

Abstract: Many acquired disabilities and chronic diseases have psychosocial side effects such as increased propensity of isolation, divorce, depression etc. These are not only bothersome to the person and his/her social surroundings but also costly in the sense that they impede the person's ability to benefit from available services. Nevertheless, when people acquire long-term and possibly chronic diseases (e.g., ABI; PTSD, chronic pain), often they are offered interventions that address the direct impediments only, but little support that addresses their grief and existential challenges following the loss of their former self. It is a core contention of rehabilitation psychology that counseling to address these issues is warranted for two reasons: (a) it can ease the psychological pain and assist in re-identifying oneself; and (b) when unaddressed, the issues may lead to depression and additional crises that hinder the person's outcome of the rehabilitation intervention as such. We argue that animals may play positive roles in rehabilitation psychology in at least three ways: (1) *Animal Assisted Therapy*: Animals may be incorporated into counseling that assist the client in dealing with the grief, existential issues and redefinition of self that the disability requires. In physio- and occupational therapy, animals may serve as gentle motivators. (2) *Assistance dogs*: For some disabilities, be they somatic or psychological, service dogs may be an option. Pressing issues in this field are quality standards, ethics and animal welfare. (3) *Companion animals*: Companion animals have been shown to feel supportive, give a sense of purpose, and socially destigmatize people with disabilities. How the client's own pets may be of help in rehabilitation psychology is a promising but yet sparsely explored issue. In the poster, we illustrate these three ways of incorporating animals into rehabilitation psychology and discuss the competences that psychologists could supply for each.

Animal Assisted Rehabilitation Psychology

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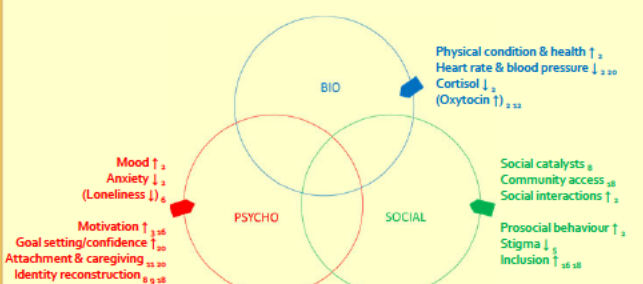
Problem: Need to augment psychosocial dimensions of rehabilitation

Question: How may animals assist?

Method: Review research and standards

Aim: Recommendations for rehabilitation psychologists

POTENTIALS OF HUMAN ANIMAL INTERACTION



CHALLENGES

From dismissal to quick fix & media hype.

Practical challenges to AAI research include [the research quality, the heterogeneity of clients and animals], the welfare of these animals, and the unusual pressure from the public and media to report and publish positive findings. 25 p. 223

E.g., non-detection of stress and fear in animals is detrimental to their welfare (and people's safety) 9 10. Apparent solutions for clients may supplant or be counterproductive to rehabilitation 9

We need terminology, standards, research, education, and integrated rehabilitation plans.

BASIC DEFINITIONS & STANDARDS

Animal Assisted Therapy is carried out by animal-handler teams: a team provide interventions for several clients. The interventions are goal-directed, evaluated, and within the expertise area of a health professional who is or guides the handler. Several precautions to ensure health and wellbeing of both people and animals involved (details in IAHAIO White Paper₂₀).

Assistance dogs are handed over: After training by a professional a specifically trained dog lives with a recipient 24/7. The dog is trained to carry out a number of tasks that are tailor-made to compensate for the specific user's functional impairments. Legislation grants the recipient special rights. ADI¹ suggests some standards. Precautions for wellbeing of dog, recipient and surroundings need more attention 25 27.

Companion animals (pets) are part of many households. They may have relevance for rehabilitation too.

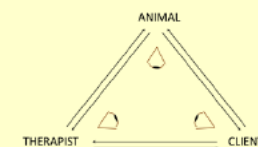
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ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY

AAT in counseling

Animal-augmented psychodynamics: 6 relations⁴ ~ 3 bewitnessed relationships^{4 9}.



Meaningful applications in most approaches, e.g., cognitive-behavioral⁴, non-directive⁴, narrative⁹.

Psychologist may be counselor or supervisor. **Both roles:** Identify usefulness of the triangle in the chosen counseling model + use IAHAIO guidelines²⁰. **If counselor/handler oneself:** We recommend courses in etology and certification as handler.

AAT in physio- and occupational therapy e.g., when hemiparesis after ABI

Early: dog-augmented motivation when retraining hand, gait, etc.^{3 24}



Later: horse-back riding for bodily control + option for rider hobby and identity²⁸



"I don't need to become the person I was before when I'm with horses." 28 p. 75

Psychologist may be member of cross-disciplinary rehabilitation team. Contribute to identify potentials of animals in the rehabilitation process: for whom, and how. Promote professionalism and ethics. Refer to research and to guidelines by IAHAIO²⁰ (in general) and PATH Intl²³ (horses).

ASSISTANCE DOGS

ADs have up to 3 outcomes²⁹: Functional (what they were trained for) + psychological bond^{22 29 20} + more social inclusion/participation^{5 9 29}

"When I walk on the street without Samson, then I'm 10 times more insecure about what is going to happen. But when I walk with him.... my focus is on him and it is also easier for me to be with people because it takes some of the focus from me. People would like to talk about him, and I would like to talk about him." (women with PTSD 7P-7)



Psychologist may be involved in several phases. **When physical impairment:** Part of cross-disciplinary rehabilitation team. Contribute to identify potentials and caveats, assist with client assessments and support if requested, validate emotions, grief support when the dog retires. **When mental impairment:** Pivotal in planning and long-term. As above plus: Does this person need an assistance dog? For what? Which dilemmas must be dealt with, e.g., is s/he capable of handling one? Ethically? What will assist growth versus avoidance? What ongoing support does the client need to make things work? Also, psycho-education for client and social workers.

Acknowledgements

Psychodynamics model is from Cynthia Chandler^{4P 5} as interpreted by Hansen¹⁰. Therapy dog photo by Magnus Vennarsten courtesy of Monica Broman NyttöHundan. 28 Therapy horse photo courtesy of Dorte Baggesen Und & Co. <http://undogco.dk> Assistance dog photo: Skeaze at Pixabay https://cdn.pixabay.com/photo/2015/06/04/03/swimmer-802890_340.jpg

COMPANION ANIMALS

CAs may motivate and contribute to psychological needs²⁰, social inclusion⁹ and identity reconstruction^{8 9}.

Marie, who uses a wheel-chair due to ABI, recently bought a dog: "I feel more joy in life" and "I get out more, since I have to". She describes how walking the dog has made her meet the neighbours who now greet her and talk when they meet. 8 p. 257



Psychologist may discuss as part of rehabilitation plan. Pets often have many roles in family dynamics, which can be employed. Functional impairment affects the entire family. CA may enable new shared family activities, e.g., training or sports 9

CONCLUSION

Animals may augment rehabilitation in several ways.

Caveat animal welfare, competing concerns, and lacking standards.

We recommend that rehabilitation psychologist promote animal involvement whilst maintaining that such must be integrated in the overall rehabilitation plan with specific goals, and refer to guidelines, ethics and professional knowledge of both client and animal needs.

