

Pet Therapy for Depression

Transcript

Edie Moore: Animal assisted therapy really helps us to connect to our natural selves. Often depression is based on some what we call negative feedback loops in the mind where people persevere on false beliefs, like I'm no good or I'm not good enough. This can help to break that cycle. That's a habit, it's a bad habit that all of us have to one degree or another. It's just that it can get out of balance and lead to, down to a downward spiral that we call depression.

Connie: In a span of six years, I lost my whole family, my brother, my father, my mother, my grandmother. But then last year I lost my daughter. This little girl here's helped, this was her dog. As you can see she's my dog now. And she helps me a lot by just being with me wherever go, taking me for whatever I am with her I'm happy, sad or whatever.

Depression's a hard thing to pinpoint. Sometimes it makes you angry, other times you're just real anxious. It comes in all sorts of ways. I've been seeing a pet therapist and it's helped me, as well as my family. Pet therapy is a plus because you not only get the guidance of the therapist but you get the calming effect of that animal being in your lap or just being near you.

Edie Moore: This is Tuppence. She's my current therapy dog. Tuppence is a Havanese. I specifically chose this breed because they're very intelligent, very like people, they like other animals and they're easy to train which is important to me.

Tuppence is one aspect of how I work with clients. She's a well-trained therapy dog. She's been a therapy dog since she was 18 months so she has a lot of experience with a lot of different clients and she knows who her clients are. I've always been impressed with how the dog sees the hurting heart within and they just go straight for that. They are not concerned about the externals.

There are several things that I've been working on with Connie and Francesca. They come in because of Francesca's difficulties over tragedy in their lives and it pretty quickly became clear that Connie needed to spend time talking through things also.

Connie: One of the things that is hard when you're depressed is wanting to get out of bed, doing anything, going anyplace.

Edie Moore: In talk therapy, people are using their frontal cortex, their thinking brain. Many problems that people have are connected to the body and memories that go beyond the thinking brain. Just stroking a fur bearing animal is calming and releases the cortisol hormones that counter the stress that people feel.

It's a safe other being that they can connect with and identify things that maybe they're not quite to identify in themselves.

Really the best part of my job is the people I get to meet. I meet wonderful people and I get to introduce them to another of working with animals.