

ODJA – June 2024 Wellness Message from Tania Perlin

Hello everyone,
I hope that you are enjoying the start to the warm weather and summer.

In this wellness message I wanted to focus on my favorite subject; animals.

I know that many of you have pets and are great animal lovers.

I have been told by numerous friends and colleagues that they enjoy the company of their furry companion more than people.

It's sad to say but at times it is true.

The overwhelming amount of work, daily responsibilities and just life in general, makes us feel tired and spent. Being with animals provides an oasis where we can be ourselves, relax and be with a living being that is completely non-judgmental and accepting.

In our profession we see a great deal of pain, stress and anguish. By nature we are all individuals who are "helpers". That is why we do what we do... we want to alleviate the pain in this world by helping our clients deal with difficult life problems.

As Deputy Judges, we lead with humanity. We do our best to ensure that litigants do not have to experience the extra stress of being before a judge who is not compassionate to the difficulties of going through the legal process.

We mostly work with people who are angry, argumentative, in emotional/physical pain and are just not happy to be before us. This type of environment permeates our very being and eventually puts us out of balance.

Animals are sensitive to the smallest variation in our mood, speech, and even facial expression. However, unlike humans, they do not get depleted by these negative energies. In fact, somehow, they can transmute them and create positive effects on their human companions.

After a long day, I love to hug my dogs. I feel an immediate release of tension and I am flooded with waves of relaxation and calm.

One day, I hope that science will be able to bottle this beautiful animal formula of changing negative energy to positive, allowing us to refresh and recharge whenever we want.

However, until that day comes, here are some suggestions to manage stress with animal therapy.

1. If possible, have your fur baby with you at work. My little dog has a bed beside my desk. All I need is to look at him and I feel instantly happy and refreshed.

2. During breaks, hug your fur baby. This will release serotonin, the "feel good" chemical produced by the body. (Little known fact: 90% of serotonin is found in the cells lining the gastrointestinal tract, and released into the bloodstream. Only 10% is produced in the brain).

3. Take the cue from our animal friends and connect to your body instinctually. That means, going inwards and figuring out what feels good.

Many people function from the neck up. We think, analyze, reason, debate. However we rarely FEEL things. Feeling requires sitting in a quiet space, taking a few deep breaths (diaphragm breathing we discussed in earlier wellness messages), and then naming your feelings. This is not the time to figure out WHY you feel something, but rather WHAT you feel.

For example, you may find that you feel sad, anxious, jittery, angry, frustrated etc... A good way to connect to your feelings is using an emotions chart that will help you label the feeling.

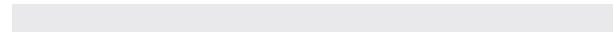
Once you can identify what you are feeling, allow it to pass through your body without judging it or figuring out how to resolve it. The practice is not to make the feeling go away, but rather to sit with it, and allow it to dissipate on its own.

Scientists have found that it takes 90 seconds for the feeling to dissolve on its own. The reason we may feel things longer is because we start figuring out how to make it go away so we can reduce our discomfort.

We may try to numb the feelings, by scrolling on the phone, watching tv, drinking alcohol, taking medication, working long hours, etc... However if we just identify the feeling and let it go on its own, then in 90 seconds it has passed through the body and we have become a bit lighter.

Below is a link to a very simple emotions chart that I found on amazon, in case you want to try this exercise.

It does require consistent practice, but after a while, you will be able to identify your feelings in a few seconds and allow them to dissipate before they become aging fires.


[Amazon.com: uoyien Feelings Chart For kids Mental Health Posters ...](#)
[app.goo.gl](#)

4. Animal therapy does not have to be with cats or dogs. It can be as simple as watching fish swim in a fish tank or aquarium. Studies have shown that this activity reduces anxiety, creates a calming effect on the nervous system and lowers blood pressure.

This is the simplest way of relaxing as you don't need to get a real aquarium. Just turn on your tube or your cable provider and you can choose an aquarium that you like and can watch at your leisure. On a similar note, various studies have shown that there is a link between watching cute animal videos and stress reduction.

The only caveat is that you don't decide to read emails and scroll social media while looking at the animal videos.

So whether you have a real life pet at home, or prefer to watch them on the screen, take a few minutes several times per day to disconnect from thinking and relax into just being. Please send some pictures of your pet "therapists". I am certain we will all benefit from the smiles they bring.

All the best and happy summer from your wellness/mental health committee.

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