APPENDIX Q

Bridging Clinical Practice and Research in Animal Assisted Interventions

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A

Overview of the Session

- The Value of Volunteering and Mentoring
- Peer Tutoring
- The Need for Research and Outcome Assessment
- The Importance of Generalization and Maintenance

B

The Story of Velma and Juan: Putting a face to our work

C

Project Second Chance: Youth Diagnostic and Development Center (YDDC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico- An Example

D

constucted adolescents to help a small group of dogs change their behaviors so they can be adopted.

During each session four shelter dogs are brought to the center by the Humane Association.

The dogs are boarded for the three week period. Dogs are paired with a resident who becomes a mentor. The care included maintaining the kennels, feeding, walking, and training mentees.com
Juan’s Impression of being Velma’s mentor

Juan said, "You know, I really spent time thinking about what I needed to give a dog like Velma so she could become more secure. Probably the most important ingredient that I had to show her was that my intentions were friendly. I had to show her that I would not harm her like those people in her past.”

Why People Volunteer

Volunteering can be one of the most rewarding and gratifying experiences one can have. It has the power to change lives, both for the volunteer and for the people being helped. Volunteering can also have significant benefits for the volunteer, including personal growth, increased job skills, and improved social interactions. It is a win-win situation for everyone involved.

Helping others can make us feel good about ourselves. According to a study by Carnegie Mellon University, volunteers report increased happiness and reduced stress levels. Additionally, volunteering can lead to increased confidence and a sense of purpose.

The Value of Volunteering

Volunteering is a way to give back to the community and make a positive impact. It is a way to connect with others and feel a sense of belonging. Volunteering is also a way to learn new skills and gain valuable experience.

Volunteers can help organizations in a variety of ways, from providing direct services to clients to serving on boards and committees. Some examples of volunteer roles include:

- Animal shelter volunteers
- Food bank volunteers
- School volunteers
- Community garden volunteers
- Environmental groups

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Volunteering with People or Animals. Is there a difference?

Effects of Peer Tutoring
- Peer-mediated interventions studies have shown that students can effectively help improve the social behaviors of their peers (Arrega Mayer, 1996; Mortweet, 1996; Gardner et al, 2001).
- Good et al (2001), have gained personally by becoming better communicators and achieving a clearer sense of identity. Most mentors point out that they have gained a sense of self satisfaction by becoming role models to others.

Peer assisted learning (PAL) has been shown through meta-analyses to assist in changes in attitudes, self-concept, and behavior ratings of both tutors and tutees (Johnson and Johnson, 1989).
- Rubin (2003) and Ginsburg-Block (2006) point out that PAL interventions may help the affective needs of vulnerable student populations.

The Value of Working with the Dogs
- Anecdotes such that animals can lessen the frustration of the youth involved and at times help them deal with their own impatience (Arluke, 2007)

The Healing Power of "Silence"
- For it is by muteness that a dog becomes to one so literally beyond-value; with him one is at peace where issues play no torturing tricks. When he just sits loving and knows he is being loved, these are the moments that I think are precious to a dog; when with his adoring eyes, he feels that you are really thinking of him.
- W. H. Auden, from "Memories, 1924"

The Hook
- The strongest buy in to this form of intervention is that working with animals is novel and fun.
AAI must be thought of in terms of a Partnership Between Animals and Humans. Both make an impact on the therapeutic process.

Review of what we know already
- USDA has identified 24 dog training programs for youth at risk in the United States.
- In most cases, the major goal of all programs is to attempt to enhance the development of psychological and emotional skills which can be transferred to other life activities.

What do most programs consist of?
- Sessions focus around dog training techniques and animal care. All programs include the use of positive training techniques.
- Some programs go beyond typical dog mentoring activities and address issues such as anger management, conflict resolution, and journaling.

Anticipated Outcomes
- Problem solving skills
- Empathy
- Anger and self control
- Dealing with frustration: Developing Patience
- Helps students verbalize and express themselves

The Challenge!
- Anecdotes rather than intensive evaluations compose most of the literature on the efficacy of AAI. That needs to change.
The Need for Outcome Assessment
- There needs to be a more appropriate bridge between clinical practice and best practice research.
- Practitioners are encouraged to pay closer attention to the need for program evaluation and documentation.

Some Solutions to Consider:
Strategies to help generalize skills beyond their therapeutic settings
- (Stokes, Osnes 1989; Stokes and Baer, 1977; Gresham et al. 2001 and Gresham, 1998.)

Generalization and Maintenance
- Generalization and maintenance represent the key considerations in any social skills training.
- Two major types of Generalization to consider
  - **Temporal Generalization** - durability or maintenance if the behavior changes following the termination of the treatment.
  - **Generalization across settings** - the display of the treatment changes in settings outside the initial therapeutic setting.

- **Major Problem**
  - Train and Hope mentality - Involves 2 components: **A)** intervention to effect behavior change in a treatment environment and
  - **B)** examining whether generalization across settings, therapists and/or time occurs without any further active treatment.

Current Functional Contingencies
- When the youth move to a less restrictive and structured environment, they often fail to demonstrate those learned skills. Change in setting and supports often interfere with the successful transfer of the social skills.

- **Important Outcome** Aggressively reinforce any occurrence of generalization
Trapping

- Trapping involves developing behaviors that fall into the behavior trap by what happens in the environment when the behaviors are used.
- Examples: Talking with others, accepting criticism, controlling anger, following rules, will all probably be reinforced more by significant people in that child's life. The youth is more likely to continue to use the behaviors after the training because others will reinforce them. (The behaviors learned need to be efficient and reliable).

The Value of Cognitive Mediators

- Cognitive mediators help the youth identify and interpret social cues, predict what may happen next, select what skills to use next and to evaluate outcomes.

Wraparound Process

According to Eber (2002) "The wraparound process brings providers, families, and community representatives together to commit unconditionally to a way of conducting problem solving and planning that gives equal importance and support to the child and his or her family and other caregivers" (p.14).

Bottom Line

- Generalization is most likely to be achieved when the training and practices occur in situations that are as similar as possible to the situations where the youth is expected to use the new skills! The skills learn need to be reliable and efficient.


Three types of measures to consider in planning social skill interventions
- Social validity
- Observations of the child's behavior in the natural environment
- Measure component skills
Social Validity
- Predicts long-term outcomes important to society
- Measures
  - Peer acceptance
  - Friendship status
  - Parent and teacher judgments
- Archival data
  - School attendance
  - Disciplinary referrals
  - School suspension

Observations in Natural Environment
- Objective observations
- Direct observational recording

Observations in Natural Environment – cont’d
- Did the child’s behavior change in a predicted direction?
- Objective observations in the natural setting indicates if the behavior did or did not change

Measure of Component Skills
- A socially valid measure: This is a measure how the child does in the following categories:
  - Role-playing tests
  - Problem-solving measures
  - Measures of cognition

Do You Believe In Magic?

Scarlet and Magic
- Scarlet, a tenth grader
- Challenges - Her impulsive reactions and her social immaturity cause difficulties with peers.
"There’s a little Magic in Magic."
From Afternoons with Peggy, Fine and Eiser (2009)

So, to enhance the efficacy of AAI
let’s not only believe in "magic"
but demonstrate it efficacy.