

Demonstrating the Efficacy of Animal-Assisted Therapy

Key Terms:

Handler- Trained dog handlers from West Tennessee Therapy Dogs

Participant- Recipient of services from the Exceptional Foundation and participant in the current research study

	Basic Format		
	Day 1		Day 2
Week 1	Rapport-Building, Play	Petting; Ring Around Rosey	Petting; Object Toss
Week 2	Pet Care, Grooming	Brush and Treat	Walk Preparation
Week 3	Language, Commands	Basic Dog Commands	Play Tambourine
Week 4	Safety, Etiquette	Walk Outdoors	Encounter Others

*IMPORTANT: Before each and every activity, handlers demonstrate the activities step-by-step as participants observe.

*Participants and handlers in the control group will interact with the stuffed dog as realistically as possible to mimic a real dog, with the handler and other participants stepping in as needed to manipulate the stuffed dog to perform actions (i.e., tapping tambourine with stuffed animal's paw) or with handlers stepping in to perform actions the stuffed dog cannot perform (i.e., retrieving a toy object). Having the participants step in to manipulate the stuffed dog is encouraged as much as possible for further participation.

Week 1, Day 1:

Theme- Rapport-building, Play

Activities-

2:00-2:10, Activity #1 - Petting:

1. Handlers introduce themselves and the dog to participants
2. Each participant builds individual rapport with the dog by FIRST having the dog sniff participant's hand, then participants pet and talk to the dog

*Handlers stand by to closely supervise these activities, guiding participants and dogs as needed.

2:10-2:20, Activity #2 - Ring Around The Rosey:

1. Participants form a circle, with the handlers and dog standing outside the circle

2. Participants take turns holding the leash as the dog walks outside the circle next to each participant; all walk in a circle singing
“Ring Around the Rosey”
“Ring around the rosey
A pocket full of posies
Ashes, ashes, we all fall DOWN!
3. As participants sing the words, they gently drop to the floor at the word “Down”; handlers assist the dog to sit or lie down in time with participants as needed
4. Participants continue until each participant has had a chance to guide the dog around the circle

*Handlers stand by to closely supervise these activities, guiding participants and dogs as needed.

Week 1, Day 2:

2:00-2:10, Activity #1 – Petting:

1. Participants continue to build rapport by petting and talking to the dog

2:10-2:20, Activity #2 – Object Toss:

1. Participants take turns throwing a toy object to the dog, who then retrieves the object for the participant, handing it back to the participant

*For the control group, the handler will step in to play the part of the stuffed dog in retrieving the toy object.

*Handlers stand by to closely supervise these activities, guiding participants and dogs as needed.

Week 2, Day 1:

Theme- Pet Care, Grooming

Activities-

2:00-2:20, Activity #1 – Brush + Treat:

1. Participants each brush the dog with several strokes of a brush, alternating between different parts of the dog’s body for an even

brushing, using different strokes depending on the area being brushed (i.e., long firm strokes on back fur vs. short, delicate strokes near neck and face)

2. After each participant brushes the dog, the participant gives the dog a small, low-calorie, low-fat treat (i.e., carrots for good dental hygiene and to avoid unwanted weight gain) as a reward for the dog's cooperation; handlers highlight the importance of rewarding with appropriate treats, not overfeeding, giving treat with open hand, etc.

*Handlers stand by to closely supervise these activities, guiding participants and dogs as needed.

Week 2, Day 2:

2:00-2:20, Activity #2 – Walk Preparation → Water + collar and leash:

1. Each participant practices taking a water bowl, filling it with water from a pitcher, and gently setting down in front of the dog; handlers highlight the importance of giving dogs fresh water before walks to avoid dehydration
2. Each participant practices putting the collar on the dog, practicing manual dexterity to adjust the collar as needed to fit safely and comfortably for the dog
3. Each participant practices attaching the leash to the collar, further reinforcing manual dexterity; handlers highlight the importance of keeping dogs securely on a leash before going out in public

*Handlers stand by to closely supervise these activities, guiding participants and dogs as needed.

Week 3, Day 1:

Theme- Language, Commands

Activities-

2:00-2:20, Activity #1 – Learning and practicing basic dog commands:

1. Participants practice giving the following commands to the dog, who responds appropriately to each command: sit, stay, down, stand, and come

*Handlers stand by to closely supervise these activities, guiding participants and dogs as needed.

Week 3, Day 2:

2:00-2:20, Activity #2 – Play Tambourine:

*Participants utilize a similar set of instructions as would be given to have the dog shake hands, except that instead of shaking hands, the dog taps a tambourine.

1. Participants take turns kneeling down in front of the dog, holding a tambourine within easy reach of the dog's paw.
2. Participants each give the shake command to the dog to have the dog "play the tambourine"

*Handlers stand by to closely supervise these activities, guiding participants and dogs as needed.

Week 4, Day 1:

Theme- Safety, Etiquette

Activities-

2:00-2:20, Activity #1 – Walk preparation, going outdoors, walking with dog

1. Participants each practice what they learned in week 2 for walk preparation by giving the dog a bowl of water and putting on leash and collar
2. Participants take brief turns walking the dog around outside.

Week 4, Day 2:

2:40-3:00, Activity #2 – Encountering others on the walk:

1. Participants again take turns walking the dog around outside, but this time they each encounter a person on the path walking another dog
2. Participants then utilize what they observed and learned from the handlers in stepping around the other handler and dog, asking the handler if their dog is friendly to humans and other dogs, cautiously extending their hands for the other dog to sniff once permission from handler is given, and continue on their walk

*Handlers stand by to closely supervise these activities, guiding participants and dogs as needed.