

Animal Assisted Healing

Name: _____ Date: _____

For this exercise you will need an animal assistant. You may use your own pet for the exercise. If you do not have a pet, you may wish to borrow one from a friend or neighbor, or visit a petting zoo if there is one near you. Don't attempt this exercise with a wild animal. If you have allergies, select an animal you're not allergic to, if possible.

To engage in the Animal Assisted Healing exercise, complete the following steps, then go on to answer the questions on the next page.

1. Find a space, preferably outdoors, where you and your animal assistant may be undisturbed for the duration of the exercise.
2. Begin by taking your pulse. Write down your heart rate on the worksheet on the next page, or just make a mental note of it for now.
3. Ask your animal assistant for its permission and help in completing this exercise, and wait for a reply. Read the animal assistant's body language for signs that permission has been granted. If it has not, or if the animal seems uneasy in any way, postpone the activity until another time.
4. Once permission has been granted, thank your animal assistant by giving him or her a treat of some sort.
5. Bond with your animal assistant by grooming or petting it.
6. When you feel a bond has been established, think of a situation in which you need healing help. If you do not have such a situation, just enjoy the experience of being with your animal assistant.
7. Play with your animal assistant in some way. If your animal assistant is a dog, you may toss a ball or a stick. If a cat, you may offer it a bit of string. If some other animal, find a way to engage in a playful activity with it.
8. When you have finished playing with the animal assistant, thank it once again and express your gratitude by offering it another treat.
9. Take your pulse again.
10. Dismiss your animal assistant in a kind and gentle way.

When you have completed all 10 steps above, go to the worksheet on the next page and answer the questions.

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RESTING HEART RATE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EXERCISE: _____ beats per minute

How did your animal assistant grant you permission to do the exercise?

How did you choose to bond with your animal assistant? How did he/she respond?

How did your animal assistant choose to bond with you? How did you respond?

Before playing with your animal assistant, did you think of a situation in which you needed help? Did playing with your animal assistant change the way you thought about the situation? How?
