

Reviews of the Book, Animal Assisted Play Therapy, by Risë VanFleet & Tracie Faa-Thompson

Please find the reviews of this book at the time of its publication in September 2017 below.

Forewords by **Aubrey H. Fine** and **Patricia McConnell** (not reproduced here).

The following are reviews from highly esteemed leaders in the various fields that are incorporated into Animal Assisted Play Therapy™.

From the back cover:

Animal Assisted Play Therapy presents a comprehensive approach to the inclusion of animals in psychotherapy in general, and play therapy in particular. The book goes beyond describing the inclusion of animals in sessions to describe the nature of the relationship between the animal, the therapist and the client. Extensive attention is paid to the competencies the therapist must have in order to engage in AAPT as well as guidance in selecting and training animals. One of the most unique aspects of the book is the degree to which it focuses on the welfare of the animal as essential to both ethical practice and to the success of any AAPT intervention. The book is engaging and the writers' style is very reader-friendly, making the concepts accessible to those new to the field as well as seasoned practitioners. There are many anecdotes and clinical examples which are both illustrative and clinically useful. The research on the involvement of animals in therapy is well represented and all of the material well referenced. Overall, the book is an excellent resource and a wonderful addition to the literature on a rapidly growing intervention.

--Kevin O'Connor, PhD, ABPP, RPT-S, Cofounder/Director Emeritus, Association for Play Therapy;
Distinguished Professor, CA School of Professional Psychology at Alliant International University

It is difficult to capture in a few words, just how good this book is. This text is a truly extraordinary and compelling synthesis of theory, practice and fundamental principles, written in an easy to understand style, by two authors who clearly have a love for what they do and who want to promote scientific and compassionate practice with animal assisted interventions. The book is essential reading not just for those with an interest in the professional practice of Animal Assisted Play Therapy, but also for anyone more broadly interested in how animals can enrich our lives and wider society. This book will clearly be a classic in its field.

--Prof Daniel S. Mills BVMSc PhD CBiol FRSB FHEA CCAB Dip ECAWBM(BM) FRCVS; European & RCVS Recognised Specialist in Veterinary Behavioural Medicine School of Life Sciences, University of Lincoln, UK

Animal Assisted Play Therapy by Risë VanFleet and Tracie Faa-Thompson is an excellent resource for beginning and advanced practitioners of this approach. It provides the reader with practical knowledge on how to implement therapeutic strategies that consider the welfare of both human and animal participants. The authors' great breadth of experience and expertise is evident in this comprehensive presentation. Their book is a highly valuable contribution to the field of animal-assisted counseling and psychotherapy.

--**Cynthia K. Chandler, EdD, LPC-S, LMFT-S**, Professor of Counseling, University of North Texas; Author of *Animal-Assisted Therapy in Counseling*

***** More praise for *Animal Assisted Play Therapy* (from front pages):*****

Animal Assisted Play Therapy is an encyclopedic and clearly written book that surely will set the standard for many years to come. Weaving in wonderful stories and case studies with available scientific data, Risë VanFleet and Tracie Faa-Thompson have written a comprehensive and wide-ranging volume—a detailed practical guide—that is a must-read for everyone who is involved in any type of animal assisted therapy. It's impossible to cover all of the areas that are discussed in great detail, so here are a few snippets that should whet readers' appetites for learning more about the numerous areas the authors cover. These include recognizing the importance of play for both humans and nonhumans that makes therapy more enjoyable and enriching for all participants, paying very close attention to the animals' point of view and well-being as a voluntary partner in therapy rather than as a non-consenting co-therapist, and being sure there is a good fit in the personalities of the humans and the nonhumans between whom a deep reciprocal partnership is formed. I learned an incredible amount from reading and rereading sections of this landmark book, and it's easy to see how it will remain the significant go-to reference for people practicing animal assisted therapy for many years to come.

–**Marc Bekoff, PhD**, author of *The Emotional Lives of Animals* and *The Animals' Agenda: Freedom, Compassion, and Coexistence in the Human Age*

I can't imagine a more incredibly comprehensive and honest exploration of AAPT. To their huge credit, throughout this book, the authors continually demonstrate the importance of genuinely caring for the well-being and welfare of the animals involved and ensuring that their needs come first. If you want to learn, question and ultimately understand AAPT, I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

–**Ben Hart**, *Hart's Horsemanship*; Author of *The Art and Science of Clicker Training for Horses: A Positive Approach to Training Equines and Understanding Them*

A well-researched text based on the rich experience of two trailblazing professionals. A must-read for therapists and anyone seeking to enlarge their toolbox and horizon in ethical human-animal interaction work. VanFleet and Faa-Thompson have compiled an evidence-based book rich in scope and theory. Most of all it offers best practice advice and step-by-step guidance for therapists looking to integrate animals into their practice. In the growing literature of animal assisted therapy, this one's a game changer.

–**Michael E. Kaufmann**, Director, Green Chimneys Nature Based Programs Sam and Myra Ross Institute; Board of Trustees, Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.)

Professionals in the field of animal-assisted interactions have long sought an experience- and science-based text. This is it. The authors provide comprehensive information across the treatment spectrum, from choosing an animal through working with that partner to the end of that partner's career. The reader is challenged to look closely at his/her own work. Practicing empathy and respect for animals as well as clients is artfully woven into every chapter. This book needs not only to be on the shelf, but also to be read by every human healthcare professional who works with animals.

--**Ann R. Howie, LICSW, ACSW**, author of *Teaming with Your Therapy Dog* Adjunct Professor, University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work CEO, Human-Animal Solutions, PLLC

Dr. Risë VanFleet and Tracie Faa-Thompson have partnered to provide a definitive guide to the implementation of Animal Assisted Play Therapy. Bringing a combined wealth of knowledge and experience with dogs, horses, and human mental health, they provide a scientifically based but practical outline to the field of animal assisted interventions. While providing a good argument for the importance of having sound human clinical skills before adding an animal component to therapy, they also emphasize the well-being of all animals involved. In selecting and training their animal partners to designing interventions that will most benefit their clients, they are always cognizant and respectful of the effect of this work on the animals themselves. In this time of increased interest and recognition of animal assisted therapy, practitioners should look out for the well-being of all who are involved in these complex interactions. It is refreshing to know that there is a good resource that can guide them in this pursuit.

–**Nancy Dreschel, DVM, PhD**, Instructor of Companion Animal Science, Researcher, Pennsylvania State University

This book by the pioneers of Animal Assisted Play Therapy (AAPT) is by far the most comprehensive, detailed, and practical guide for practitioners and students in the field. The wealth of experience of the authors informs every section of this book. It is well-organized, written in a lively, humorous, and readable style and will serve as a unique reference for AAPT for years to come.

–**David A. Crenshaw, PhD, ABPP**; Author and Co-Editor of *Play Therapy: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice* (and others); Clinical Director of Children's Home of Poughkeepsie (NY)

This is a book about reciprocally rewarding relationships between and among therapists, clients, and the very special animals that have become partners in play therapy. It is a seamless blend of personal narratives, case studies, sound advice for mental health professionals, and rigorous scholarly work. From the first chapter that explains how the authors became interested in the human-animal bond all the way to the last chapter on future directions, their insights ring true. Rather than just writing about Animal Assisted Play Therapy, they live it and use it to reach children for whom other interventions frequently have failed. If you are a newcomer to the

field, expect to get a thorough orientation. If you are an experienced play therapist, expect to have your assumptions challenged. These coauthors share impressive credentials, vast experience and considerable wisdom, wit, and candor. They are exceptionally capable guides to the world of Animal Assisted Play Therapy.

–**Mary Renck Jalongo, PhD**, Journal and Book Series Editor, Springer Nature

This book marks an evolutionary leap for the human-animal bond. Our dependence on animals is no less great in the 21st century. It's just that now we need them to feed our soul and save us from enemies within. And they can, but only if we dare to become conscious of just how profound our partnerships can be. Thank you Risë and Tracie for showing us how to lose and find ourselves in play with animals!

–**Meg Daley Olmert**, author of *Made For Each Other: The Biology of the Human-Animal Bond*; Director of Research for Warrior Canine Connection, Inc.

***Animal Assisted Play Therapy** is a rich and valuable resource for both aspiring and experienced AAPT therapists. VanFleet and Faa-Thompson integrate their professionalism in the area of play therapy, deep acquaintance with dogs and horses, and extensive AAPT experience in a way that brings the reader to a multi-level understanding of the field of AAPT, for all its complexities and opportunities it provides for insight and healing. This book differs from many others in that it recognizes the centrality of the client's and therapist's relationships with the animals and their implications for the psychotherapy process. Indeed, the subject of these relationships, together with the subjects of professional training, ethics, and animal welfare, are woven into the chapters throughout the book, showing their critical implications for understanding and implementing AAPT at every level. The authors cover various issues, unique to the field of AAPT, that are imperative for the AAPT therapist to consider. The book also dismantles certain long-standing myths about the field of AAT: AAT is not based on magical process, the animal does not need extensive obedience training, and the animal is not the therapist. The authors of **Animal Assisted Play Therapy** make an important contribution to the development of AAPT as a serious clinical field.*

–**Nancy Parish-Plass**, Chairperson of the Israeli Association of Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy; Animal-Assisted Psychotherapist at the Ahava Emergency Shelter for At-Risk Children; Editor of *Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy: Theory, Issues, and Practice*

This is a hugely important contribution to the field of Animal-Assisted Therapy. In this book VanFleet and Faa-Thompson provide the first comprehensive overview of Animal Assisted Play Therapy through theory to practice, with the importance of relationship and ethics and welfare of the therapy animals being central. This book will be a leader in the field for years to come.

–**Hannah Louise Burgon, PhD**; Founder and Co-Director of Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship; Author of *Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning with At-Risk Young People*; Qualified Social Worker; Founder and Director of Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship in the UK

Risë VanFleet and Tracie Faa-Thompson do a wonderful job in explaining Animal Assisted Play Therapy—including the benefits, the animal-human bond, competencies, how involving dogs in therapy can be empowering for the client, prepping your animal for this job, and so much more! As a Certified Dog Behavior Consultant and trainer who also works with horses on occasion, I've gained new insight from this book. The coverage of why people sometimes unknowingly behave in ways that create stress for their animals and how to help them gain awareness while changing their behavior is particularly helpful for those of us in the animal professions. The similarities of helping therapy clients interact with animals with my own work teaching people to train their dogs were fascinating and affirming of the way I work with my own dog behavior and training clients! The many case examples in the book also offer ideas and directions for animal professionals who wish to assist therapists using AAPT in their work. I was particularly glad to see sections on becoming centered, how being in nature can facilitate therapy, developing respect and proper care for one's animal in therapy, how the therapist-animal team must adjust to the needs of each other, and as part of that and just as important, the need for therapists to be able to properly read the animal for signs of stress. Without reciprocity in this special partnership, all will come to nought. Changing one's human behavior to effect change in the animal is an important cornerstone of a solid relationship—in and out of the therapy. Because my focus is always on the dogs, I especially liked the discussions of competencies needed by therapists as well as choosing the right animal for the job, so this doesn't become simply 'taking my nice little dog to work with me.' It takes a highly skilled person to successfully dovetail both components (animals and therapy) and this book details many of those skills to develop an effective and beneficial program. I enthusiastically encourage anyone who is interested in AAPT and AAT, whether just starting or with many years of experience, to read this well-researched and practical book. It contains many gems of solid wisdom!

–Pamela Dennison, CDBC, author of 5 books and 3 DVDs, including *You Can Train Your Dog: Mastering the Art & Science of Modern Dog Training* and *The R.E.W.A.R.D. Zone for Aggressive & Reactive Dogs*

I recall several years ago listening to a podcast on Animal Assisted Play Therapy (AAPT). Risë VanFleet was sharing about this type of treatment and the ways it could be beneficial for children. As I listened to Risë describe the process of AAPT, I remember thinking what an incredible process this could be for so many children in therapy. Fast forward several years and VanFleet and Faa-Thompson have amassed a comprehensive and thoroughly enjoyable book about AAPT. Not only does this book present a clear definition of AAPT, it is full of case examples, theoretical understanding, practical implementation, research, and a clear unison of animal assisted therapy and play therapy. It is the definitive guide on AAPT. Practitioners will enjoy reading and learning about AAPT and appreciate the level of thoroughness that the authors have mastered in bringing this much-needed treatment to the forefront of therapeutic options.

–Robert Jason Grant, EdD, LPC, RPT-S, CAS; Play and behavioral therapist, author of *Play-Based Interventions for Autism Spectrum Disorder and Other Developmental Disabilities*, and creator of AutPlay Therapy (a play and behavioral therapy for neurodevelopmental disorders)

Highly recommended to AAPT practitioners and to parents of children involved with AAPT, so they can participate more fully in the therapy. Also, I'd strongly recommend it to practitioners who have 'office pets' who may double as informal 'therapy animals,' since the book gives excellent tips on liability, choosing the proper animal and setting, and avoiding 'bad outcomes.'

–Merijeanne Moore, DO, Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association; Past President of the Alaska Psychiatric Association; 30 years in practice, including the Air Force Medical Corps and private and public inpatient adolescent and adult psychiatry

*In their new book, **Animal Assisted Play Therapy**, Risë VanFleet and Tracie Faa-Thompson have created the definitive and comprehensive resource for anyone involved in the field. This book provides an enjoyable and easy-to-read overview of the core principles and processes of AAPT (Animal Assisted Play Therapy). It also offers in-depth information on the theoretical foundations, history, and considerations for practitioners, including the identification and standards for practitioner competencies, both for therapy/clinical skills and in terms of animal handling and knowledge of animal behavior. By presenting a general outline for those new to the field and also diving deep into specifics, VanFleet and Faa-Thompson have delivered the first must-have book for those involved in AAPT. The book provides valuable information for those just getting started in AAPT or Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI) as it identifies training and preparations needed before getting started in this work and first steps and considerations when one begins to involve animals in the therapeutic process. There is also much here for current practitioners who may wish to evaluate an existing program to both assess and improve those programs. Regardless of the reason you pick up this book, from the opening quote ('Even the expert was once a beginner') to a discussion of the needs for specific further research and the issue of credentialing, you will gain a better understanding of how all of the elements of AAPT interrelate. The authors share personal stories and case studies to show the importance of mutually respectful relationships as practitioners work in partnership with animals and the development of the AAPT specialty practice area. The authors are credentialed mental health professionals as well as having credentials as play therapists. Their passion for their work, their clients, and their high regard for animals and the roles animals play in all of our lives is very clear. If you have an interest in this field, and wish to, as the authors describe 'explore fun, exciting, and novel ways to help our clients with these animals with whom we live, work, and play' this book will expand your knowledge and provide a great ongoing reference source.*

–Cathy Reisfield, Founder, Head Trainer and Parent Educator at Dependable Dogs®, specializing in training, education and support services for individuals and families who share their homes with dogs.

VanFleet & Faa-Thompson are pioneers in the field of Animal Assisted Play Therapy (AAPT). Many healthcare and human service providers are interested in the inclusion of animals in practice, and this book offers critical information and considerations for both novice and experienced practitioners of any discipline. The authors discuss the foundations, principles, theory, and competencies for AAPT and take on the more challenging topics that must be considered before including AAPT in practice. This is one of the few books that

discusses the professional issues, ethics, and welfare as it directly applies to AAPT. Both authors are well rounded and respected in their field for work with humans, and for their continuing education and qualifications to humanely and respectfully work with animals, and to teach workshops on this topic. This book is an important addition to every practitioner's library who has an interest in animal assisted therapy, and a must-have to fulfill the required competencies for practice in this specialty area.

–**Melissa Winkle, OTR/L, FAOTA**; President, Dogwood Therapy Services and Animal Assisted Intervention International; Editor and author of the book series *Professional Applications of Animal Assisted Interventions*

***Animal Assisted Play Therapy** by Risë VanFleet and Tracie Faa-Thompson offers an illuminating new resource in the field of the therapeutic inclusion of animals. This powerful and comprehensive new text offers practitioners a substantive and instructive new look at the role of canines and equines as partners in play therapy. I've had the opportunity to lead the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work program and each year carefully review the emerging sources of new knowledge available to teach our graduate programs focused on animal assisted social work. Risë VanFleet and Tracie Faa-Thompson represent two of our most experienced and professional colleagues. This new offering will be added to the important sources of information and best practice for those professionals incorporating animals in their clinical practice. Attention to understanding and partnering with the specific animals, thoughtfully presented case examples with attention to applied ethics, safety, animal well-being and evidence-oriented goals make this book an important contribution to understanding and optimizing the power of the human-animal connection. This book is destined to become an important part of our field's core training competencies and a showcase for the many benefits and potential offered by Animal Assisted Play Therapy.*

–**Philip Tedeschi**, Executive Director, Institute for Human-Animal Connection; Clinical Professor, University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work