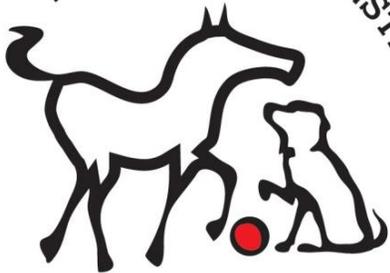


INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR



Animal Assisted
Play Therapy®



Animal Assisted Play Therapy™: What Is It?

AAPT is a form of therapy conducted by mental health professionals, allied health professionals, educators, and their associates. It integrates the fields of animal-assisted therapy and play therapy, incorporating significant aspects of ethology, animal behavior, welfare, and ethics. It can be used with children, adults, families, individuals, and groups. VanFleet and Faa-Thompson (2017) have defined it as *the integrated involvement of animals in the context of play therapy, in which appropriately trained therapists and animals engage with clients primarily through systematic playful interventions, with the goal of improving clients' developmental and psychosocial health, while simultaneously ensuring the animal's well-being and voluntary engagement. Play and playfulness are essential ingredients of the interactions and the relationship.*

VanFleet, R., & Faa-Thompson, T. (2017). *Animal Assisted Play Therapy*. Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press.

Relationship and Animal Welfare Emphasis: AAPT emphasizes the importance of relationships--the relationships between therapists and their animals, between therapists and clients, and between clients and animals. All activities and decisions are made within the frame of mutually respectful, beneficial, and fun relationships. Not only must client needs be met, but the sessions must be voluntary and enjoyable for the animals. Equipment is used minimally or not at all so that the animals can make choices about their own participation.

Play Emphasis: Play isn't just for children! Interactions are playful and light in tone. This is to provide emotional safety for clients of all ages. Problems are taken seriously, but therapeutic interventions use playfulness and humor to help achieve client goals.

Activities that do things **to** animals are to be avoided; activities that do things **with** animals are precisely what AAPT is all about.

--Risë VanFleet & Tracie Faa-Thompson

Building relationship by scratching the "itchy spots" →



Goal Areas & Applications

AAPT has wide applicability and can be used by therapists using all theoretical orientations. There are directive and nondirective forms of it, with interventions that involve differing levels of structure. AAPT has been used with most major client problem areas, including attachment and trauma problems, anxiety, autism spectrum disorders, behavior issues, attention and learning challenges, relationship problems, and with those who have histories of harming animals. AAPT is an empowerment approach, focusing on building strengths while resolving difficulties. It is ideal for families, and also has been used with businesses and organizations. Primary mental health goal areas include (1) self-efficacy, (2) attachment and relationship, (3) empathy, (4) self-regulation, and (5) specific problem resolution. Several research studies have been completed or are ongoing.



Training & Certification

The International Institute for Animal Assisted Play Therapy® offers online courses, in-person hands-on workshops, and a full certification program. Live skill-building trainings are offered regularly in the USA, UK, Australia, and in other countries at times. AAPT training has been shown through a doctoral dissertation study to be very effective in building therapist self-efficacy, and has been described by many as "the best training I have ever received." The acclaimed AAPT certification program is based on *demonstrated competencies* acquired through considerable training, relationship work with one's animals, and supervised experience. It is intended for those who are practicing professionals in their fields, although students are welcome. The full manual is at www.iaapt.org. Competencies include the following:

- professional therapy skills
- play therapy skills
- relationship building
- facilitation of client-animal interactions
- animal ethology/behavior/socialization/humane training
- fluency in understanding animal body language
- splitting attention/observation skills
- animal handling
- professional ethics
- animal welfare

For More Information:



www.iaapt.org

