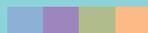




Treating the Whole Animal

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Creating Your Animal Companion's Healing Team



Why A Healing Team is Important

Injury or illness is often the result of an imbalance in an animal's physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual being. For example, stress or anxiety (mental) can lead to depression (mental and emotional), which can lead to fatigue (physical), which can lead to lack of appetite (physical), which can lead to a pulled muscle (physical). If we treat only the physical, we have not restored full health. We must also treat the mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the illness, or the animal will continue to become ill or injured. Therefore, a team of practitioners that heals on all levels is important to have on hand for preventive and responsive care.



Getting Started

Getting started is easy, beginning with your veterinarian. Have a frank conversation about your wishes to include deep healing and preventive care through the addition of holistic methods. See if your veterinarian offers or makes referrals for this type of care. If your veterinarian isn't open to a holistic approach, find one who is. The American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association (www.theahvma.org) and other holistic groups are great places to find compatible veterinarians.

Holistic medicine takes the perspective of treating the whole animal. Even if there is a current physical problem, such as diarrhea or itching, good holistic veterinarians will ask questions about past problems, any changes in the household or the environment



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that may have triggered the current complaint, and if there is anything that makes the current issue better or worse. Their goals are to make the animals healthier for life, not just to get rid of the current symptoms. They will educate you and explain what they see when physically examining your animal.

Integrative veterinarians may actually practice some holistic methods, including acupuncture, herbs, flower essences, homeopathy, chiropractic,

network chiropractic, nutrition, glandulars, Reiki, Tellington touch, healing touch, and long-distance healing modalities. Some individuals are wonderful with your animal, while others are great at explaining to you what is happening

with your animal. A few are good in both areas. Your animal should be comfortable with your choice, and you should be able to have your questions and concerns addressed.

After consulting the right holistic veterinarian for you and your animal companion, identify the types of care that are offered and identify the healing qualities. Inquire into the training and experience in each specialty offered. Veterinarians, chiropractors, and acupuncturists can be certified



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in homeopathy, botanical medicine, chiropractic, and TCVM. This is your opportunity to interview and become educated about the treatment options available. You may decide to move totally to a holistic veterinarian or to have both conventional and holistic veterinarians as the core of your healing team.



Deciding Who Else to Add to the Team

It's now time to look at other practitioners, depending on the gaps in the holistic care of your animal (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual) and your animal's individual needs. Start by identifying if there are any physical issues with your animal that are not addressed by your team. For example, performance animals (show dogs, show horses, etc.) may need an animal massage therapist or chiropractor for preventive care or to address issues that come up because of their intense exercise. To find the right massage practitioner, consult those who are certified by the National Board of Certification for Animal Acupressure and Massage (<http://www.nbcaam.org>).

It's always great to have an energy healing practitioner who can round out the mental, emotional, and spiritual healing. Some wonderful energy healing practices include Reiki, healing touch, Tellington touch, flower essences, sound healing, and color therapy. Finding a practitioner of these therapies is more challenging, as many of these fields of practice are not regulated. In Maryland, the Animal Reiki Alliance has a list of approved Reiki practitioners and offers certification in the practice of Animal Reiki (www.animalreikialliance.com).

A nutritionist is also important to have on the team. There's an old adage, "You are what you eat," and that rings true in today's environment. Balanced, species-appropriate nutrition is the cornerstone and foundation to overall wellness. Proper nutrition serves to support the animal's overall wellness and health, and is a therapy in its own right. It allows the body to heal by being able to properly digest and take in nourishment and nutrients. A nutritionist can help guide you and create an integrative plan to support your animal's health.

Other methods to consider for your team include acupuncture, acupressure, aromatherapy, cold laser therapy, and cranial sacral therapy, among many others. You are also a critical member of the team and can be trained in many of the modalities mentioned: Reiki,

flower essences, animal massage, and acupressure, among others. The more healing you can offer your own animal and yourself, the healthier your entire household will be.



Managing the Team

You are the team manager and responsible for ensuring the right members are working together. Observing the animal's receptivity and response to each practitioner is critical, as is documenting and tracking each session and sharing this information with your veterinarian. Document how the animal responds to a particular treatment – if it is a cure, of temporary help, of no response, or it depends on the illness (often with apparent relief of symptoms). Keeping a journal with a list of treatments, symptoms, and changes after treatment is key to understanding your animal's total healing process. As the team manager, you may also remove or add practitioners at any time to serve your animal's healing needs.

The goal of a healing team is to have practitioners whom you trust for treating your animal at all levels – physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Holistic treatments are not necessarily weekly treatments or expensive. It is more expensive to need surgery or drugs than to prevent problems before they happen. It's also less expensive to begin treatment with more gentle therapies that may provide the necessary healing than jumping in with drugs or surgery that can possibly also cause harm. 🐾

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