



## **CODE OF ETHICS**

### **THE ISRAELI ASSOCIATION OF**

### **ANIMAL-ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. These bylaws define the demands of professional ethics in the area of animal-assisted psychotherapy (AAP). Below, the word **"therapist"** will refer to **"animal-assisted psychotherapist."**
2. Members of the Israeli Association of Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy (the IAAAP) are obligated to act according to these bylaws and the decisions of the ethics committee.
3. These bylaws set ethical standards for those who integrate animals in their work, even if they are not IAAAP members.
4. These bylaws serve as a foundation for the process of legal recognition of profession of AAP.
5. These bylaws demand from the therapist integrity through impartiality and obligation to the advancement and welfare of each client without discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, beliefs, nationality, origin, values, ideology, political stance, age, sexual preference,
6. The therapist must be aware of his/her responsibility and obligations delineated in these bylaws.
7. The AAP therapist must obey the national laws related to work in the field of mental health, welfare and education as well as in the field of animal welfare law and its derivations.
8. One will be considered an Animal-Assisted Psychotherapist if one has fulfilled the requirements of professional training specialization according to the bylaws of the IAAAP.
9. The therapist will be held to the requirements and limitations of the IAAAP in terms of and according to his/her training, specialization, experience in therapy, and rank in the IAAAP.
10. The AAP therapist must be sure to, to the best of his/her ability, explain the essence of his/her profession to clients, the public, and professional organizations in Israel and abroad, as well as to do one's best to promote and advance the profession and the IAAAP.



**PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND RESPONSIBILITY**

11. The AAP therapist is expected to maintain a high professional level and to keep updated with professional developments and new ideas in the profession of AAP and in parallel and related fields (mental health professions, the study of the human-animal bond, animal science and welfare).
12. The therapist must be aware of the uniqueness of AAP, based on a network of connections which exists in the therapy triangle – therapist-animal-client.
13. The therapist must be acquainted with the variety of ways in which animals may contribute to the process of AAP (see the appendix of the IAAAP bylaws), as well as the variety of ways in which animals may limit psychotherapy.
14. The therapist must insist on receiving professional clinical supervision, according to the requirements of the IAAAP and according to the accepted practice of the therapist's place of employment.
15. The therapist must maintain multi-disciplinary contact with professionals in the areas of mental health, welfare, education, veterinary science, and animal behavior, according to the framework and population with which one works.
16. The therapist must behave fairly and respectfully towards other professional, avoid slander, and cooperate with them for the good of the client.
17. The therapist must evaluate, give therapy and supervises only in the area of his/her expertise and according to his/her training and experience in the area of AAT.
18. The therapist must properly document the therapy process, to write a summary of the therapy in a manner that is acceptable in mental health professions.
19. When reporting on the state of the client to authorized external parties (family, educational, legal, therapy and others), the reporting must be done in such a way which will be respectful towards the client and his/her family, safeguarding secrecy and confidentiality, with discretion, and in consultation with other professionals, and according to the rules acceptable to the institution in which the therapy takes place.
20. A therapist interested in making public a case description in professional forums, the mass media, professional books or journals, or for teaching purposes, must do so according to ethical regulations, while showing respect to the client and his/her families, safeguarding secrecy and confidentiality .... of the client and/or his/her guardian.



21. Private work:

a. It is forbidden for the AAP therapist employed by a public institution to work privately within said institution and/or with the same clients, unless one has received special permission to do so from the institution.

b. The AAP therapist must wait one year between doing therapy with a client within said institution and continuing therapy with that same client privately, unless it is done with transparency and with the knowledge of the public framework, this being in order to prevent taking advantage of the therapeutic relationship for personal reasons.

22. Termination of therapy:

a. The therapist must know how to terminate the therapy relationship at the appropriate time in a fitting manner, advising the client, guardian and/or framework in which the therapy takes place of the process needed for termination of the therapy relationship.

b. The therapist must be aware of situations which require the cessation of therapy or the transferring of the client to different psychotherapist, according to the background of the therapist or according to the needs of the client, and help the client in this transition.

23. Education and Supervision;

a. The therapist that is also a supervisor or educator is obligated to nurture the professional development of his/her interns and supervisees. (S)he must stand as a personal example in the areas of ethics, professional level, and interpersonal attitude in a way that shows respect towards the profession as well as towards his/her clients.

b. The therapist who supervises and teaches is obligated to receive supervision on supervision and to complete appropriate training according to the IAAAP bylaws.

c. A supervisor or educator must abstain from taking advantage of his/her influential status over his/her intern or supervisee.

d. A supervisor or educator must abstain from creating a therapeutic connection with his/her student or supervisee unless the supervision and/or teaching has finished without the agreement of all concerned.

e. A supervisor or educator must abstain from creating a therapeutic connection with a client of his/her intern or supervisee without the agreement of all concerned.



#### **RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS ANIMALS**

24. The therapist's responsibility towards the animals is the foundation of the therapy setting and the condition for the therapy process.

25. The therapist must provide for the animals proper living conditions including: appropriate physical space, proper nutrition, the existence of appropriate social behavior, protection from environmental harm, space appropriate for breeding, rest and environmental enrichment.

26. The therapist must relate to the vitality of the animal as a factor which generates situations which create and influence dynamics in therapy.

27. The AAP therapist must avoid objectifying the animals out of the recognition they are independent living beings with feelings, needs and emotions.

28. The therapist must allow for physical separation between the animal and the client in moments of distress and/or danger to any of each. For instance, in instances of sudden fear of the client or animal, threat of physical harm to the client or animal.

#### **RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS CLIENTS**

29. The therapist must act fairly and respectfully towards the clients, and accept their differences. The therapist must act out of an awareness of the clients' good and use therapeutic interventions that are appropriate for their needs. The therapist must structure the framework and the therapy contract according to mutual agreement.

30. Before the first therapy session, the therapist must:

a. announce to the client or guardian about the therapist's professional training, skills, expertise, special methods or techniques which will be used, and therapy experience.

b. define the conditions of the therapy, including times and cost of the sessions and information concerning issues of confidentiality and legal requirements for reporting to the proper authorities.

c. verify the lack of clients' medical problems relating to the presence of the animals through written permission by parents or legal guardian, and to tell the clients and guardians of any possible health dangers in the sessions with animals.

31. The therapist must define the therapy contract with the clients or guardian at the commencement of therapy. The contract must include rules for behavior necessary in the therapy setting and in relation to their behavior towards the animals.

32. In his/her work with clients, the therapist must match the therapy interventions to the clients' medical, psychiatric, neurological and/or emotional state.

33. The AAP therapist must abstain from taking advantage of his/her power or influential status over the client.

34. It is forbidden for the AAP therapist to do therapy with someone with whom (s)he has family/friendship/economic ties, as well as the following instances:

a. at least half a year after the end of the lecturer-student relationship

b. in instances in which the therapist is employed as a lecturer in the same institution as the student, it is forbidden to conduct a therapist-client relationship at the same time that there is an authority relationship of teacher-student with any of his/her students.

35. The AAP therapist must take care of the emotional welfare of the client while in the presence of animals and must be aware of every change in the condition of the client in relation to the animal.

a. During the therapy session the therapist must make sure that the client agrees to the presence of animals in the therapy setting. It is forbidden to force clients to touch the animal against their will.

b. The therapist must allow enough space so clients may distance themselves from the animals according to the clients' needs.

c. To ensure the psychological welfare of the client, one must not allow the client to harm an animal.

d. In the case that harm was caused to an animal during the therapy session, the therapist must structure the working through of the situation as part of the therapy process.

36. The AAP therapist must worry about the physical welfare of the client while in the presence of animals:

a. Before the first meeting with the client (see article 23)

b. Throughout the therapy:



- One must stay aware of and check out any signs of allergies or sensitivities to presence of animals. If sensitivities or medical problems arise during the therapy process, the therapy must notify the client and guardian and refer them for medical evaluation.

- One must not allow the client to do anything that might constitute for him/her possible danger or harm by the animal or by any accompanying accessories, without warning ahead of time of expected dangers.

- One must not expose the client to an animal with a zoonotic disease.

- One must not allow the client to touch or get close to an aggressive animal or one that is not used to contact with humans or to an animal with whom therapist is unacquainted.

- In the case that the client is harmed or injured by the animal, or from any other reason related to the therapy setting, one must act according to the regulations of the Health Ministry or Agriculture Ministry. In addition, one must act according to the following:

\* give the appropriate basic first aid

\* report to the person responsible for the client (when relevant) – parent, teacher, director of institution, etc.)

\* refer the client to a doctor to check for the need for tetanus shot and/or other treatment

\* isolate of the animal as ruled by law in the case that the client has been injured by an animal

37. The AAP therapist must make sure that the therapeutic area, the resources and the methods are appropriate for the client and his/her unique needs.

### **MULTICULTURAL ASPECTS**

38. Therapists should be aware of the differences and gaps between their culture, beliefs and prejudices and those of their clients before they decide to take upon themselves the therapy. Therapists must be aware of the implications of these issues for the therapy process and bring them up in clinical supervision.

39. Therapists must accept with openness and respect the cultural complexity and difference of clients, and not force their opinions and beliefs on them, and they must be flexible in their manner of work.



40. The therapist must try to become acquainted as much as possible with the culture, religion, traditions, beliefs, and values of their clients, including their prejudices towards animals, in order to understand their motivations and behaviors towards them during therapy.

41. Therapists must act and express themselves in such a way that is not discriminatory on the basis of race, sex, national origin, ethnic background in the framework of their professional functioning, and to relate at the appropriate time professionally to the expression of racism that comes up in therapy in such a way that sheds light on the damage caused to the emotional welfare of people as a result of racism. It is their responsibility of therapists who are aware of the fact that they themselves have racist stances, to work on themselves over time in order to understand the source of this stance and prevent as much as possible its invasiveness into their therapy activity.

This article also applies to those who teach and provide supervision.

#### **CLOSENESS, SEXUALITY, TOUCH AND INTIMACY**

42. AAP provides opportunities for intimacy, touch, physical closeness and awakening of urges and sexuality. Any abuse of these issues constitutes a flagrant violation of these bylaws and is against the law.

43. AAP provides opportunity for contact with content such as parenthood, birth, nursing, sexuality, mating/breeding, violence, aggression, etc. The therapist must be conscious and aware of such, that these subjects may awaken various emotional reactions within the client and to mediate these for the client.

44. The therapist must be conscious of the closeness and physical and emotional intimacy that are created during AAP, and also be conscious of the passion/urges awakened in the presence of the animals. The therapist must bring these issues to supervision.

45. The therapist must differentiate between expressions of closeness, touch and intimacy within the therapy triangle that are significant for the personal development of the client, and close relations, touch and intimacy that constitute abuse of the therapy relationship.

46. If the closeness and touch are experienced by anyone in the therapy relationship as inappropriate to the situation, the therapist must work this through in the framework of clinical supervision and later with the client.



47. In reference to touch in the therapy triangle:

a. the therapist must allow clients to choose the type of touch and closeness with the animals that they feel appropriate for themselves.

b. AAP provides opportunities for certain situations in which touch between clients, the therapist, and the animals is demanded. The therapist must inform the client and/or guardian and define this in the therapy contract. The therapist must consider certain situations such as: correct holding, taking care of the animal, treating the wounds of with the animal or the client, prevention of the animal falling and also to apply discretion concerning intervention including touch for the sake of rehabilitation of motor and sensory problems.

48. In reference to sexuality in the therapy triangle:

AAP raises in a tangible way sexual content in the therapist and in the client. The therapist must be conscious of this. Any abuse of sexual content constitutes a flagrant violation of these bylaws and is illegal. Thus, the therapist is forbidden any sexual involvement with the client and/or involvement in erotic activity with the client, or undressing in the client's presence, or sexual relationship with a past client after the termination of the therapy. Also, it is forbidden for the therapist to allow the client to undress for the purpose of stripping.

This article also applies to those who teach and provide supervision.

49. The therapist must be conscious of and sensitive to the manner of referring to sexuality among various cultures.

50. In reference to intimacy: AAP accelerates situations such as intimacy in the early stages of therapy. The therapist must be conscious of this and set clear limits in order to allow safe conditions for the development of the therapy.