



POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER Factsheet

August 2021

What is animal-assisted psychotherapy?

Animal-assisted psychotherapy is a goal-directed intervention involving an animal as part of the treatment process. It is usually delivered by a health service professional with specialised expertise and is designed to improve mental and physical health. Studies have shown that being around animals can decrease blood pressure, physiological arousal, and cardiopulmonary pressure. It may also improve trauma symptoms.

What is the evidence for animal-assisted psychotherapy?

Moderate to low quality evidence found a large improvement in PTSD, depression, and anxiety symptoms with animal-assisted therapy (pre-post analysis, mostly utilising group sessions with horses). The effect was medium-sized when compared to control conditions. The following factors were associated with largest effects; studies conducted in Australia (rather than the US or Spain), the intervention provider was someone other than a psychologist, psychiatrist, or therapist, interventions with additional in-clinic individual therapy, studies with more women, group interventions, and interventions delivered outside.

For more information see the technical table

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

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NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about PTSD and its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.