

Animal Assisted Therapy Informed Consent and Release of Liability

I incorporate my dog, Millie into my psychotherapy work. I believe her presence benefits my clients & there are scientific studies to back me up. The use of animals by health professionals in their work is called animal assisted therapy. Numerous studies that show that interacting with animals helps people lower their blood pressure, increases engagement & reduces anxiety & depression. This consent form outlines the risks & rules needed to ensure your health & safety (as well as Millie's) as we work together.

Millie and I are currently in training with a professional therapy dog trainer. Millie still needs to learn some skills to pass her therapy dog certification test. First up will be the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen test.

What you need to know:

1. You may opt to not have Millie in your sessions. Initial here if making that choice: _____
2. While Millie has been screened by a veterinarian before commencing work as a therapy animal, animals do sometimes carry disease. Because your contact is minimal, this risk is very small. Millie is up to date on all her vaccinations.
3. While Millie is a "hypoallergenic" dog (she has hair, not fur) there may still be a risk of an allergic reaction. Please let me know if you typically have allergies to animals.
4. If you or your child have a fear of dogs (however mild) then animal assisted therapy may not be appropriate for you. Let's discuss potential risks & benefits prior to the start of our work together.
5. As Millie's handler & as your therapist I will be looking out for your welfare as well as hers. However, it is important to remember that Millie is an animal & as such can be unpredictable. Millie is a gentle dog & affectionate dog, however, scratches, jumping, mouthing & unwanted kisses are all possible, especially during her early training.
6. Animals have individual rights, just as each client has rights. Millie gets to decide how & when she participates in the sessions. It is important for everyone's benefit (as well as safety) that she is not coerced or mistreated. She typically greets people enthusiastically & then sleeps.
7. Clients may not bring their own animal to also be involved in their therapy session. Let me know if you wish me to meet your animal, I can arrange for Millie to be elsewhere during that session.
8. Parents or guardians of children under the age of 10 must remain present during sessions.
9. Confidentiality is important to Millie. She won't talk about you, but it is possible she may recognize you outside of a session. Don't worry she is friendly with most people, so no one need know that she actually knows you.

While I have listed some common risks, I cannot foresee all potential risks. By signing this form you are stating your acceptance of the above rules & risks & agree to accept full liability in the event that Millie 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 Carol Harvey MFT from any liability should any injury occur as part of your animal assisted therapy.

Statement of Understanding

I understand that I have a right to a copy of this agreement. I have had any questions, I may have had, answered to my satisfaction. **I have read, understand, & agree to abide by this agreement & consent to participate in animal assisted therapy with Carol Harvey MFT.**

client date

client date

client/parent/guardian date

client/parent/guardian date