

*Innovative Initiatives in research, Health Care and Education: The role of AAI in relation to the human-animal-bond.* Inaugural speech MJ Enders-Slegers, 6th December 2013 Heerlen the Netherlands.

Abstract

Title: *Is an inclusion of a natural setting, horses and dogs, beneficial for a client in psychodynamic psychotherapy?*

We introduce a psychodynamic psychotherapy model, Equestrian Focal Psychodynamic Psychotherapy (EFPP), in which a natural setting, dogs and horses are included. The general aim is to acquire more insight in the added value of the inclusion of these properties. In conventional psychodynamic psychotherapy the forming of an intersubjective relationship between patient and therapist is essential. We hypothesize that EFPP facilitates the forming of this intersubjective relationship easier and provides for a more optimal treatment, especially for patients whose problems arise from insecure attachment representations.

We present a theoretical framework that incorporates a coupling of human-animal bond theories with psychotherapy theories aimed at attachment concepts.

Additionally we present results of conducted studies on EFPP. These results provide for further research questions on how change is acquired for patients in mental health care who underwent EFPP treatment. In alignment of these questions we will focus on the non-verbal interaction between animal and patient.

Through mixed-method designs, complementary phenomena can be investigated and thus provide stronger evidence for the applicability of EFPP by convergence and the confirmation of the different findings.