

Canine-Assisted Therapy for Limited Mobility Clients

Mental Stimulation:

Encourage patients to help “train” the dog by giving voice and hand commands, or help with rudimentary grooming, such as brushing, combing, brushing teeth, wiping face. Talking about the pets a patient had is another kind of therapy, too.

Physical Activities:

Incorporate dog into physical exercise: walks, ball tossing, tug-of-war games, stretching, ball kicking, etc.

Emotional Connections:

Boost self-esteem by praising clients’

activities with canines: look for ways that clients meet physical, social or psychological goals. Invite canine to a patient’s birthday celebration, if appropriate, or to holiday festivities. Also allow “quiet time” with canine team if requested by client. Think about a festive scarf to dress up your pet on holidays or special occasions.

What Else?

Follow-up Activities Related to Pets:

1. Make a personalized weekly or monthly calendar that has an animal theme. Have clients make additional calendars for others who cannot participate.
2. Encourage clients to tell stories about growing up with animals or having pets.
3. Create book marks by laminating animal photos on a strip of paper with a saying or animal tip.
4. Create a “Holiday Letter” that can be given or sent out to visitors, family, friends. Encourage clients to recount their experiences with visiting canines.
5. During holidays, have clients wrap up a few dog biscuits for their “canine therapists.”
6. Create activity calendars and add special days that are dedicated to dogs, such as St. Francis of



Self-Care:

Invite patients to get ready for a dog’s visit by putting on a fresh clothes, perform toiletries, putting on a watch or jewelry. Reinforce “getting ready” by talking about how prepare your dog for visits.

Increased Social Interaction:

Encourage clients to meet in a day or activity room to meet the canine 10 minutes before expected arrival time. They can talk about their own experiences as a “warm-up” for the visit.

Bring in the Paws video to show to clients in a group setting and it leave with the staff as an educational tool.

Asissi’s Feast Day when animals are blessed, of “Be Kind to Animals Week”, “Puppy Week”, etc.

Family Participation:

1. Ask family to assist with collecting stories, have grandchildren illustrate or photocopy old photos. Create albums, scrapbooks, or short stories.
2. Invite family to pet therapy or to accompany client on “walks” if possible.
3. Sometimes a stuffed animal is comforting. If the client likes a particular kind of animal, a family member might find one as the patient’s official mascot.
4. Encourage family to bring in books on tape or videos that the client will enjoy.

Nursing takes care of the whole person, dealing with the physical care, emotional care, spiritual care and the interactional aspects within the family system, home environment, and community. Nursing can quite appropriately provide significant leadership in promoting the concept [of animal-assisted therapy]....

Betty J. Carmack, EdD, RN, Associate Professor, University of San Francisco, School of Nursing, *Holistic Nursing Practice*, December 1997

Canine-Assisted Therapy for Immobilized Clients

Recall:

Talking about past experiences with pets, remembering their names, what they looked like.

Dexterity:

Unbuckling and buckling uniforms, collars and leashes to brush or groom a dog. Giving an approved treat from handler.



Emotional Outlet and Comfort:

Inviting patients to talk with the canine, to rest peacefully or nap with dog.

Tactile Stimulation:

Petting and touching. Some canines like to give kisses, shake hands, roll over for belly rubs.

Self-Care:

Inviting patients to get ready for a dog's visit by combing their hair, putting on makeup, sitting up in bed, turning off TV.

What Else?

Follow-up Activities Related to Pets:

1. Reading or listening to books on tape.
2. Watching DVD's or television shows (Animal Planet) about animals.
3. Looking through pet magazines such as *Cat Fancy* or *Dog Fancy* for pictures to put up on walls.

Staff Follow-Up:

1. Ask patients about the dog later in the week.
 2. Ask if patients would like pictures taken with the canines. Photocopy for relatives.
 3. Put the canine's birthday on activity calendar.
- Patients can make cards or have a little party.

4. Many female patients enjoy nurturing a pet by brushing it, putting ribbons in a dog's hair or collar, or painting a dog's nails. If the handler agrees, have a supply of ribbons, scarves and nail polish available.

Family Participation: Ask family members to

1. Visit during pet therapy; bring in pictures of past pets. Bring a stuffed animal for the patient.
2. Ask children/grandchildren to draw pictures or send cards with animal themes.
3. Bring in pet/animal stories or articles to aloud. Clip newspaper or magazine articles to send to their family member in convalescent care.

In today's high-tech health care environment, it is ironic that a puppy's sloppy kiss can create measurable health benefits. The evidence favoring the health value of pets is so compelling that if pet therapy were a pill, we would not be able to manufacture it fast enough.

Larry Dossey, MD Executive Editor, Alternative Therapies, "The Healing Power of Pets: A Look at Animal-Assisted Therapy," July 1997