



Bespoke training for every dog for each stage of its life

cheerfuldogs chronicles

cheerful dogs, happy people

Issue 7

A World of Dogs: Animal Assisted Therapy

These days, the concept and merit of animal assisted therapy (AAT) is well known and accepted, even if large-scale research studies on the emotional aspects of the topic are still relatively scarce. It's hard to pinpoint when the therapeutic potential of animals was first recognized, but many credit Florence Nightingale, an influential figure in the development of modern nursing, with discovering the significant anxiety-reducing effects of small pet animals on children and adults living in psychiatric institutions. In the 1930s, Sigmund Freud nudged the field forward when he began using his Chow, Jofi, during psychotherapy sessions. His findings in turn lent legitimacy to a paper on animal assisted therapy submitted by child psychologist Boris Levinson at an American Psychological Association meeting in the early 1960s.



Decades later, AAT programmes can be found in nursing homes, hospitals, prisons, homes for disabled children, residential treatment facilities, as well as some libraries and schools. It is said that animals may be good for our physical health. By their mere company, they may reduce our blood pressure, slow our heart rates, facilitate faster healing, and improve our life expectancy (see, for example, the American Heart Association's 2013 scientific statement saying that owning a dog lowers the risk of heart disease). But there are strong indications that the positive effect of canine company extends to emotional and mental trauma, too. Dogs seem able to connect with autistic children and patients with Alzheimer's, or help people otherwise silenced by grief and shock to open up.



Cheerful Dogs, Happy People
cheerfuldogs.com

cont.

...animal assisted therapy

But why? The precise biological process behind the effect eludes researchers, but a number of theories exist. One component is a dog's complete absence of judgment. Calm, well-trained dogs (and other pets) provide gentle physical affection and quiet presence, which allows patients to focus their attention away from internal trauma and external environments—like hospital rooms or psychiatric institutions—that can exacerbate fear and loneliness. Some describe it as a “healing space” accompanying the dog, in which AAT recipients can feel safe and secure, and therefore better able to express themselves and connect with healthcare providers. That being said, while it is a kind gesture on the part of guardians to want to involve their pets in AAT, it has to be a two-way handshake. The pet needs to enjoy it too. So it is vital for the human handler to be conversant at reading the AAT dog's body language on the fly, and stop the AAT session immediately on seeing signs of stress and discomfort in the dog.



Follow



Supported by



Dogs in Action: Flyball

Flyball is a team sport for dogs; the canine equivalent of a relay race. Dogs sprint over a series of hurdles, trigger a spring pad to release a tennis ball, catch the ball, and dash back.

Flyball is the perfect energy outlet for high-drive dogs like Border Collies and Terriers, but dogs of any type can participate, including mixed-breed.

The idea behind flyball is to have a great time with your dog and other dog-loving people, so improvise your own flyball game with your family, friends and their mutts. All you need are tennis balls, things to jump over, cheerful dogs and happy people!

cheerfuldogs.com

Your go-to trainer for enlightened dog lovers

Website: cheerfuldogs.com

cheerfuldogswalking.com

Professional dog walking you can trust

Website: cheerfuldogswalking.com

Tel: 9630 3884

Email: cheerfuldogswalking@gmail.com

Save the environment, access our e-newsletters on our websites