

Certification

The Therapy / Visitation Dog should ONLY work with the handler, with which it has been trained and certified.

Dogs 6-12m old graduate with full Therapy Dog access under a Probationer Certificate. Probationer dogs have demonstrated to be safe and friendly for public interactions, however are young or new to the role and at times may require redirecting or prompting from the handler.

Dogs 12m old + graduate with full access as a New Graduate Therapy Dog Certificate

Dogs may undergo temperament changes throughout their life due to reasons such as age, illness or life experience. Therefore, it is best practice to complete annual recertification.

Contact Us

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or if there is anything I can clarify further.

Madeline Briggs

Ballan, 3342.

Phone: 0418 633 330

Email: dogtraining.companion@gmail.com

Web: <https://vongorongsdandtraining.com/>

ABN: 96 391 501 180

DAB: 2025-004



Companion Dog Training *Therapy Dog* for animal-human interactions in your organisation.



COMPANION DOG TRAINING

BALLAN, 3342.

Animal Assisted Services and Visitations.



Handler Madeline Briggs with Therapy Dog Flynn.

Studies show, merely the presence of a dog can help people feel calmer and less anxious.

- Safe space - For many participants the dog provides a safe, calming friendship – someone they can escape to, debrief or confide in.
- Exercise – Therapy Dogs can create a little extra motivation to get in the clients daily walks or exercises. Some people might need more incentive to attend activities. A dog can often provide that little extra. Dogs in P.E classes in schools have been shown to increase participation of students who otherwise would not engage.
- Comfort - During sad times, a therapy dog can provide a presence of support.
- Life lessons / Responsibility - Dogs can provide great life lessons that are helpful to teach children. Things like: Live in the moment; Don't hold grudges; Play every day; Accept yourself; Jump for joy when you're happy; Drink lots of water; Love unconditionally; It's good to move etc.
- Emotional connection and expression – The presence of a calm Therapy Dog helps to ground participants by reducing cortisol and increase hormones like oxytocin. Relaxing the nervous system and fostering safety while promoting bonding.
- Overcoming a dog phobia - Some clients may have a dog phobia. Providing them with an experience (when they are ready) may be just what they need to overcome their fear.

- Goal based interventions - Applicable with trauma, ASD emotional regulation, wellbeing, hygiene and more. Emotional regulation interventions aimed at emotional balance, promoting calmness, bonding and reducing stress.
- Wellbeing and Social and Emotional Learning - Behaviour management, social skills learning, and emotional regulation.

Therapy / Visitation Dog common activities!

- Story time / literacy – Dog lays down for children to read to him/her individually or in groups.
- Reward time - Therapy dog interactions can be used as a reward-based strategy (i.e. 30 minutes of solid work = X minutes with the therapy dog).
- Leash walking - Having the client walk the dog (supervised) can increase willingness to exercise and improve self-worth.
- Tricks and training – Having the dog perform a “pet show” or showing others how to train the dog can lift morale and improve interaction amongst those involved.
- General positivity - For someone who enjoys dogs, simply having them in their vicinity – on yard duty, walking around the facility, present in activities, waiting rooms etc, can greatly assist that clients wellbeing.

What is a Therapy Dog?

Therapy Dogs are dogs that bring joy, affection, comfort and friendship to humans. Together with their handler, they visit people in a range of settings such as - hospitals, nursing homes, schools, childcare centers, libraries, counselling and psychological centers, among other community centers.

Therapy / Visitation Dogs have been assessed as having a suitable and stable Therapy Dog temperament which is gentle, calm and which naturally loves people. To perform their role, they MUST enjoy human attention and be non-reactive to the environment or people around them. Therapy Dogs are well trained and responsive to their owners in all settings.

In closing, Therapy animals are not trained to do specific support tasks (like assistance animals.) Instead, they are trained to have good manners such as housebreaking, not mouthing or jumping up, and to let people pat them, play with them or engage in activities. Therapy Dogs help to cheer up students, provide company and comfort to patients when feeling sad, lonely or unwell, create a soothing atmosphere when humans are stressed and promote positive behaviours amongst participants.

Therapy Dog Benefits!

Animal-assisted services is an emerging field because of the beneficial effect animals may have on people's health, well-being, and motivation. The beneficial effects animals may have on humans can be demonstrated across age, race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and life condition (Tedeschi, Fitchet & Molitor 2005). Animals have the potential to make humans happier, healthier, and more sociable (Bode 2020, citing Altschiller 2011). Hence, research indicates that humans may derive many benefits from contact with animals, such as:

- Improving ones physical and physiological health (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013).
- Lowering blood pressure (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Allen, Blascovich & Mendes 2002).
- Lowering cholesterol (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Walsh 2009)
- Lowering cortisol levels (Bode 2021).
- Increasing in levels of dopamine (Shena et al. 2018).
- Increasing in endorphins (Bode 2021).
- Increasing in oxytocin (Bode 2021).
- Heightening levels of well-being (Compitus 2021).
- Providing positive mental health outcomes such as: reduced anxiety, depression social isolation (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Friedmann & Tsai 2006).
- Assisting people with mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, better cope with their disease (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Beck 2005).
- 5 • Developing a protective factor for people who experience various issues such as exposure to trauma or violence (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Castelh, Hart, & Zasloff 2001).
- Mitigating experiences of social isolation due to illness or age (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge & Kawam 2013, citing Castelh, Hart & Zasloff 2001).
- Providing social support for people (Hoy-Gerlach, Delgado & Sloane 2019).

Research conducted around neurochemistry that causes the effectiveness of animal therapy:

The Oxytocin Effect (Odendaal 2000)

Dogs can increase our dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin levels. These are the “feel good” chemicals our brains release that improve mood and affect happiness.

During positive human-animal interactions, greater oxytocin (a neurotransmitter produced when we have positive experiences with those we love) is created in the brain (Handlin et al. 2011). The reported benefits of therapy dogs in the research cited above, is posited to have its cause-effect relationship rooted in the oxytocin effect (that is, because oxytocin is increased in the human by the interaction and presence of the therapy dog, then oxytocin is the change agent which causes the benefits seen)

Increases in oxytocin lead to feelings of relaxation, acceptance and of accepting others (Julius et al. 2013b). It also leads to feelings of trustworthiness, less fear and anxiety, increases in concentration, memory and learning (Handlin et al 2011). It is also suggested to increase one’s willingness and desire to engage socially. Oxytocin also affects other hormones resulting in reductions in stress physiology (heart rate, blood pressure, cortisol production etc), pain sensitivity and gut function (Uvnas- Moberg et al. 2011). The presence of oxytocin can create changes to our social, cognitive and nervous system functions (Handlin et al. 2011; Handlin, Nilsson, Ejdeback, Hydbring-Sandberg & Uvnas-Moberg 2012; ISAZ et al. 2012; Julius et al. 2013, Uvnas-Moberg, Handlin & Petersson 2011).

Who may benefit from the Oxytocin Effect?

Individuals who have some form of disruption to the oxytocin or stress pathways are likely to exhibit the strongest benefits. The disruptions often exist for people who have experienced trauma, loneliness or isolation. As well as people who have Autism Spectrum Disorders, mental health difficulties, pain syndromes or disorders, and attachment difficulties (Sigal Zilcha-Mano, Mario Mikulincer & Phillip Shaver 2011; Grandin, Fine & Bowers 2010; Barker, Pandurangi & Best 2013).