

# Pet Therapy Tips for Different Populations

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## CHILDREN:

### I. In General

#### A. Preparing the Visit

##### 1. Information to know:

- a) Number of children that will be present
- b) Layout of the room
  - (1) Where is it best for children and dog to sit?
- c) Length of your visit
  - (1) it is suggested that visits are about 45 minutes or less
- d) Goals of your visit
- e) Type of children
  - (1) Are you there for a special reason?
    - (a) this will affect your goals
- f) If you must be careful of pet allergies

##### 2. Discuss the visit with the child's teacher beforehand if possible

#### B. Tips to Prepare for children

- 1. Use a 4 foot leash or a shorter leash

#### C. Introduce Yourself and Your Dog to the Children

##### 1. Tell the children about your dog

- a) What is your dog's name and age?
- b) What kind of dog is it?
- c) What does the dog like?
- d) Do you have any funny stories about your dog?
  - (1) Try to relate your dog's personality to why you are with the children now
    - (a) Example: My dog loves to read! Today she will be reading with you. She likes to read books about animals and look at the pictures

##### 2. Introduce Yourself

- a) Tell where you are from, what you like
  - (1) once again, try to relate something to the children so they feel comfortable

##### 3. Before letting the children approach your dog, instruct them on how to approach based on your own knowledge about your dog

- a) Tell them your expectations:
  - (1) how to safely approach
    - (a) ex: slowly, from the front, with palms turned up for the dog to sniff
    - (2) if you wish for the children to be seated
    - (3) tell them to move slowly around pets
    - (4) tell them to be gentle
- b) Do not let more than a few children surround your pet at a time
  - (1) small groups are better
- c) Never allow children to put their faces in your pet's face

#### D. Remember that some children might be afraid of pets

- 1. do not force your pet on the child

- a) In most circumstances, children who are fearful warm up to pets after repeated visits.
- b) Take your lead from the adult responsible for the children you are visiting.
- E. How to handle a child that mistreats your animal
  - 1. Remove your animal from the situation
  - 2. Use this as an opportunity to talk to the children about how the dog feels
    - a) Do not embarrass the child that acted inappropriately
      - (1) use this as an opportunity to teach empathy
- F. What to Do
  - 1. Perform Tricks (kids will be impressed)
  - 2. Play games with children and pet

## II. Children with Reading Difficulties

- A. What to expect from children with reading difficulties
  - 1. Nervousness, self-conscious about mistakes in front of people, trouble focusing on the text, a dread of reading, quiet voice when reading
- B. How to Help Children Read
  - 1. Using your dog to help
    - a) Position the dog
      - (1) Put the dog in between you and the child if in chairs
      - (2) the R.E.A.D. program has children sit on floor with dog
      - (3) Wherever you are, make sure you can read the text!
        - (a) If possible, have a copy of the same book the child is reading so you can follow along, correct mistakes, and *encourage* good reading
      - (4) Allow children to be in a position to pet the dog as they read if they need to
        - (a) this can soothe a nervous child
    - b) Have children show the dog pictures
      - (1) the dog is a rewarding, nonjudgmental party, and this makes reading more fun
    - c) Tell the children that the dog is listening to them and that the dog is reading, too
      - (1) If possible, direct your dog's attention to the book
    - d) Use the dog as a reward for reading
      - (1) allow them to give the dog a treat when they are finished reading if your dog has passed the KPETS treat test
        - (a) if you can't use treats, maybe use a toy for the child to reward the dog with
      - (2) allow them to pet the dog when they finish reading
  - 2. What You Can Do
    - a) Encourage and reward children for good behavior
      - (1) Praise children for figuring out difficult words
      - (2) Encourage expressive reading

- (3) Say, “I liked the way you.....”
- b) Aid children when they are having difficulty
  - (1) Help them sound out words
  - (2) Give them hints based on context
  - (3) Define words they may not know
    - (a) ask them what certain words mean
- c) Respond to the text they are reading
  - (1) Relate it to their lives or your own life
  - (2) reinforce lessons stated in text
    - (a) if book encourages use of “please” and “thank you,” mention that politeness is important and how you use it
  - (3) Ask them simple questions about the text
  - (4) Ask them how characters might feel and how the child might feel in that situation
- d) Work with the teacher!!
  - (1) The teacher can prepare a list of questions or comments for the volunteer to use to guide meaningful interactions.

### III. Children with Autism

#### A. What is Autism?

- 1. A complex disorder of brain development
  - a) It is a spectrum!!
- 2. Characterized by (in varying degrees)
  - a) difficulties in social interaction (part 1 of triad)
  - b) difficulties in verbal and nonverbal communication (2 of triad)
  - c) repetitive behaviors (3 of triad)
    - (1) e.g., hand-flapping, repeating a single word/phrase
    - (2) some people with autism cannot live independently
- 3. Can be associated with
  - a) intellectual disability
  - b) difficulties in motor coordination
  - c) difficulties in attention
- 4. Some Behaviors to Expect
  - a) some children lack expressive language
    - (1) you might be helping encourage children to speak
  - b) some children may have violent tantrums
    - (1) in my opinion, it is particularly important to have a quick-release collar when working with autistic children who could potentially have tantrums
  - c) often avoid eye contact with other people
  - d) have difficulty interpreting what others are thinking or feeling because they can't understand social cues, such as tone of voice or facial expressions, and don't watch other people's faces for clues about appropriate behavior
  - e) Can lack empathy

(1) You can ask an autistic child questions concerning how the dog might feel in certain situations, which can help develop empathy if the child likes animals

f) repetitive movements such as rocking and twirling, or self-abusive behavior such as biting or head-banging

g) don't know how to play interactively with other children

(1) That's why play with a dog might be beneficial for autistic children that like animals

h) Some speak in a sing-song voice about a narrow range of favorite topics, with little regard for the interests of the person to whom they are speaking.

i) impaired ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others

j) absence or impairment of imaginative and social play

k) stereotyped, repetitive, or unusual use of language

l) restricted patterns of interest that are abnormal in intensity or focus

m) preoccupation with certain objects or subjects

n) Inflexible adherence to specific routines or rituals.

B. What AAT can do for children with autism

1. increase willingness to participate in therapy
2. lessen threatening nature of therapeutic environment
3. increase attention and engagement on part of patient
4. provide social support
5. provide social lubrication
6. increase self-esteem
7. provide motivation for completion of therapeutic tasks
8. provide a calming influence, help foster empathy and attachment

C. Safety and efficacy of treatment must be considered

1. If a child with Autism has a history of aggression, it is generally not safe to work with that child
  - a) even self-injurious behaviors must be analyzed with their potential to turn outward toward the dog or to frighten the animal
2. Once you begin the process of working with an autistic child, you must always assess if:
  - a) it is safe for all, including for the animal
  - b) it is a low-stress situation, including for the animal
  - c) useful from a therapeutic perspective

(1) for example, children with autism often have extreme anxiety issues, which can become counterproductive if animal makes the child nervous

D. Working with Autistic Children:

1. Keep open communication between child, dog handler, therapist, administrator of facility, teachers, parents, etc.
  - a) Therapists and other officials should create a treatment plan that you use
  - b) most likely, you would do occupational therapy with children with autism
2. Work with children that already have an interest in animals
3. Activities:

- a) petting the dog and talking with the handler and anyone else present
  - (1) children with autism are often sensitive to sensory stimulation, e.g., feeling fur on dog
    - (a) be careful of your dog licking, drooling and making noises such as barks, which could upset children with autism (certain stimulation can “overload” them)
- b) Activities similar to those for physical and occupational therapy
- c) Have your dog do tricks; allow children to give simple commands
- d) See more ideas for activities in the last section of this booklet, Other Activities and Trick Ideas from the book, “Animal Assisted Therapy Activities to Motivate and Inspire”

## AT-RISK TEENS:

- I. Who is At-Risk?
  - A. children
    1. are seen as at risk if they are disabled, have low self-esteem, or have been abused
    2. having limited reading proficiency, having experienced abuse or trauma, having a disability or illness, or having exhibited behavior problems
  - B. the family
    1. is at-risk if it has family risk factors such as poverty, single parenthood, and low parental education levels
    2. poverty, a low level of parental education, a large number of children, not owning a home, single parenthood, welfare dependence, family dysfunction, abuse, parental mental illness, parental substance use, and family discord or illness.
  - C. the community
    1. is at risk if it has a high crime rate and a low high school graduation rate
    2. rates of poverty, crime, unemployment, or teen parenthood in the community
- II. What are teens at risk of?
  - A. alcohol/drug abuse, violence(bullying, robbery, assault), risky sexual behaviors, teen pregnancy, dating abuse(physical, sexual, or psychological/emotional violence within a dating relationship, as well as stalking), suicide
- III. Goals for working with at-risk teens
  - A. improving grades in school, delaying sexual initiation, or developing conflict resolution skills
  - B. encourage the development of extracurricular activities/skills such as art, sports competence, volunteering
- IV. How volunteers can help:
  - A. Role models outside the family can serve as potential buffers for vulnerable children.
- V. What pet therapy inherently offers
  - A. Dogs, honest and non-judgmental, connect with kids in a way that adults often cannot
  - B. As youth learn basic dog handling skills they have an opportunity to care for and about another living being and to experience the love and affirmation dogs offer so freely.
  - C. They see the power of communication, of relationships built on mutual trust and respect.
  - D. Sometimes, simply seeing they can positively influence another being — getting a dog to *sit* gives them permission to envision greater possibilities for their own future
  - E. Being with dogs reduces anxiety and arousal.
  - F. A teen who successfully walks a dog across the room, gets his dog to “sit” or master a trick, suddenly becomes a someone able to effect another being, to achieve, to teach
  - G. As the youth work with the dogs and each other they begin to create a new self-perception.
  - H. can help build empathy, self-esteem and the skills and behaviors that foster positive interactions with family, peers, and the community and help give them a fair shake at a better life
- VI. Your role in pet therapy with teens
  - A. You cannot act as a counselor, but you can provide the necessary welcoming environment
    1. You can encourage teens and make it clear that they have the ability to succeed in life
    2. You can serve as a role model
      - a) Demonstrate patience, good resolution skills, kindness, etc.

3. You can offer help in any way possible
4. Treat them with unconditional positive regard
5. You can reward them and give them praise for good behavior
6. You can encourage them to join support groups, go to a counselor, engage in extracurricular activities
7. offer a hopeful, healthy perspective on life
8. provide a safe place to discuss problems, free of judgment
  - a) CAUTION: be wary of giving advice and acting as a counselor; the goal is just to let students talk freely
9. Set up training sessions for teens to learn how to train dogs and take care of dogs (main activity)
  - a) this encourages building self-esteem and self-concept, as well as perceptions of control over their circumstances
  - b) this also can be a training exercise in handling frustrations in training a dog and in other situations in life
    - (1) suggest conflict resolution techniques that assist clients in working through their interpersonal struggles at home and in school
  - c) teach them about positive reinforcement and how it can help them in their own lives
10. Use your pet as a way to explain the teen's own behavior and success/failure in certain interactions
  - a) e.g., the dog does not want to do this because he is unsure, but with help, the dog can do it
  - b) the dog is happy when you take care of him and are kind to him
  - c) the dog is scared when you raise your voice

## **THE ELDERLY**

### **I. Working with the Elderly in Nursing Homes**

#### **A. When to Visit**

1. Older people tend to become sleepier in the early evening and wake earlier in the morning compared to younger adults.
2. Perhaps schedule visits with elderly when they are more likely to be awake: before early evening, especially in the morning
3. If you visit in the early evening, do not be discouraged by a lack of participation

#### **B. Where to Visit**

1. Working near a nurse's station or in central area is the cheapest for nursing homes
  - a) It's ideal if a staff person is available at all times on therapy dog visits
  - b) at least be in a position to be able to hail a nurse if needed
    - (1) this is to avoid accidents or have nurses deal with a patient that could potentially harm your dog

#### **C. How to Interact**

1. Elderly in nursing homes more likely to be depressed than other elderly, and social engagement is important predictor of depression in nursing homes
  - a) Social interaction as facilitated by the dog is beneficial psychologically
    - (1) This is your job! Talk to the residents when visiting with pets
      - (a) Talk about weather, their pasts, the dog, tell stories, encourage them to tell stories
      - (b) Initiate as many conversations as you can
      - (c) Keep the conversation light-hearted and be able to laugh
      - (d) Ask nurses who might know about a resident what that resident is interested in and talk about that
        - (i) you can do this if you decide to ask a nurse who usually likes visits from animals
    - (2) Plan something fun; do tricks, play games
2. How to Approach Residents
  - a) Be quiet and respectful at all times because many residents will not feel well
  - b) Always read body language; some elderly people, due to physical limitations, may not communicate as well verbally
  - c) Ask permission before visiting
  - d) Ask a resident if they like dogs before asking to visit
    - (1) Sometimes residents say they do not want to pet a dog because they do not understand your question, they do not want to monopolize the dog's time, or because they feel self-conscious in the center of group attention
  - e) If there are several people who look like they want to pet the dog, mention that the dog likes being pet by several people at once
  - f) Residents may worry about a dog's unpredictable movements being potentially harmful, so if you tell a resident how to interact with the dog, he/she might feel more comfortable

- (1) Assure residents before approaching that your pet is gentle and calm; mention that he/she is a therapy dog
  - (2) Tell residents how your pet likes to be petted
    - (a) it helps to ask a resident to pet a dog *under* its head
      - (i) dogs will often lift their heads up when approached with a petting hand from above because it can be intimidating
        - (a) this raising of the head can discourage residents
    - (3) If your dog likes to lick, tell the resident and ask if that is okay
      - (a) Many elderly people I have run into dislike being licked
  - g) For people in wheelchairs, it is often effective to put the dog beside the person facing in the same direction as the person. It is easy to pet a dog this way, and the person does not have to worry about feeling confronted by a dog's teeth
3. Interaction Suggestions Based on Elderly Health Changes
- a) Increasing limitations in ability to physically perform normal activities of daily living because of physical impairments and disease
    - (1) Loss of neurons in brain (that aren't replaced) account for decreased flexibility, slowness of movement, stooped, shuffling gait
    - (2) Falls are the most common and most serious problem that elderly people face
      - (a) This is why it is important to ask residents to sit down when near a dog!
  - b) Bodily changes that affect strength
    - (1) Bone loss occurs in elderly
    - (2) Arthritis affects more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of men and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of women older than 65
      - (a) causes swelling, pain, discomfort
    - (3) loss of muscle mass
    - (4) For all these reasons, be careful in your interactions with elderly people
      - (a) keep dog under control at all times
      - (b) do not set heavy dogs in seniors' laps
        - (i) Putting smaller dogs in a chair is helpful, especially if you can use hand gestures to show where you want a dog to face based on the resident's preference
      - (c) certain play activities like tug-of-war are not appropriate with seniors
        - (i) Retrieving is a better game to play
      - (d) Some older people have a stronger side: put your dog on that side of them so they can better pet the dog (do not ask the person which side is stronger, though!)
  - c) Aging of sensory organs
    - (1) As people grow older, they experience some loss of sensitivity in their sensory abilities
    - (2) Vision

- (a) vision impairment is one of the leading causes of disability for people 65+
- (b) Older people need more light to perceive depth and to see clearly
- (c) vision loss can be dangerous; it is a good idea when moving an older person to tell them what is around them so they do not trip and fall
- (d) make sure the lighting is good when you bring your pet in; turn on all lights possible
- (e) do not do tricks too far away from seniors
- (f) occasionally remark on what the dog is doing, especially if it is comical

(3) Hearing

- (a) hearing loss increases with advanced age
- (b) longitudinal study of men and women aged 50-102:
  - (i) 12.1% women had hearing loss
  - (ii) 23.6% of men had hearing loss
- (c) People with hearing problems often have trouble with morale and social functioning; more likely to feel left-out
  - (i) make a special effort to be heard by those with hearing problems
  - (ii) use hand gestures
  - (iii) smile
  - (iv) make it easy for the hearing impaired to see what is occurring

(4) Touch and temperature

- (a) sense of touch diminishes with age, especially on skin of fingertips, which becomes less sensitive
- (b) decreased sensitivity to pain
- (c) bodies lose ability to regulate heating and cooling
  - (i) elderly feel more comfortable in warm environments
  - (ii) blood circulation decreases, they lose the layer of fatty tissue beneath the skin that helps with insulation
    - (a) be prepared for yourself and dog in warm temps!  
Have water available and do not dress too warmly
  - (iii) sweat glands decrease and may stop working
    - (a) watch for heat exhaustion/stroke if you are outside with seniors

(5) Potential Mental Issues due to normal aging

- (a) As people get older, memory lapses become more frequent
- (b) new information is more difficult to remember
  - (i) do not expect older people to remember new names right away; introduce yourself and your dog several times if necessary

- (ii) Avoid saying, “do you remember me?”
- (c) long-term memory fairly stable
  - (i) Ask older people about their past experiences and pets
    - (a) Reminiscing is good for elderly people

## II. Elderly with Alzheimer’s

### A. What is Alzheimer’s?

1. Alzheimer’s is a common form of dementia
2. Half of all people who reach 85 have symptoms of Alzheimer’s
  - a) You will encounter this often!
3. onset of Alzheimer’s is slow and involves subtle changes
  - a) begins with loss of short-term memory; a person permanently forgets things like where they put belongings
  - b) repetition and confusion
    - (1) may ask same question over and over, may confuse time of day
  - c) about  $\frac{1}{3}$  have delusions involving theft
    - (1) be careful about receiving gifts
  - d) a person with Alzheimer’s may be able to tell a story from 40 years ago in detail but forget what year it is
    - (1) roll with the punches in confusing conversations
  - e) people with Alzheimer’s can have mood swings

### B. How to Communicate with a Person with Alzheimer’s

1. Tips for helping a person with Alzheimer’s communicate:
  - a) Be patient and supportive
    - (1) do not interrupt, and let the person know that you care to listen
  - b) offer comfort and reassurance
    - (1) If he or she is having trouble communicating, let the person know that it's okay. Encourage the person to continue to explain his or her thoughts.
  - c) Avoid criticizing or correcting
    - (1) Don't tell the person what he or she is saying is incorrect. Instead, listen and try to find the meaning in what is being said. Repeat what was said if it helps to clarify the thought.
  - d) Avoid arguing
    - (1) If the person says something you don't agree with, let it be. Arguing usually only makes things worse — often heightening the level of agitation for the person with dementia.
    - (2) It is better to go where they are
      - (a) If they think they are 12 years old sitting on their parent’s porch in the summer, roll with it rather than telling them that they are wrong
  - e) Offer a guess

- (1) If the person uses the wrong word or cannot find a word, try guessing the right one. If you understand what the person means, you may not need to give the correct word. Be careful not to cause unnecessary frustration.
  - f) Encourage unspoken communication
    - (1) If you don't understand what is being said, ask the person to point or gesture.
  - g) Limit Distractions
    - (1) Find a place that's quiet. The surroundings should support the person's ability to focus on his or her thoughts.
  - h) Focus on feelings, not facts
    - (1) Sometimes the emotions being expressed are more important than what is being said. Look for the feelings behind the words. At times, tone of voice and other actions may provide clues.
2. Tips For Your Communication with a Person with Alzheimer's
  - a) Keep in mind: while a person with later-stage Alzheimer's may not always respond, he or she still requires and benefits from continued communication
  - b) Identify yourself
    - (1) Approach the person from the front and say who you are.
    - (2) Keep good eye contact
      - (a) If the person is seated or reclined, go down to that level.
  - c) Use the person's name
    - (1) It helps orient the person and gets his or her attention.
  - d) Use short, simple words and sentences
    - (1) Lengthy requests or stories can be overwhelming.
    - (2) Ask one question at a time.
  - e) Speak slowly and distinctively
    - (1) Be aware of speed and clarity of speech
    - (2) Use a gentle and relaxed tone — a lower pitch is more calming.
  - f) Patiently wait for a response
    - (1) The person may need extra time to process what you said.
  - g) Repeat information or questions as needed
    - (1) If the person doesn't respond, wait a moment. Then ask again.
  - h) Avoid confusing, vague statements
    - (1) If you tell the person to "Hop in!" he or she may interpret your instructions literally.
    - (2) Instead, describe the action directly: "Please come here. Your shower is ready."
    - (3) Instead of using "it" or "that," name the object or place.
      - (a) For example rather than "Here it is" say "Here is your hat."
  - i) Use positive sentences
    - (1) Instead of saying, "Don't go there," say, "Let's go here."
  - j) Give visual cues

(1) To help demonstrate the task, point or touch the item you want the individual to use or begin the task for the person.

k) Convey an easy-going manner

(1) Be aware of your feelings and attitude — you may be communicating through your tone of voice.

(2) Use positive, friendly facial expressions and nonverbal communication.

### C. How to Handle a Mood Swing

1. Can be caused by fear, fatigue, frustration

2. What to do:

a) find out what is causing the frustration, and try to understand it

b) reassure the person

(1) Use calming phrases such as: "You're safe here;" "I'm sorry that you are upset;" and "I will stay until you feel better." Let the person know you are there.

c) Ask a nurse for help

(1) But never leave residents alone!

d) Hopefully you will have someone standing nearby in the event of a resident becoming upset (especially if you stay near a nurse's station)

## PHYSICAL THERAPY

- I. What is Physical Therapy?
  - A. PTs examine each individual and develop a plan using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability
  - B. Treatments
    1. Physical Therapy incorporates stretching, therapeutic exercise(work on strength, balance, endurance, flexibility), balance training, strength training, functional mobility training, gait training, and caregiver training
- II. Working with Physical Therapists
  - A. Physical Therapists often not sure of how to implement a dog in treatment
    1. Ask them what patients like dogs
    2. Ask them what the treatment goals are for patients who like dogs
    3. Tell them what your dog is capable of
      - a) tricks
      - b) obedience commands that could be helpful
        - (1) sit and stay(for being pet and brushed)
        - (2) heel (for walking with patients)
      - c) Remind them that dogs can be used as a reward
    4. Work together to come up with a treatment plan
      - a) Will you work with same patients every few weeks?
      - b) Will you perform similar tasks each week?
    5. Set up *regular* and *scheduled* pet therapy visits with a few clients that enjoy animals
- III. Example Exercises
  - A. Improving balance and endurance standing
    1. Play fetch with the dog while standing
      - (1) Have a towel to wipe drool off ball/toy
      - b) offers a distraction and a reward
      - c) can have participant move farther away with each throw
      - d) benefits:
        - (1) mobility, range of motion, upper body movement/control, arm strength, can help with standing endurance
      - e) skills needed: sit/stay, fetching
    2. Brush the dog while standing
      - a) Place the dog on a raised table and ask the client to stand while stroking or brushing the animal's back and head
        - (1) Have dog sit on blanket
        - (2) Nice to have a lint roller handy
      - b) this gives the person a reward and a reason for standing
      - c) can help with stretching if you place dog at end of person's reach
    3. Have person hold a hoola hoop and command dog to jump through it
      - a) benefits:
        - (1) upper body movement/control, hand/arm strength and control, positional concept, can help with arm and standing endurance

4. Have participants hold a rope in place for dog to walk/crawl under or over
  - a) skills needed: “crawl” and “jump” on command
  - b) benefits:
    - (1) upper body movement, attention to task, can help with arm and standing endurance
- B. Improving balance and endurance walking
  1. walk the dog around the halls with the patient
    - a) To increase the client’s ambulation skills, the therapist has the client walk the dog for short distances around the facility grounds. (The handler uses a double lead and walks alongside the dog and client.)
    - b) have two leashes; one for handler to hold, and other for patient to hold
  2. Have person pull dog in wagon (dog sits)
    - a) benefits
      - (1) balance, mobility, upper body movement, hand/arm strength
  3. Have your dog “march” beside a person as they march
- C. Improving arm strength and endurance
  1. fetch
  2. holding a hoop for dog to jump through
  3. holding a jump rope for a dog to crawl under

\*See more ideas for exercises and activities in the last section of this booklet, Other Activities and Trick Ideas from the book, “Animal Assisted Therapy Activities to Motivate and Inspire”

## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

### I. What is Occupational Therapy?

- A. Occupational therapists work with people of all ages who need specialized assistance to lead independent, productive, and satisfying lives due to physical, developmental, social, or emotional problems.
- B. Occupational therapists use the "occupations" of self-care, work, and play/leisure activities to increase independence, enhance development, and/or prevent disability.
- C. Who you might work with:
  1. Common occupational therapy interventions include helping children with disabilities to participate fully in school and social situations, helping people recovering from injury to regain skills, and providing supports for older adults experiencing physical and cognitive changes
  2. Might work with adults and children with brain injury, chronic diseases, adults and children with developmental and intellectual disabilities, adults and children that struggle with their mobility, people who have had strokes, adults and children with autism
  3. More likely to work with fine motor skills

### II. Working with Occupational Therapists

- A. Physical Therapists often not sure of how to implement a dog in treatment
  1. Ask them what patients like dogs
  2. Ask them what the treatment goals are for patients who like dogs
  3. Tell them what your dog is capable of
    - a) tricks
    - b) obedience commands that could be helpful
      - (1) sit and stay(for being pet and brushed)
      - (2) heel (for walking with patients)
    - c) Remind them that dogs can be used as a reward
  4. Work together to come up with a treatment plan
    - a) Will you work with same patients every few weeks?
    - b) Will you perform similar tasks each week?
  5. Set up *regular* and *scheduled* pet therapy visits with a few clients that enjoy animals

### III. Potential Activities for a Patient and Your Dog

- A. Physical Therapy techniques mentioned before are helpful
  1. Additional strength and grip exercises for fine motor control:
    - a) Have person hold onto leash and dog pulls them in a wheelchair
    - b) Have person hold dog toys and treats tightly, then release when ready to give back to dog
    - c) Have person hold brush and groom dog
    - d) Manipulate buckles, clasps on leashes, collars, and animal carriers
    - e) Some toys can be useful for fine motor control exercises
    - f) Open containers of treats for the animal and feed small pieces of food to the animal
      - (1) soft cubes that contain balls to be thrown to dog
        - (a) person must extract these balls from cube

- (2) soft rings on a stick that can be removed and thrown to dog, then put back on stick
  - (3) squeaky toys can be squeaked a certain number of times before being thrown to dog
  - 2. For children especially, a dog can be used as a model and reward
    - a) “The dog is doing this; why don’t you do it, too?”
      - (1) example: “Harper likes her food; do you want to try yours?”
- B. Other Helpful Occupational Tasks
- 1. “Washing Day”
    - a) Equipment: Rope tied between two chairs/table/wheelchair, some clothespins, basket of “wash”
    - b) participant stands at clothesline, dog “hands” the clothes to the participant to hang on the line using the clothespins
    - c) benefits: attention to task, following verbal directions, fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination
  - 2. Knife and fork
    - a) Equipment: knife, fork, plate, food dog can eat and can be cut
    - b) dog sits beside table, person cuts the food in bite-sized pieces for the dog, person cleans up
    - c) benefits: sequencing, caring for others, cleaning up, feeding skills, safety(in relation to knife and fork), hand/eye coordination, upper body movement
  - 3. Grooming
    - a) Equipment: bows/ribbons, dog brush/comb(make sure it’s gentle!)
    - b) Make sure dog is able to be reached by person comfortably, and have person groom dog
    - c) benefits: caring for others, fine motor skills, motor planning
    - d) another benefit:
      - (1) A therapist teaches a client the steps of brushing a dog. Motivated by the opportunity to brush the dog himself, the client remembers the steps, and the therapist has the client recite the order of events aloud as he goes through the actual sequence.
      - (2) Mastering the use of grooming tools for a dog may support the establishment of a personal care routine for the client.
  - 4. Hide/find/cleanup
    - a) Skills needed: dog must find toy buried in box of styrofoam packing
    - b) equipment: toy, box with lid filled with anti-static packing peanuts, broom, dustpan
    - c) participant hides toy in packing material, gives dog “find it” command, dog finds toy and returns it to participant, participant uses broom and dustpan to clean up any packing material that spills out of box
    - d) benefits: clean up skills, sequencing
  - 5. Feed the Dog

- a) Equipment: dog bowl, spoon, kibble, second ingredient that is safe for your dog like cottage cheese or yogurt
  - b) Participant prepares dog's meal by following handler's instructions, opening containers, measuring out appropriate amounts; mixes the ingredients with a spoon; participant gives command to "sit" and "wait" as s/he places the food on the floor. Participant collects bowls for washing and drying when dog is done(participant has opportunity to clean bowls afterward as well)
  - c) You can also use measuring cups to learn quantities
  - d) benefits: clean up skills, feeding skills, following verbal directions, fine motor skills
6. Colored treats (good at the end of a visit)
- a) Have participant ask handler what color treat the handler wants to give to the dog; handler tells a color; participant gives that color treat (or treat from that color container) to dog and says goodbye.

## TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY:

### I. About Traumatic Brain Injury(TBI)

#### A. Problems as a result of brain injury

1. Symptoms of mild TBI include headache, confusion, lightheadedness, dizziness, blurred vision or tired eyes, ringing in the ears, bad taste in the mouth, fatigue or lethargy, a change in sleep patterns, behavioral or mood changes, and trouble with memory, concentration, attention, or thinking.
2. For individuals hospitalized after a TBI, almost half (43%) have a related disability one year after the injury. A TBI may lead to a wide range of short- or long-term issues affecting:
  - a) **Cognitive Function** (e.g., attention and memory)
  - b) **Motor function** (e.g., extremity weakness, impaired coordination and balance)
  - c) **Sensation** (e.g., hearing, vision, impaired perception and touch)
  - d) **Emotion** (e.g., depression, anxiety, aggression, impulse control, personality change, social inappropriateness)
  - e) also have trouble with **Communication** (expression and understanding)

### II. Benefits of AAT and TBI Patients

1. **Empathy:** Identifying with and understanding the feelings and motives of another.
  - a) Understanding what an animal is feeling is easier than determining what a person is feeling because the animal is straightforward and lives in the moment
  - b) With TBI, the loss of the ability to "read" social cues and expressions of other people makes TBI survivors reduce their interactions with people and they start to focus inward
2. **Outward Focus:** Bringing individuals out of themselves.
  - a) Individuals with TBI become more socially interactive when dogs are around.
3. **Rapport:** A relationship of mutual trust or a feeling of connection or bonding. The animal's presence may open a path through the person's initial resistance.
4. **Entertainment:** At a minimum, the presence of an animal can be entertaining. Even people who don't like animals often enjoy watching their antics and reactions.
5. **Socialization:** Seeking out or enjoying the company of others.
  - a) Studies have shown that when dogs come to visit an agency, there is more laughter and interaction than during any other "therapy" or entertainment time.
6. **Mental Stimulation:** Mental stimulation occurs because of increased communication with other people, recalled memories, and the entertainment provided dogs. The presence of the dogs serves to brighten the atmosphere, increasing amusement, laughter, and play. These positive distractions may help to decrease feelings of isolation or alienation
7. **Physical Contact, Touch:** Much has been written about the correlation between touch and health. For some people, touch from another person is not acceptable, but the warm, furry touch of a dog is both acceptable and beneficial.

8. **Physiological Benefits:** Positive effects on the basic functioning of the body.

- a) Many people are able to relax when animals are present. Tests have shown that the decrease in heart rate and blood pressure can be dramatic.

III. What You Can Do:

A. Overall, try to facilitate the natural benefits of AAT: empathy, outward focus, rapport, entertainment, socialization, mental stimulation, and touch

1. make people feel comfortable: smile, laugh, actively listen and respond
2. speak about pleasant things
3. encourage them to notice the dog and what the dog is doing
4. talk about feelings of the dog
5. have your dog do a few tricks
6. allow them to give your dog treats and toys
7. allow them to give your dog simple commands
8. tell stories
9. engage patients actively
10. ask them questions

## **Other Activities and Trick Ideas from the book, “Animal Assisted Therapy Activities to Motivate and Inspire”**

Here are a few tricks and games taken from the book, “Animal Assisted Therapy Activities to Motivate and Inspire.” These tricks/games can be used in a variety of ways for each population. A few ways you can utilize these tricks/games are to:

- Entertain and increase group participation in nursing homes for the elderly and when working with TBI patients
- Give autistic children practice in social skills and play
- Practice sequencing with occupational therapy patients
- Have at-risk teens teach these tricks to your dog

Be creative! Feel free to change these tricks or come up with your own when working with clients. Always keep safety and the needs of the specific population in mind, and consult the professionals you are working with when creating a treatment plan.

### I. Tricks

#### **a. Play Piano**

- i. Equipment: small piano
- ii. Skills needed: sit, paw or touch command
- iii. Purpose is simply to entertain

#### **b. Play Tambourine**

- i. Equipment: tambourine
- ii. Skills needed: paw or touch command
- iii. Purpose is simply to entertain

#### **c. Read**

- i. How:
  1. Make a two-sided sign with one command per side
    - a. For example, on one side it could say “sit,” and on the other it could say “paw.”
  2. This trick requires your dog to understand hand signals
    - a. You need a hand signal for “sit” and a hand signal for “paw”
  3. Give the signals so it looks like your dog is reading the card, but do not say the command
- ii. Benefits for client:
  1. Good to show kids with reading difficulties that your dog can read
    - a. Use before the session
  2. Good trick teens can teach your dog
  3. Can also entertain

#### **d. Carry the Basket**

- i. Equipment:
  1. Small basket that your dog can carry
  2. Can put treats in basket
    - a. Valentine’s Day cards, food, business cards, small presents, etc.

- ii. Fun for those that will be **gentle** with your dog
  - a. Elderly, TBI patients, people at KPETS events like college students or KPETS members
  - b. Maybe not children
- iii. How:
  - 1. Trainer gives dog basket with treats and walks around room with dog
  - 2. People can reach in basket and pull out treats
- iv. Variation:
  - 1. People can also put items in basket for dog to collect

**e. Dance**

- i. Skills needed: stand on hind legs
- ii. How: give the command to dance, and then use a treat to guide the dance
- iii. Can use music
- iv. Can be used to introduce your dog to children (“My dog likes to dance. Do you like to dance?”)

**f. Pray/Meditate**

- i. Skills needed: paws up, sit/stay
- ii. Equipment: chair
- iii. How:
  - 1. Tap chair and give the “paws up” command
  - 2. Give the “stay” command
  - 3. Give the “pray/meditate” command
    - a. Dog puts his head down between his paws
- iv. Purpose is to entertain

**II. Games**

**a. Limbo**

- i. Skills needed: down and crawl
- ii. Equipment needed: rope, two people to hold ends of rope
- iii. How:
  - 1. Have client(s) either watch the dog play limbo(for example, elderly), or take turns playing limbo with the dog(children)
- iv. Benefits for clients
  - 1. Can turn this into a game(especially with a child), or use as a trick to entertain
  - 2. Could help with arm endurance(holding rope) and standing in PT

**b. Dice**

- i. Equipment needed:
  - 1. 2 large, plush dice
  - 2. A piece of paper/card labeled 2-12
    - a. Every number will have a trick beside it
      - i. For example, your card could say this:
        - ii. 2. Sit
        - iii. 3. Down

- iv. 4. Roll over
  - v. 5. Dance
  - vi. 6. High 5
  - vii. 7. Speak
  - viii. 8. Crawl
  - ix. 9. Play piano
  - x. 10. March
  - xi. 11. Fetch
  - xii. 12. Your Choice
- ii. How:
    - 1. Participant will roll the large dice and count the dots
    - 2. Participant reads the trick next to the number on the card.
    - 3. Participant(or handler) instructs dog to perform the trick.
  - iii. Client Benefits
    - 1. Numerical concepts, reading, sequencing, communicating with others, verbalizing wants/needs, upper body movement
  - iv. Beneficial for:
    - 1. Children, children with reading difficulties, elderly, TBI, physical therapy patients for standing endurance/arm strength, occupational therapy patients
    - 2. Can increase client participation
    - 3. Helps with number practice and reading

**c. Ring Around the Rosie**

- i. Skills needed: down command and following on lead
- ii. How:
  - 1. Dogs and participants walk around in a circle, reciting the nursery rhyme.
  - 2. At the end of the nursery rhyme, the participant gives the dog the “down” command.
    - a. Client can lead dog and give command, or the owner can lead dog and give command
  - 3. The last team down is out of the game(or you do not have to eliminate anyone)
- iii. Client Benefits:
  - 1. Attention to task, sequencing, communicating with others, verbalizing wants and needs, balance, mobility, motor planning, cooperation/teamwork, play skills

**d. Tic-Tac-Toe**

- i. Skills needed: fetch and drop on command
- ii. Equipment needed:
  - 1. Game square divided into nine equal squares spread on the floor
  - 2. Ten bean bags or toys
    - a. 5 of each color/shape
- iii. How:
  - 1. Participant and dog take turns tossing or dropping bean bags/toys onto tic-tac-toe mat

2. Participant should hold all bean bags, and give/toss bean bags to dog when it is the dog's turn
  3. Handler directs the dog to fetch the bean bag/toy and drop it on the mat in a space
  4. Person who has 3 bags/toys in a row wins
- iv. Variations:
1. Have participant throw bag rather than drop it on the mat
- v. Client Benefits:
1. Attention to task, hand/eye coordination, motor planning, range of motion, upper body movement/control, play skills
  2. If client has difficulty moving (for example, if he/she is elderly), he/she can still play this game by telling the handler where he/she wants the toy to go (you could potentially label the spaces with numbers for easier play)
  3. Throwing the toy/beanbag could help with arm strength in PT
- e. **Musical Hoops**
- i. Skills needed: heel, sit
  - ii. Equipment: One hoola hoop per participant
  - iii. How:
    1. Participants walk around the outside circle to the music
    2. When the music stops, participants and dogs will find a hoola hoop and sit in it
    3. Remove one hoop each round
    4. Those outside of a hoop are eliminated from the game
    5. NO running!!
  - iv. Client Benefits:
    1. Directional/positional, verbalizing wants and needs, balance, mobility, cooperation, play skills
- f. **Bowling**
- i. Skills needed: fetch
  - ii. Equipment:
    1. Bowling pins or other objects that can be knocked down easily
    2. Ball
  - iii. How:
    1. Participant will roll or throw the ball at pins to be knocked down
    2. Dog will retrieve ball and give it to first participant
    3. Participants can keep score, especially if adding practice is a goal
      - a. Letters can also be used in place of numbers; perhaps you could create a spelling game using pins!
  - iv. Benefits:
    1. Attention to task, directional/positional, numerical concepts, verbalizing wants and needs, fine motor skills, hand/eye coordination, range of motion, play skills
    2. Could be used to help with standing balance/endurance and arm strength in PT
    3. Easy game for residents in nursing home to play or for TBI patients
- g. **Where's your bone?**
- i. Skills needed:

1. Understanding of concept of sniffing hands to find treat
2. Ability to *gently* take treats from a person's hand; pass the KPETS treat test!
- ii. Equipment: small treats that can be held in palm of hand
- iii. How:
  1. Handler leaves the room with dog
  2. Someone inside gives a treat to a participant to hold in their hand
  3. Handler comes back in with dog
  4. Dog sniffs each person's hand
  5. When the dog finds the bone, the participant opens his/her hand to offer the treat
- iv. Client Benefits:
  1. Communicating with others, verbalizing wants and needs, fine motor skills, hand/eye coordination, play skills, self-control
  2. Useful in large groups that may not be able to physically participate in other activities