



NEW WORKSHOPS SCHEDULED FOR 2011 !



Due to popular demand, another Animal Assisted Play Therapy workshop has been added for 2011!! All the details are on the Playful Pooch Program website link below. This workshop sells out very quickly, so if you missed registering in time for the first 2011 offering, check this out now! Early registration results in lower prices, too!

The second level training in AAPT will be offered in the UK in 2011, and that workshop has been posted on the website as well. Only those who have attended the first level AAPT training are eligible. Six seats are available for therapists and their dogs. See the website below for more information.

www.playfulpooch.org

INTERESTED IN CANINE COMMUNICATION SIGNALS?

We are now carrying Sarah Kalnajs's DVD set, *The Language of Dogs*, in our Playful Pooch Store.

The Playful Pooch Program

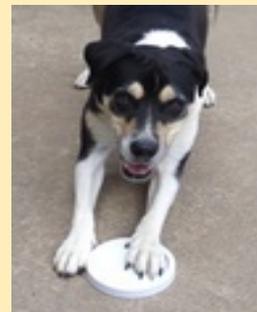
of the Family Enhancement & Play Therapy Center, Inc.

Canine Assisted Intervention for Fear of the Dark

Canine Assisted Intervention for Fear of the Dark*

Kirrie has helped develop a new way to intervene with children who have fear of the dark. The only prop needed is a closet light - the type that you push on or off and that runs on a battery rather than electricity. The intervention works best in a room where the lights can be dimmed gradually. Here's how it works:

The Canine Play Therapist must learn to turn the light on and off by touching it with sufficient pressure. This is done using a typical targeting method. Kirrie learned this by free shaping, a clicker, and treats. I placed the light on the ground (see photo), then waited for her to put her foot on it. She has learned paw targeting before, so this didn't take long. When she touched it, I clicked and treated. Once she had that down, the new requirement was that she touch it with sufficient pressure to turn it on and off. Then I clicked and treated. Once she had THAT down, I began adding the cue (word used to tell her what to do). I simply said, "Light!" Once she learned that, I could say either "On Light!" or "Off Light!" as she knew to press whenever she heard "Light." The final dog training step involved reducing the frequency of clicks and treats, eventually eliminating the clicks and giving treats only occasionally (intermittent reinforcement schedule).



After the dog has learned this little trick, you are ready to use it with a child who is afraid of the dark. I simply present it as a new trick that Kirrie has learned and that they can play with her. With older children and teens, I explain that Kirrie has a new trick that might help them be more comfortable with lower light levels.

I show them how to give Kirrie the cues to turn the light on and off, then I put the child in charge of the light levels in the room. We usually start with the lights fully on in the room and ask Kirrie to turn the closet light on and off. The child plays the game, including giving Kirrie occasional treats. As he or she feels ready, the child gradually dims the lights in the room while continuing to play the game with Kirrie. Eventually we reach the point where the room lights are off while we are playing the game. This works better when the room can get quite dark (although not totally). (Tip: It's important to use your play therapy skills to keep the session playful and emotionally safe for children.)

The closet lights often come in packages of two, so Kirrie frequently

Featuring internationally-known positive dog trainer and behaviorist, Sarah Kalnajs, this DVD shows videos of the various stress signals that dogs show, and is a great resource for learning to "read the entire dog," to keep your pooch's stress levels down, and to prevent potential problems between your dog and others.

www.playfulpooch.org

NEW ARTICLES

POSTED

Several new articles related to Animal Assisted Play Therapy have been posted!! Visit the website and click on Resources.

www.playfulpooch.org

gives one to the kids to take home and try near their bed. This intervention usually works best when repeated over a few sessions. All must be done at the child's pace, and the desensitization procedure is used for only 5 minutes or so of a session. The remainder of the session is used for other play therapy interventions, either with or without the dog.

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**As with all psychotherapy interventions, this should be implemented only by those with the proper training and experience and with full consideration of the individual needs of the child and family.*

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Credential in Animal Assisted Play Therapy Being Developed

I am working on the development of a credential in Animal Assisted Play Therapy. It will involve criteria for both the human and nonhuman animal co-therapists. This will be under development throughout 2011, and new posts here will provide information as it nears completion.

The Playful Pooch Program wishes everyone a very happy holiday season, and a terrific year in 2011!!!

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