



Effect of Animals on Human Health Interactions

Naina Nambiar

New Jersey Institute of Nature

Nandini Menon, Advisor/Mentor - New Jersey Institute of Nature

Consultant: Dr. Sandra Gomez, Somerset Hills Learning Institute

Consultant: Poornima Paranjpe, Reiki specialist



Abstract

The last ten years have seen a rise in the acceptance of the idea that having pets and using animals in therapy and education may have a variety of advantageous benefits on humans. Human-animal interactions have been shown to benefit social attention, social behavior, interpersonal interactions, mood, stress-related metrics like heart rate and blood pressure, self-reported fear and anxiety, as well as mental and physical health in people of various ages, with and without specific medical or mental health conditions.

Introduction

The significance of animal-assisted interventions is becoming increasingly important. Interacting with animals positively influences human social interaction and related elements, like trust, empathy, aggression, and a good mood. For example, Souter and Miller (2007) came to the conclusion in their meta-analysis that animal-assisted therapies have the potential to dramatically reduce depression symptoms. Numerous studies examined how spending time with animals affected levels of stress, managing stress either through endocrinological or cardiovascular variables.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the positive effects that animals have on human's mental and physical health as well as to analyze the methods, viewpoints, and attitudes of mental health and human services professionals regarding animal assisted therapy. Current school counselor resources do not seem to yield long term results in terms of alleviating stress and anxiety. Therefore, the goal of this study is to explore animal assisted therapy for high school students.

Measures

The main data source was an interview protocol consisting of 14 questions. The data was collected over a one week period.

Interview Protocol:

The interviews were conducted individually. The interviews were recorded using a phone, and notes were taken during the interview. These notes were later transcribed onto a Google Document and reviewed to evaluate the major themes of discussion.

Results and Discussions

Based on my results and discussions, I can conclude that different forms of therapy provide different outcomes for everyone. All of the interviewees agreed on the following themes.

A. Animals are an important resource to alleviate stress and provide therapy
B. There is no one solution for everyone. Many different forms of therapy and medicine must be able to collaborate with one another.

Based on my interviews, I would like to find out more information on equine assisted therapy specifically. As it is an emerging field, I would like to learn enough to be able to influence more people to make this a more accessible and well known option for all kinds of people in need of therapy.

Photographs



Conclusion

In general, research shows that interacting with and observing animals have a positive impact on self-reported anxiety and serenity, particularly in stressful situations. Wells (2007, 2009) came to the conclusion that there is evidence to support the therapeutic usefulness of companion animals to people in two review articles on pet ownership and human health. In their meta-analysis of 49 studies, Nimer and Lundahl (2007) found that animal-assisted interventions (as opposed to pet ownership or merely animal-assisted activities) had positive health effects for people of all ages, frequently with medium effect sizes in terms of emotional well-being, medical conditions, and behavioral problems. After conducting my research, I drew the conclusion that contact with companion animals has the potential to enhance social interaction and functioning in children and adults with or without mental health issues based on the evidence provided.

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