



Animal Assisted Therapy Informed Consent and Release of Liability

We are excited to announce the commencement of Animal Assisted Therapy at I am ME psychology from June 2024.

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) involves the use of animals by health professionals in treatment, with the aim of improving clients' emotional, social and cognitive functioning. Dogs are often involved in AAT in sessions with children and adolescents to provide comfort, engagement, and motivation during treatment.

Sketch is a Therapy Dog and has attended psychology clinic's for over 7 years with his owner Therese Melhem, Clinical Psychologist. Sketch is an eight-year-old Cavoodle. He is a friendly, calm, gentle and a sleepy dog. He is small in size and is hypoallergenic with a non-shedding coat.

We are providing these forms to obtain consent from families in preparation for Sketch's return to our clinic. This consent form outlines the risks and rules needed to ensure yours/your child's health and safety (as well as Sketch's) as we work together.

Please note that you have the right to refuse Animal Assisted Therapy, and if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to raise them with us.

What you need to know:

1. You may choose to **NOT** have Sketch in your sessions. Initial here if making that choice:
2. Sketch is groomed regularly and he visits his veterinarian yearly for shots and check-ups. Sketch is up to date on all his vaccinations. Visiting the veterinarian is necessary to keep the dogs healthy and safe as well as to prevent the spread of any diseases; however, animals do sometimes carry disease. Because your contact is minimal, this risk is very small. It is important to maintain appropriate hygiene following interactions with Sketch. I/we agree and understand:
3. While Sketch is a hypoallergenic dog, there may still be a risk of an allergic reaction. Please let me know if you typically have allergies to animals. I/we agree and understand:

Please list any known allergies to animals or write N/A if no known allergies.

4. If you or your child have a fear of dogs (however mild) then AAT may not be appropriate for you. Let's discuss potential risks and benefits prior to the start of our work together. I/we agree and understand:

5. As Sketch's handler and as your Psychologist, Therese will be looking out for your/your child's welfare as well as Sketch's. However, it is important to remember that Sketch is an animal and as such can be unpredictable. Sketch is a gentle and an affectionate dog, however, scratches, nibbles, jumping, mouthing and unwanted kisses are all possible. I/we agree and understand:

6. Animals have individual rights, just as each client has rights. Sketch gets to decide how and when he participates in the sessions. It is important for everyone's benefit (as well as safety) that he is not coerced or mistreated. He typically greets people enthusiastically and then sleeps. I/we agree and understand:

7. Clients may not bring their own animal to also be involved in their therapy session. I/we agree and understand:

8. Confidentiality is important to Sketch. He won't talk about you, but it is possible he may recognise you outside of a session. Don't worry he is friendly with most people, so no one need know that he actually knows you. I/we agree and understand:

9. Sketch is to be treated and handled gently. No hitting, pulling tail, hair, ears, yelling or any other actions that may cause the dog to become uncomfortable and/or jeopardising the dogs safety. In the event such behaviours exist, Sketch will be removed immediately and future sessions with the client will be evaluated for the safety and effectiveness of AAT for the client.

10. While we have listed some common risks, we cannot foresee all potential risks. By signing this form, you are stating your acceptance of the above rules and risks and agree to accept full liability in the event that Sketch harms you or your child in any way in the course of treatment or as a result of treatment. By signing this form, you are releasing Therese Melhem, and I am ME Psychology from any liability should any injury occur as part of your animal assisted therapy. I/we agree and understand:

Changes to AAT Terms

We reserve the right to update or amend these AAT Terms at any time. It is your responsibility to view the AAT Terms regularly on our website, so you are aware of any changes. Your access and engagement with I am ME psychology services and AAT following agreement on any changes to the AAT Terms will be on the amended AAT Terms.

Statement of Understanding and Consent

I/we understand that I have a right to a copy of this agreement and the most updated version can always be accessed on the I am ME psychology website iammepsychology.com.au. Any questions, I may have had, are answered to my satisfaction. I have read, understand, and agree to abide by this agreement and consent for myself and my child to participate in Animal Assisted Therapy with Therese Melhem and I am ME psychology.