



Canine Assisted Therapy

Informed Consent and Release of Liability

I incorporate my dog, Harlow, into my psychotherapy work. I believe her presence benefits my clients and there are clinical studies that suggest the benefits of introducing a dog into therapy. The use of animals by health professionals in their work is called animal assisted therapy. Numerous studies have shown that interacting with animals help people increase engagement and reduce stress, anxiety and depression. This consent form outlines the risks and rules needed to insure your health and safety, Harlow's safety and provide the most benefit as we work together.

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

What you need to know:

1. You may opt to not have Harlow in your sessions. Initial here if making that choice: _____
2. While Harlow 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. Harlow is up to date on all her vaccinations.
3. While Harlow is not a "hypoallergenic" dog, there may 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 and benefits prior to the start of our work together.
5. As Harlow's handler and as your therapist, I will be looking out for your welfare as well as hers. However, it is important to remember that Harlow is an animal and as such can be unpredictable. Harlow is a friendly dog and affectionate dog, however scratches, jumping, mouthing and unwanted licks and kisses are all possible, especially during her early training.
6. Animals have individual rights, just as each client has rights. Harlow gets to decide how and when she participates in the sessions. It is important for everyone's benefit (as well as for safety) that she is not coerced or mistreated. She typically greets people enthusiastically and then calms down.
7. Clients may not bring their own animal to be involved in their therapy session.
8. Parents or guardians of children under the age of 10 may need to remain present during sessions.
9. Confidentiality is important to Harlow. 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 needs know that she actually knows you.

Listed are some common risks, but I cannot foresee all potential risks. By signing this form you are stating your acceptance of the above rules and risks, known and unknown. Additionally you agree to accept full liability in the event that Harlow harms you, your child or damages personal property in any way in the course of treatment or as a result of treatment. By signing this form, you are releasing and holding harmless Serenity Counseling LLC, practice therapists and all employees from any liability should any injury or damage occur as part of your animal assisted therapy.

Statement of Understanding

I understand that this is a legally binding document and have the right to have it reviewed by an attorney. I have a right to a copy of this agreement. I have asked all questions I may have and they were answered to my satisfaction. I have read, understand and agree to abide by this agreement and consent to participate in animal assisted therapy with Serenity Counseling, LLC.

client _____ date _____ client _____ date _____

client/parent/guardian _____ date _____ client/parent/guardian _____ date _____