

The Roots of Health

Animal Assisted Therapy Consent and Release of Liability Form

Animal-Assisted Therapy (ATT) is a type of therapy that incorporates human-animal interactions into a therapeutic treatment process. It is considered an adjunct to existing therapy, and is led by Rachel Benbow, CST-T, LMT, a licensed health professional who has training in AAT. AAT is incorporated as an adjunct part of therapy sessions by using the human-animal bond to reduce stress/anxiety and enhance positive emotional responses.

Benefits of AAT:

- Emotion recognition/regulation
- Reduction of anxiety/stress
- Decrease depression
- Ability to address grief/loss issues
- Reduction of blood pressure
- Self-esteem enhancement
- Improve emotional and behavioral problems
- Improved socialization
- Improve ability to trust

About Lady:

Lady is a certified Therapy Dog who is included in the therapeutic setting. Lady is a spayed, fully vaccinated female Setter mix. She goes to the veterinarian yearly for all appropriate tests and/or treatments. Lady is trained through positive based reinforcement methods.

As Lady is a valuable part of our therapy team, we hope that you are comfortable with her presence in our office and in your sessions with Rachel. However, because Lady is an animal, we are responsible for her welfare. Also, because she is an animal, her behavior cannot always be predictable. Therefore, it is important to discuss the rules needed to insure your safety and health, as well as Lady's safety and health. We want to create as safe a working situation as possible, and to provide you with diligent warning about the potential harm that can be present when working with animals.

Patient Screening for AAT:

Please identify if the statement/s pertain to you:

1. I am afraid of dogs. Yes No
2. I have allergies to dogs. Yes No
3. I have been diagnosed with a medical ailment that may compromise my health if I am in close proximity to a dog. Yes No
4. I am not aware of any ailments or medical condition that would prohibit physical interaction such as handling, touching, and kissing the dog. _____ (initial)

Risks Related to AAT:

- Animals have their own natural defenses. While the therapist handler will do everything possible to prevent any injury, it is possible that someone could get scratched or bitten.
- Animals often use their mouths in play. Therefore, even when playing, it is possible for light biting to occur.
- Lady will be groomed and her nails will be kept short; however, there may be a risk of getting scratched and the therapist, Rachel Benbow, will not be liable in the event such an accident happens.
- Dogs communicate their wants and needs through body language and barking, for example; they wag their tail in excitement or brush or lean against you to show love or get your attention, and as such there is a possibility of losing you balance and falling down. Since this is the nature of dogs, the therapist CANNOT be held liable if such an occurrence happens.
- Lady has been screened by a veterinarian before joining our therapy team. Because your contact is minimal, there is little risk of transfer of zoonotic disease which is carried by fecal matter or urine. Please note, Rachel Benbow takes many precautions to keep Lady disease free.

Rules Related to AAT:

- Lady has individual rights, just as each client does. Therefore, Lady is allowed to determine if and when she interacts with clients. While it may be planned to have Lady interact with you, she will never be forced to do so.
- Lady has her own quiet space in the office where she can rest, sleep, or just take a quiet break. She should not be disturbed when she is in this area.
- Lady is always to be treated gently. She should never be hit, have her ears pulled, carried or treated in any other way that is uncomfortable to her. In the event such behaviors exist, the dog will be removed immediately to a safe area, and future sessions with the client will be evaluated for the safety and effectiveness of ATT for the client. Rachel Benbow retains the right to terminate a session if behavior toward Lady remains inappropriate even after Lady is removed to a safe space.
- Lady will always need her handler present in any therapeutic situation, and the dog will never be left alone with the client during a therapy session. Rachel Benbow, will make every effort to monitor the dog's behavior during a therapy session.
- If Lady becomes irritated, scared, or acts in a negative manner, the handler will put the animal in a safe place. No other person should touch the animal at these times.

Consent and Release of Liability:

By signing below you are stating your understanding and acceptance of these risks and rules. You accept full liability in the event that an animal harms you or your dependent in the course of treatment while in the presence of Rachel Benbow, CST-T, LMT or Lady.

Print Client Name

Client or Parent/Guardian Signature

Date



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