

Therapeutic Touch: Complementary Procedure for Very Ill Companion Animals

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*Presented at Vision and Reality Conference
November, 1998*

The incidence of cancers, lymphomas, auto-immune disease is increasing in the companion animal population. I believe that these illnesses are indicators of problems both in basic care and in environmental quality. With the application of standard and holistic veterinary treatment, attention to basic care, and the use of Therapeutic Touch, Tellington TTouch, and other complementary disciplines, the lives of companion animals can be extended and made more comfortable.

Veterinary Treatment

In the event of a diagnosis of cancer or other serious illness, the most important step is to work with a good and compassionate veterinarian, preferably one who has training in holistic approaches such as homeopathy, acupuncture, and vitamin and herbal supplementation.

Therapeutic Touch

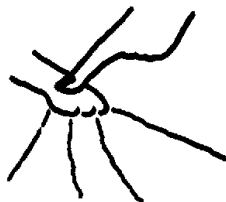
In my experience, Therapeutic Touch can significantly increase the physical comfort of a very ill animal.

Centering. Through resonance, the act of centering offers the greatest possibility of a major shift to the field of the receiving animal. With centering, comes the very rapid onset of the relaxation response that eases tension in the body and supports a greater energetic flow through the field. This is crucial as health problems are related to energy deficit and interruptions in the flow.

Companion animals are greatly stressed by their owners' distressed emotional and mental states. The most basic guideline for pet owners is that the conscious act of centering within the presence of the animal can help to relax the animal, slow and deepen its respiration, and increase its comfort level.

Supporting Energetic Flow. Using grounding visualisations (see "On Grounding Visualisations") to support energetic flow through the field is important before inviting a greater amount of energy-light to enter the field. Developing the grounding can be done in many ways:

a) Gently touching the feet, one or two at a time, and visualising roots growing into the ground can significantly alter the field toward greater integration. I use a single finger to lightly touch the top of the paw. Doing a similar kind of rooting for the tail directly supports energetic flow down the spine.



b) Drawing energy out of the bottom of the feet with a fluid “pulling” hand movement also increases flow through the field.



c) Gently massaging the bottom of the paw and between the pads augments energetic flow out through the feet.

I call this work of supporting flow out through the lower portion of the field “setting up the plumbing.” Bringing more energy into the system without this early step can result in energy build-up higher in the field and this will make the animal uneasy and even uncomfortable. Once the grounding is firmly established, unruffling the entire field can clear the flow and bring more energy through the field.

Increasing Energetic Flow. The act of unruffling actually brings more energy into and through the field. I envision light entering through the crown and other chakras and the entire field itself. In addition, the energy available through the practitioner’s hand chakras can also add energy to the animal’s field.

The focus on brightening and strengthening the entire field is much more effective than concentrating on specific places. This is most easily done in a state of deep centering (see "On Wholeness").

It is very important to use very light and soothing hand movements. Make every movement count by anchoring it to a visualisation of soft, bright light moving through the field. Three passes through the field done this way can be much more effective than 25 unruffling strokes without any depth of visualisation guiding them. Pausing between passes allows the field to process the work more effectively.

As with very ill humans, or delicate babies and elderly people, sick animals are extraordinarily sensitive to energy work. A minute or two of TT done a few times a day is much more effective than a 20 minute treatment. Indeed, in my experience, most animals whether healthy or ill can only take a few minutes of work at any one time.

The Heart Sandwich. The application of Cathleen Fanslow-Brunjes “Hand-Heart Connection” offers profound support to the field. Cathleen’s work has been used in Therapeutic Touch treatments for humans in the form of the heart sandwich; the same approach is used with animals.

One or two hands make light body contact near the animal’s heart. The ideal hand placement, one hand on the shoulder and the other on the chest between the front legs, “encompasses the heart.” If necessary, the hand-heart connection may be done with a single hand in contact with the chest area or a front leg.

Energetically, this is a neutral step: energy is not directed into the heart or the field. The heart sandwich is a state of being in which the human acknowledges and celebrates the beauty of the animal. This is a time for thanking the animal for its presence in your life and for all the gifts it has given. (This is not a time for demanding or wishing the animal to be well.) The heart sandwich is an extraordinary opportunity to share a profound sense of peace with the animal friend.

The Heart Sandwich can shift the entire field toward greater integration, wholeness and brightness. I believe that it is one of the most effective steps to support the heart chakra and through that the immune system as well as the respiratory and circulatory systems.

The heart sandwich can be done in a moment or over several minutes. The moment of completion is clear to both animal and person. As a finishing step to the heart sandwich, a gentle clearing of the heart area is useful to dissipate any accidental energy build-up there.

The heart sandwich may be done within the framework of the TT treatment or as a separate piece at any time. A momentary heart sandwich can be done with a light touch on the chest area or shoulder of the animal combined with seeing its beauty for even a few seconds.

The TT Treatment. The Therapeutic Touch treatment for a very ill animal may take one to five minutes; very seldom is it longer than that. Centering, supporting flow through the field by visualising grounding, brightening the field through unruffling, and supporting the heart chakra with the heart sandwich can all be done in this brief period of time.

Additional Work

In addition to basic Therapeutic Touch, I also instruct owners on the use of Linda Tellington-Jones' Tellington Touch for the Ears. Each ear has close to 400 acupressure points that influence all the major systems in the body. Using a firm slip-slide movement on each ear from the base to the tip relaxes a dog, cat, rabbit, guinea pig, etc. as it supports its health. (This work is also applicable to humans.)

The point at the very tip of the animal's ear is for shock; squeezing this a little more as the ears are massaged can bring an animal out of shock quickly in emergency situations. Many vets and vet technicians now work the ears of animals before surgery because it keeps the animal calm while going under and coming out of anaesthetic and it shortens recovery time.

Daily use (or several times a day) of this work on the ears can also increase an animal's comfort and support the healing mechanisms of the body. Daily ear work is very effective for maintaining health in well animals too.

Conclusion

Therapeutic Touch is a simple yet profoundly effective procedure for supporting health and physical comfort in humans and animals. Over the years, I have worked with many extremely ill animals and I find that teaching the owners basic TT and the Heart Sandwich is very helpful. Owners can use the work to help make their animal companions more comfortable, and in many cases to extend their lives for many months, to even over a year.

It is important to recognise that animals come into our lives to help us learn. They do this in many ways: by offering unconditional love and acceptance, by holding peace and love in a home, by mirroring human issues, and by leading their owners into profound learning experiences.

Animals are very clear about the ending of their work with a human in this lifetime. Because it is difficult for humans to let go, animals may use an illness like cancer to give advanced notice of their leaving. Their final weeks, months or year is a transitional gift to the human. The use of Therapeutic Touch during this period not only keeps the animal comfortable, but also helps the owner to accept and honour the animal's leaving.

The challenge for the TT Practitioner is to stay centered, stay in the moment and release attachment to outcome. No one knows whether the animal will survive the illness or not. We do know that by

experiencing the illness, the animal offers gifts of understanding to many humans. Our primary role is to honour the animal and owner.

Addendum

Basic Health Care

Good basic health care means providing wholesome food and water, a healthy environment and good veterinary care. The following recommendations are for both healthy and ill animals.

Food

Ann Martin of London (*Foods Pets Die For*) has done remarkable investigative work on what goes into commercial pet foods and the list is not pleasant. Animal protein comes from dead, diseased, and decayed carcasses of all kinds of animals, including euthanized pets. The chemicals and drugs used to treat or to euthanize do not disappear in the rendering process. Organs where growth hormones and other chemicals lodge are a normal part of commercial dog and cat foods.

Many commercial pet foods are directly implicated in the high incidence of various kinds of cancer and skin ailments (notably flea allergy). Behaviour problems from aggression to extreme shyness and ultra sensitivity to sound may be due to diet too, and are often reduced or eliminated within 6 weeks of changing the animal's diet.

Holistic veterinarians recommend, as I do, that as a bare minimum change, the pet be taken off beef products (because growth hormones are used with cattle) and put on lamb and rice or chicken and rice. In addition, the most common food allergens for dogs, wheat, dairy, and corn products, should be eliminated from the diet of dogs with severe skin allergies and health problems. Ideally, home cooked meals that rely heavily on chicken, rice, vegetables and oatmeal, should be used instead.

For severe allergies and health problems, holistic veterinarian, Dr. Karen Bentley from Guelph, recommends a bowl of oatmeal (without milk) in the morning and a cooked chicken, rice and vegetable (green beans, broccoli, peas, carrots) dinner in the evening. This will improve overall health considerably over a period of months. Some skin conditions can take almost a year to fully clear up.

See Richard H. Pitcairn DVM, *Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats*.

Water

Good quality water is essential to animals' health. Companion animals should not drink chlorinated water because it is implicated in bladder, colon and rectal cancer in humans and animals. As a bare minimum, water should go through a Brita or other kind of filter before being given to dogs and cats.

Environmental Clean-up

Cleaning compounds. Avoid the use of toxic chemicals on animals, in the house and in the yard. Richard H. Pitcairn DVM in his book, *Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats*, lists a wide range of toxic items including common household cleaners with a phenol base (these destroy liver cells upon inhalation). The best cleaning substances are simple soap and water.

Herbicides and Pesticides. Dogs should **NOT** be allowed on grass that has been treated with herbicides because they absorb the residue of these chemicals through the pads of their feet and through inhalation. Seven studies at the University of Guelph implicate 2,4-D herbicides in lymphoma and soft tissue sarcoma in children and animals. Given the growing numbers of these studies, we should be seeing bans on the use of many herbicides before long.

Fleas and other biting insects irritate the skin and cause the animal to scratch. This rubbing and movement of the skin actually support the animal's health by stimulating acupressure points and internal energy flows, as well as increasing blood circulation in the skin (see "Fleas, Flies and Other Helpers"). Animals that are handled all over every day are much less prone to flea infestations than those that receive very little touch. Tellington Touch or massage all over the animal every day is a major health support.

Focusing on things like touch, diet and exercise that support the animal's health is much more effective and safer than continual dousing with chemical shampoos, powders and sprays. When an agent to kill fleas has to be used, safe products are much better than strong chemicals. Ivory soap will kill fleas just as effectively as flea shampoos. Putting a little borax or diatomaceous earth in the vacuum cleaner bag and vacuuming regularly will control fleas. Dusting the animal with these products and brushing the coat out immediately will kill fleas without harming the pet. They act to desiccate insects and the sharp edges of the tiny particles damage insect bodies. Be careful not to get these powders in the animal's eyes.

Smoking. Pets in households where someone smokes are at risk. The cadmium in cigarette smoke depresses the immune system and affects the kidneys (Holistic Veterinarian Dr. Karen Kopinak of Rockwood). Eliminating smoking in the home and near the animal is essential to its health.

Veterinary Treatment

When an animal develops a health problem, the very first step an owner should take is to consult a veterinarian. An increasing number of vets are offering holistic approaches including nutritional counselling, homeopathy, vitamin and herbal supplements. These, combined with standard veterinary assessment and treatment, provide a very effective approach to supporting an animal's well being.

Vaccinations, which were developed to support health, can cause problems if too many are given at once. Many veterinarians now recommend that vaccinations be given singly with three or more weeks between injections. Killed vaccines are safer than live vaccines (Volhard & Brown).

For many years, veterinarians such Richard Pitcairn (1988 & 1998) have expressed concern about over-vaccination. In January 1998, The Academy of Feline Medicine Advisory Panel on Feline Vaccines made the "recommendation that a revaccination interval of 3 years be used for vaccines against feline panleukopenia, feline viral rhinotracheitis and feline calicivirus infection" (*Journal of the American Veterinary Association*, Jan. 15).

Conclusion

Owners can do many things to maintain the health of their animals. Providing good food and water and a safe environment are essential, as well as regular check-ups by a skilled and compassionate veterinarian. Animals give so much to humans; we have a responsibility to provide the best for them in return.

Barbara Janelle. "On Grounding Visualisations." First Published In Touch, Vol. IX, no. 4, November 1997

Barbara Janelle. "On Wholeness." First Published In Touch, Vol. X, no. 1, February 1998

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