help me understand what I am supposed to do
 Is considerate of my perception of the world
 Helps me adapt to the work environment
 Guides clients, staff, and visitors to interact with me appropriately
 Takes action to reduce my stress
 Provides a well-rounded life with nutritious food, medical care, physical and intellectual exercise, social time, and activities beyond work
 Respects my desire to retire from my work

Brambell's 5 Freedoms

Freedom from hunger and thirst
 Freedom from discomfort
 Freedom from pain, injury, or disease
 Freedom to express normal behavior
 Freedom from fear and distress

Ethical Considerations

FACT: AAIs carry an increased risk of harm.

Ethical AAI providers are aware of such risks and take actionable steps to help address them.

Lack of awareness of risks does not exclude provider's responsibility/liability

- Client Screening & Consent

- AAI is not a panacea and is not appropriate with every client in every session
 - Examples: phobias, severe allergies, dislike of animals
- AAI-specific informed consent is required BEFORE client interacts with animal.
- **MUST** include any and all risks that could possibly apply.

- Animal Advocacy

- Client-Animal
 - Clear limit setting about interactions & conduct
 - Emphasis on animal's right to choose to interact/not interact
 - Swift and effective intervention if/when necessary
- Counselor-Animal
 - Positive training techniques
 - Recognize/respond to stress and fatigue
 - Access to retreat area, water, and place to eliminate
 - No coercion or forced interactions

- Multicultural Considerations

- Different cultural groups have different views about human-animal interactions.
- Must be understood and addressed on a client-by-client basis.
- Some human-animal relationships can be associated with oppression, marginalization, and privilege

Your chances of being killed by a bunny are low but never zero.





Ethical Considerations

In addition to thorough 'front end' preparation, ethical providers must exercise diligence in addressing the following on a continuous basis:

- Animal Advocacy
 - Keeping animals physically and psychologically healthy in and out of session
 - Ongoing animal training, socialization, and evaluation
 - Honoring animal's choice to work or not work regardless of human plans/expectations
- Provider Competency
 - Ongoing provider consumption of current AAI literature, continuing education, training, and AAI peer/supervisor consultation
- Client Orientation
 - Orienting clients to appropriate interactions with the animal BEFORE meeting the animal.
 - Clear and concrete "do's and don'ts"
 - Ongoing assessment of the effectiveness and appropriateness of AAI interventions



Ethical Considerations: Pets as Professional Partners

The integration of the handler's personal pet as a therapy animal maximizes the handler's ability to predict the animal's behavior across a wide variety of settings and situations (Chandler, 2017)

HOWEVER....

Objective assessment of personally-beloved individual animals is a unique role to AAI providers.

- Providers must often confront personal biases, assumptions, and attributions towards beloved individual animals.
- Competent providers must be able to objectively and accurately assess an animal's short-term and long-term suitability for work in a therapeutic setting despite personal biases or personal investment.
- In many cases, our animal may not be suitable for work in this setting.

Questions to ask yourself/a reputable professional:

- Is the species of my pet eligible for registration?
- Does my pet enjoy interacting with 'outsiders'?
- How does my pet respond to different environments?
- How does my pet respond to stressful situations?
- Does my pet have any current training or behavioral concerns to address?
 - Registration will require a veterinarian's endorsement – What does my vet have to say about my pet's suitability?



Ethical Considerations: A Culture of Respect

- Recognize animals as sentient beings with complex inner lives that are both similar to and different from ours
- Avoid objectification of animals: i.e. “Use”, and “It”
- “Cue” instead of “Command”
- Avoid anthropomorphism and projection in favor of accurate perspective-taking (i.e. ‘guilt’, ‘knows better’, etc.)
- Animals are entitled to bodily autonomy, agency, choice, consent, and humane conditions
- Avoid imposing things on animals that is solely for *human* entertainment (i.e. costumes)

Promoting OneWelfare Concepts: Holistic Husbandry



Good Husbandry

- + Physiological, psychological, environmental, social, and dietary needs
- + Ensure maximum wellness for animal
- + What does a well animal of this species look like?
- + What does an unwell animal of this species look like?
- + Doing thorough homework and research about the species you care for (rather than assuming knowledge)



Enrichment and Stimulation

- + What kinds of things are mentally and/or physiologically enriching for this animal and why?
- + Does this animal have adequate mental and physical stimulation on a daily basis?
- + What kinds of thing relieve stress in this animal and why?
- + Recognizing that pets are technically 'in captivity' and providing opportunities do engage in natural behaviors



Behavioral Perspective-Taking

- + What is the world like for this species, from a sensory, psychological, and social perspective?
- + Natural Behaviors: What does natural behavior look like in this animal?
- + What kinds of things are unnatural or stressful for this species?
- + Why might the animal engage in certain behaviors, both wanted and unwanted, from the animal's perspective



Ethical Considerations: Humane Handling

Predominantly Positive Reinforcement + Always LIMA-based

- Active learning and problem solving
- Enriching and mentally stimulating
- Increases confidence
- Fosters healthy relationships, boundaries, and attachment
- Least Invasive Minimally Aversive (LIMA)
(<https://m.iaabc.org/about/lima/>)



Avoids the use of Positive Punishment and Negative Reinforcement

- Increases stress (which often makes existing behavioral issues worse)
- Limits brain's ability to engage in learning and problem-solving
- Decreases confidence
- Creates unhealthy relationship dynamics of power, control, and potentially abuse between trainer and trainee



Did You Know?

That positive reinforcement/rewards-based training methods are considered to be evidence-based best practices in animal training and cognition?



This type of training is more than just behavior modification, it is active learning AND problem solving!

Works on all breeds, species, and 'issues'.
Yep, even Rhinos. Or Velociraptors.

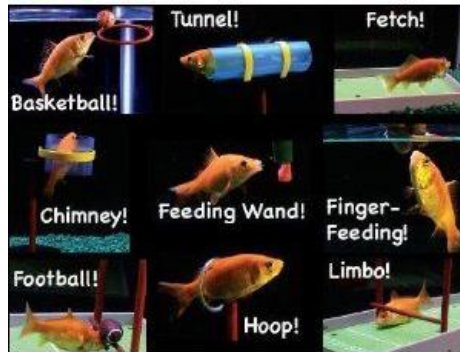
Fosters a secure base perception - when faced with stressors or a problem, animal looks to their human for reassurance or 'help' solving the problem.

This often mitigates the animal's need to 'solve it themselves' through potentially unwanted or dangerous behavior.

Takeaway: It is good for your animal's brain and emotions, and is good for your relationship.

Did You Know?

That all species of animals can be trained with positive reinforcement?



In fact, many accredited conservation/education zoos and aquariums use these methods to train animals to voluntarily participate in their own care and husbandry, from baths, to x-rays, to blood draws, and more.

These methods also help keep animals stress-free, healthy, and happy.

There is even some evidence of positive reinforcement being used to train fish and bees!

To learn more, Karen Pryor's "Don't Shoot the Dog" is a great place to start.

Did You Know?

That Dominance Theory and “Pack Leader” Theories have been totally debunked by current science in animal training and cognition?



The study that gave rise to this theory was taken out of context - the animals in this study were captive wolves who were thrust into an enclosure with other unfamiliar wolves. The observations represent the behavior of highly stressed, non-bonded animals suddenly placed in a cramped, strange, and frightening environment.

In canine families (and many other social animals such as horses and rabbits), social hierarchies are fluid and flexible, much like they are in human families.

Further, the assumption that dogs view us as other “pack” members is false. Canine cognition science shows us that dogs know we are *not* other dogs and recognize us as a different species. The same applies to other social species such as horses and rabbits.

Hint: Ideas of dominating, subduing, and overly controlling loved ones is not conducive to healthy relational attitudes, especially in mental health treatment.

DID You Know?

That Positive Punishment may result in *behavior suppression*, but almost never results in real *behavior change*?



With positive punishment, the root cause of the behavior (usually a stressor) remains unaddressed and unresolved. The animal does *not* learn how to cope with or adapt to the stressor.

In instances of behavior suppression, if the unresolved issue reaches a certain stress threshold, the unwanted behavior will return almost immediately, and potentially get worse.

Positive punishment interferes with the animal's perception of their human as a secure base, which means that they are not likely to look to us to help solve to problem or provide reassurance.

Hint: Condoning or practicing the use of aversive equipment and positive punishment can interfere with a client's ability to build a trusting relationship with us.



Promoting Humane Training/Handling

Scope of Practice

Providing direct training advice, instructions, or solutions is outside the scope of professional counseling

Instead, focus on providing broad psychoeducation and pre-vetted humane training resources

The Animal Training Industry

Animal Training is an unregulated industry

Appropriate Professionals can be hard to differentiate from Dangerous Professionals

Appropriate Training Professionals are R+ and LIMA

Appropriate Training Professionals EXCLUDE Positive Punishment and Negative Reinforcement

(including choke, prong, or e-collars, and any other painful equipment)

Recommended National Resources

Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT): <https://www.ccpdt.org/>

Force Free Dog Training: <https://www.forcefree-dogtraining.org/>

Fear Free Pets: <https://fearfreepets.com/>

Karen Pryor Academy: <https://karenpryoracademy.com> and book “Don’t Shoot the Dog”

The Pet Professional Guild Association: <https://petprofessionalguild.com/>

Byrnes, C. (2008). What is my Dog Saying: Canine Communication 101. CD-rom available at <http://risevanfleet.com/shop/product/what-is-my-dog-saying/>





Identifying Humane Professionals

Evidence-Based Training Credentialing Examples

Certified Professional Dog Trainer – Knowledge Assessed (CPDT-KA)

Certified Behavior Consultant Canine – Knowledge Assessed (CBCC-KA)

Karen Pryor Academy Certified

Certified Force Free

Certified Fear Free

(usually applies to veterinary practices, but useful for humane husbandry)



Red Flags (Cogswell, 2021)

Aversive Equipment (collars, etc.)

Physical Interventions ('alpha rolls', knees to chest, grabbing muzzle, etc.)

Disparages Treats/Rewards

Offers Board-and-Train Options

Offers Guarantees

"Off-leash" Classes

Red Flag Terms (Cogswell, 2021)

Balanced Methods/Training, Pack Leader, Obey/Obedient, Command,

Correct, "Our Own" Methods, Alpha, Energy, Natural,

Dominance, Describes Aversive Equipment as 'Safe if Properly Used/Fitted'





CHAPTER 4

Provider Competence Operationalized



Provider Competency

Specialized knowledge, skills, and attitudes are required to practice ethically and effectively in both general professional practice and in specialty areas (Toporek, Lewis, Health & Crethar, 2009).

- Competent AAT providers rely on the formal policies and objective evaluations offered by reputable therapy animal registration organizations to ensure a minimum set of animal-handler suitability.
 - Assessment by a qualified evaluator helps reduce personalizations and helps providers document appropriateness and diligence.
 - Examples: Pet Partners, Therapy Dogs International, InterMountain Therapy Animals
- Competent AAT providers seek formalized coursework, evaluative training, and supervised experience before integrating AAT with clients.
- Competent AAT providers recognize that competence is developmental and they must continue seeking training through the stages of AAT skill development: Entry level, Intermediate Level, Advanced Level, and Expert Level (see AAll Standards of Practice for definitions).
- Association for Animal Assisted Intervention Professionals (AAAIP) and the Certified Animal Assisted Intervention Specialist (C-AAIS) credential is a minimum.



The Evolution of AAI Competencies

- Prior to 2016, no formalized, empirically based AAI provider competencies existed.
- In 2016, the American Counseling Association formally adopted a set of AAT Competencies that emerged from a Grounded Theory Method empirical investigation
- The 2016 ACA Competencies served as a foundation that supported the development of formally-endorsed competencies in Pet Partners, the APA, and Animal Assisted Interventions International
- Competencies are a living construct that will continue to be refined and enhanced over time
- AAI's adaptation is presently the most current and comprehensive set of competencies in the AAI industry

Formalized Provider Competencies

In 2016, Stewart, Chang, Parker & Rice authored the first set of AAT Provider Competencies to be officially endorsed by a flagship professional organization (American Counseling Association). This document established the following:

- 3 Domains of Competence (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes)
- 9 Essential Competency Areas
- Specific Criteria Outlined under each Essential Area (See Moodle)

Since ACA's 2016 adoption of these competencies, other professional organizations including the American Psychological Association, Pet Partners, and Animal Assisted Interventions International have used the Stewart et. al competencies as the basis for their own formally endorsed competencies.





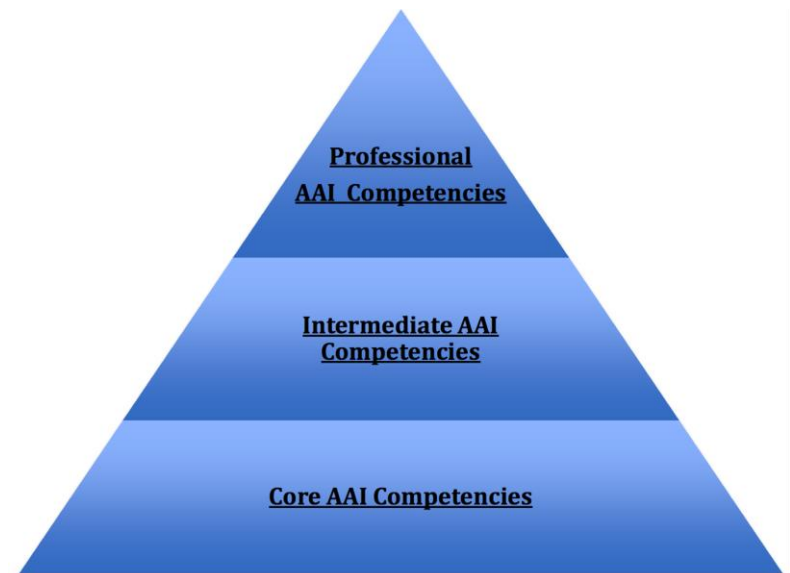
AAT Competencies Operationalized

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Specific techniques and principles	Mastery of Professional Discipline (without an animal)	Well-developed professional identity
Participation in supervised consultations	Using a theoretical framework of professional model of practice	Advocating for animal involved
Feedback from others	Applying AAIs as adjunctive addition	Advocating for field of AAIs
Treatment Process	Ability to articulate role of AAI in treatment	Collaborate with others
Animal Preparedness	Assessing client-animal interactions in a meaningful way	AAI lexicon and correct terminology
Awareness of Provider Bias	Link unexpected events or interactions to client goals	AAI-specific informed consent and other clinical documentation items
Safety for client, animal, and self		

Pet Partners Tiered Competencies

In 2016, Pet Partners adopted the ACA Competencies for Animal Assisted Interventions and created a tiered model to represent all therapy animal handler animals: volunteer, paraprofessional, and professional. Bottom tiers of the model are required for all handlers, and become more specified in higher tiers.

- Professional Competencies:
 - Discipline-specific KSA required of animal-handler teams in a professional capacity as an appropriately licensed or credentialed professional.
 - Example: Ability to assess, interpret, and utilize animal responses in a therapeutically meaningful way
- Intermediate Competencies:
 - KSA required of animal-handler teams providing AAI in paraprofessional and professional capacities.
 - Example: Knowledge about how human-animal interactions can influence the treatment process
- Core Competencies:
 - KSA required of animal-handler teams operating all levels and in all capacities.
 - Example: In-depth Species-specific knowledge





APA Ethical Standards Competencies for AAIs

- In 2019, the American Psychological Association's Division 17, Section 13 published Ethical Standards Competencies for AAIs
- Based on 2016 ACA Competencies
- Contributions from experts in the fields of psychology, animal behavior, ethology, dog training, clinical social work, education, allied health, and occupational therapy.
- Specified section dedicated to animal welfare, and competencies arranged in alignment with existing APA Ethical Standards:

(1)Professional

Values and attitudes
Cultural considerations

(2)Relational

Interdisciplinary teams

(3)Science

Related to Animal Assisted Interventions and the
Human Animal Bond

(4)Application

Interventions
Consultation

(5)Education

Teaching Supervision

(6)Systems

Leadership
Consultation
Interprofessional teams

ROAR



Animal Assisted Interventions International (AAll) AAT Competencies

Level	Expectations
Entry Level (Student)	Awareness and initial implementation of skills, knowledge and attitudes reflected in the standards and competencies for those new to AAls
Intermediate Level (Intern, Assistant, Apprentice, etc.)	Mastered the entry level skills reflected within the standards and several competencies, but are still in the phase of being trained, mentored and/or supervised for AAls. They are still learning the theoretical foundations of the standards and competencies, and are learning to apply them to practice in their member category (or categories) and discipline.
Advanced Level (Independent provider)	Mastered the entry and intermediate level skills reflected in the standards and many competencies of their member category (or categories). They have gained enough experience to be independent in theory and practice, and automatically implement standards and competencies into practice. Advanced level members recognize that continuing education and professional development is lifelong.
Expert Level (Instructors, authors, researchers, etc.)	Mastery of skills in one or more areas of AAI within their scope in the areas of theory, practice, research and constructive evaluation of people, animals or programs within their membership field. Expert level members are eligible to become assessors for AAll accreditation.

Leading Standards of Practice

Association for Animal Assisted Intervention Professionals



Animal Assisted Intervention International



ROAR

Selecting a Training Program

- Workshops and other limited trainings are not sufficient (although they make great CEU opportunities)
- Program quality varies widely, and it is not always easy to tell from web presence
- Look for:
 - Directors/instructors who have held leadership positions in trustworthy AAI organizations
 - And are recommended by other leaders in such organizations
 - Are any former students involved in leadership?
 - Directors/instructors who have extensive experience in the actual application of AAIs
 - Research experience is valuable, but not sufficient
 - Check web/social media photos – are the animals in ‘green’? If not, the program instructor may not know enough to tell the difference.
 - Offers certificate rather than certification
 - Offers applied experience under live supervision
 - Membership in Animal Assisted Intervention International’s Educational Institutions and Organizations



Idaho State
University



CHAPTER 5

AAT in Practice

ROAR



Human-Animal Relational Theory: A Guide for Practice

- HART (Chandler, 2017) is guiding framework for the practice and supervision of AAT
- HART constructs are consistent with neurobiology of human-animal interaction
- Facilitates opportunities for Significant Human-Animal Relational Moments (SHARM)
- Examples of SHARMS: greeting; acknowledgment; checking-in; comfort; speculation; interpretation; and assurance.
- Provides structure for session evaluation in AAT



Interventions

Note: Animal consent, enjoyment, and choice are required in all AAT interventions at all times. All AAT interventions focus on the development of the relationship.

While all AAT interventions are highly intentional and goal-directed, approaches vary greatly in terms of structure and focus. Examples of various degrees of structure include:

- Specific Planned Activities
- Structured Techniques
- Non-directive Process Observation
- Spontaneous Interactions





Additional Responsibilities in AAT

At every moment in the process, counselor's **must** divide their attention effectively enough to monitor and accurately assess animal consent, stress, and fatigue.

Models to assess and attend include the Window of Tolerance, Trigger Stacking, and the Traffic Light of Consent.

In addition to being foundational to ethical AAT, these models can also be applied simultaneously to work with clients.

Skill & Metaphor: Window of Tolerance

For training and/or socialization experiences to work, and for behavior regulation, the animal must be within its Window of Tolerance.

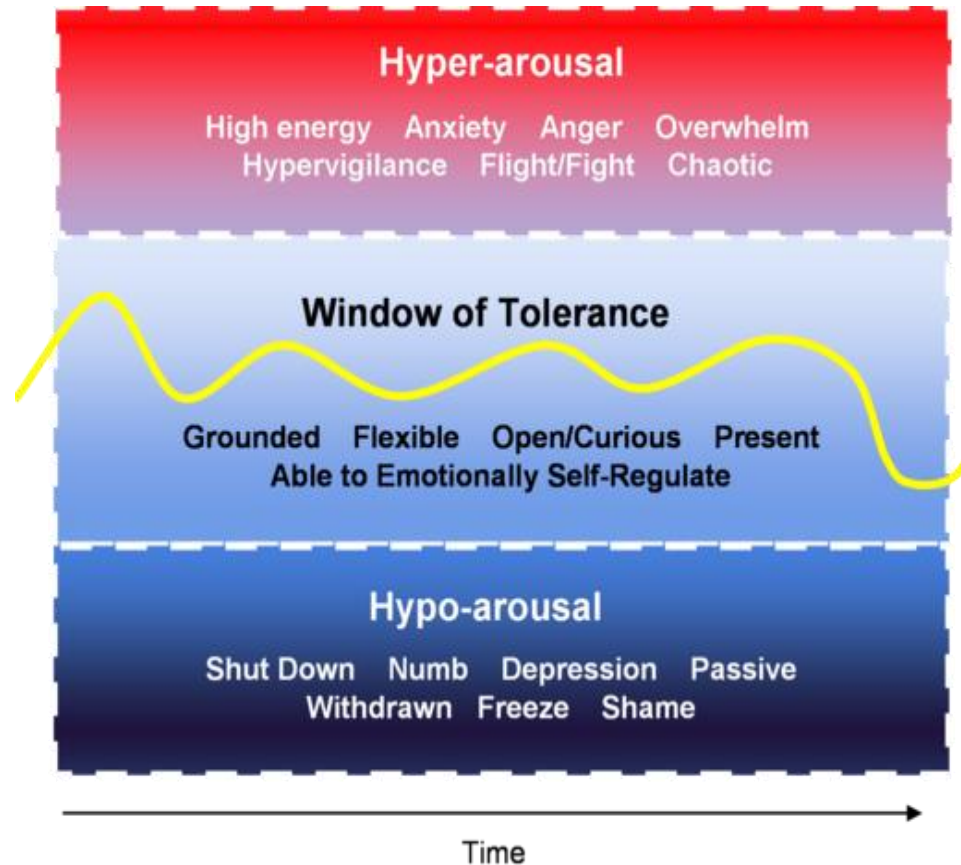
For relationships to grow and deepen, individuals must be within the Window of Tolerance.

Effective handlers constantly assess their animal's Window of Tolerance, and actively intervene when the animal moves close to an edge.

If the animal is hypo or hyper aroused, STOP. Steps to mitigate animal stress are necessary.

As the handler, YOU also need to be within your own Window of Tolerance, and so does your client.

If you become hyper/hypo aroused, take a break or stop.



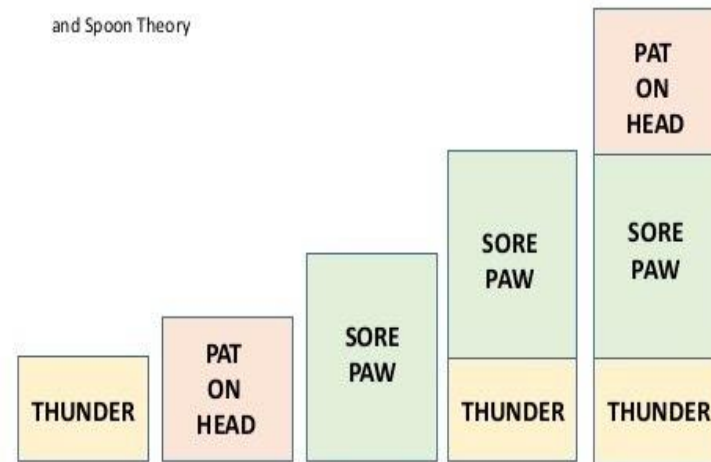


Skill & Metaphor: Trigger Stacking

- Trigger Stacking is accumulative stress caused by numerous smaller stressors occurring simultaneously.
- Even if the individual stressors do not push an individual over their regulation threshold on their own, they do when combined.
- Often to blame with “out of the blue” or “they just snapped” instances.
- Useful skill for stress management and prevention for animals and people.

TRIGGER STACKING

and Spoon Theory



Skill & Metaphor: Traffic Light of Consent

The Traffic Light of Compliance and Consent

- Red: The situation is unwanted, unpleasant, and needs to end immediately. Often obvious signs of stress/reactivity are visible.
- Yellow: The individual is *tolerating* the situation, but would rather it end. The situation needs to either change or end. Subtle signs of stress/reactivity emerge. This represents compliance.
- Green: The individual is well within threshold and actively *enjoying* the situation, and would freely choose for it to continue. This represents active consent.





Required Documentation

Informed Consent

AAT-Specific Informed Consent
Includes any and all foreseeable risks
Clear limit-setting and expectations for interactions with animal

Treatment Planning

Includes clear, empirically-supported rationale for AAI
Integrates AAI with the provider's approach
Description how HART will be applied

Case Notes

Document animal's behavior
Document client-animal interaction
Links concrete observational animal interaction data to identified treatment goals
SHARM Charts

Other Documentation

Audio or video tapes
Documentation of ongoing AAI consultation
Documentation of ongoing animal training and behavioral consultations with appropriately
credentialed professionals
Documentation of incidents

Professional Liability Insurance

Inform your carrier that you are working with a therapy animal
Request documentation of carrier's response



Other Clinical Considerations

- **Informed Consent/Professional Disclosure Statement**
 - Acknowledgement of the role of OneWelfare Model into approach
 - Disclosure that examining human-animal relationships and promoting the welfare of both may occur in treatment
 - Limit-setting: NO pets in in-person sessions*
- **Intake**
 - Include in-depth information about pets on intake forms
 - List of pets, including species, age, and nature of relationship
- **ROIs**
 - If client is working with a training professional, ROIs can help counselors include processing of client learning
- **Crisis Planning**
 - In instances of client crisis, include specific, feasible options for the pet(s) and encourage client to develop an emergency kit for pet
- **Consultation Notes**
 - Keep detailed records of consultations with appropriate animal care professionals or HAB experts for individual clients and for general resources and recommendations
 - Acknowledge scope of practice considerations

Resources

- Industry-Leading Organizations You Can Trust
 - International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO)
 - Animal Assisted Interventions International (AAIL)
 - International Society for Anthrozoology (ISAZ)
 - Pet Partners (formerly called the Delta Society)
 - Association for Animal Assisted Intervention Professionals

- Foundational Resources
 - Chandler, C. (2017). *Animal Assisted Therapy in Counseling*. New York: Routledge.
 - Fine, A.H. (2019). *Handbook on Animal Assisted Therapy: Foundations and Guidelines for Animal-Assisted Interventions*. Academic Press.
 - Byrnes, C. (2008). *What is my Dog Saying: Canine Communication 101*. CD-rom available at <http://risevanfleet.com/shop/product/what-is-my-dog-saying/>
 - Tedeschi, P. & Jenkins, M. (2019). *Transforming Trauma: Resilience And Healing Through Our Connections With Animals*. Lafayette, LA: Purdue University Press



Want More?

ISU Department of Counseling Resources

- Research on Anthrozoological Relationships (ROAR) Lab
 - Community Programming
 - Workshops and Trainings
 - Research Collaborations
- Certificate Program in Animal Assisted Interventions
 - Formal Coursework for Health Professionals to Integrate AAs in Clinical Practice (<https://www.isu.edu/counseling/programs/animal-assisted-interventions-certificate/>)

Contact for Both:

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