

Animal-Assisted Therapy in Children Diagnosed with Autism

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Abstract: The interaction between man and animal reveals several benefits both psychologically and physiologically. In terms of communication, within the interaction, there is a need to express emotions, both in humans and animals. The scientific literature has been concerned with exploring the mechanisms underlying the beneficial effects of animal-assisted therapy on children diagnosed with autism.

Keywords: autism; therapy; children; diagnosis

Autism encompasses an entire umbrella of deficiencies related to cognitive, behavioral development, coarse motility, fine motor skills, practically all aspects of a child's normal development are affected. There are several signs that may indicate Autism Spectrum Disorder, and these are visible from the time the baby is a baby. He does not look for his mother with his eyes, he does not look for objects that are moving, he does not look with his finger, he does not respond with a smile to a smile, he does not think, he does not respond to the sounds of adults, he does not react to the facial expressions of those around him, does not laugh and does not express his joy, does not say a word, all these can be indications of a disorder.

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There may be situations when the child develops normally until the age of 2, he has all the skills necessary for his age, that is, he walks, speaks, interacts naturally, and suddenly, around the age of 2, he loses all these purchases.

Early Diagnostic References of Autism

- Do not react (laughs, vocalizes, stretches your hands) when you pay attention;
- He smiles very rarely or not at all;
- Do not extend your hands when you want to take him in his arms;
- It avoids most of the time the visual contact with both you and the others;
- It is difficult to calm down when crying;
- It starts to cry without a reason to be able to detect and these episodes of crying last for a period;
- He has a hypersensitivity to sounds, some of them causing crying and nothing you do does not calm him;
- Has abnormal reactions to normal stimuli;
- When taken to an unknown place it does not show interest in exploring the environment;
- Has eating or sleeping problems;
- Manifest aversion to change and manifests itself through crying crises;
- Has certain repetitive bodily reactions such as clapping or swinging;
- Does not react to certain tones of the voice;
- Sometimes you get the impression that you don't hear when you talk to him;
- Does not mimic facial or gestural expressions;
- Non-verbal communication is missing;
- Do not try to attract you in his activities;
- Do not look at the things you look at;
- Do not look at an object you indicate;
- Does not respond when called by name;
- Do not imitate what you do;
- Does not like to be touched or taken in his arms;
- Sometimes it seems insensitive to pain;
- He stopped using certain words he used before.

- The child does not respond to the adult's requests (except when he “wants”) and seems not to hear or understand what he is asked;
- The child protests when he is asked for something and insists on receiving an answer;
- The game is marked by a stereotypical character (it always uses the objects or toys in the same way, for example: it closes / opens them, it beats with the objects in certain places, it rotates them etc);
- The child does not use the objects for their usual purpose (they lick, shake, walk the bottles he fills and empties, etc.);
- It presents problems of eating, and problems of sleep;
- Do not want to use words with a sense of communication;
- Go on the peaks;
- Ecolalia (endless repetition of sounds, words, TV commercials, etc.);
- You may not notice when the parent leaves and comes to work.

Several studies, starting in the 1990s, point out that animal-assisted therapy (horses and dogs) is an alternative form of therapy aimed at developing the abilities of children with autism and increasing their adaptive functioning ability in any environment, respectively integration. their optimality in society (Laurel, Goodman, Redefer, 1989), (Fung, Leung, 2014). Being non-verbal, therapy dogs and horses, by their mere presence signifies a premise of progress in the recovery process, since children with T.S.A. most often have difficulties in verbal expression or do not even have a verbal language, and interaction with another person can bring anxiety among children with T.S.A. they felt overwhelmed by the verbal information flow that people call upon.

According to studies in the scientific literature, Animal Assisted Therapy is a therapeutic approach that should not be given before other specialized therapies, as TAA is a therapeutic tool that, in conjunction with other methods of therapy, can highlight the poverty of children diagnosed with autism.

Children who benefit from TAA therapy they make progress in cognitive, emotional and social development and are offered educational and motivational support. In improving the symptoms of Autism Spectrum, special attention should be paid to family members. Psychological support is indispensable in such situations, because

it causes family members to be aware of these disorders and to behave in appropriate situations.

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