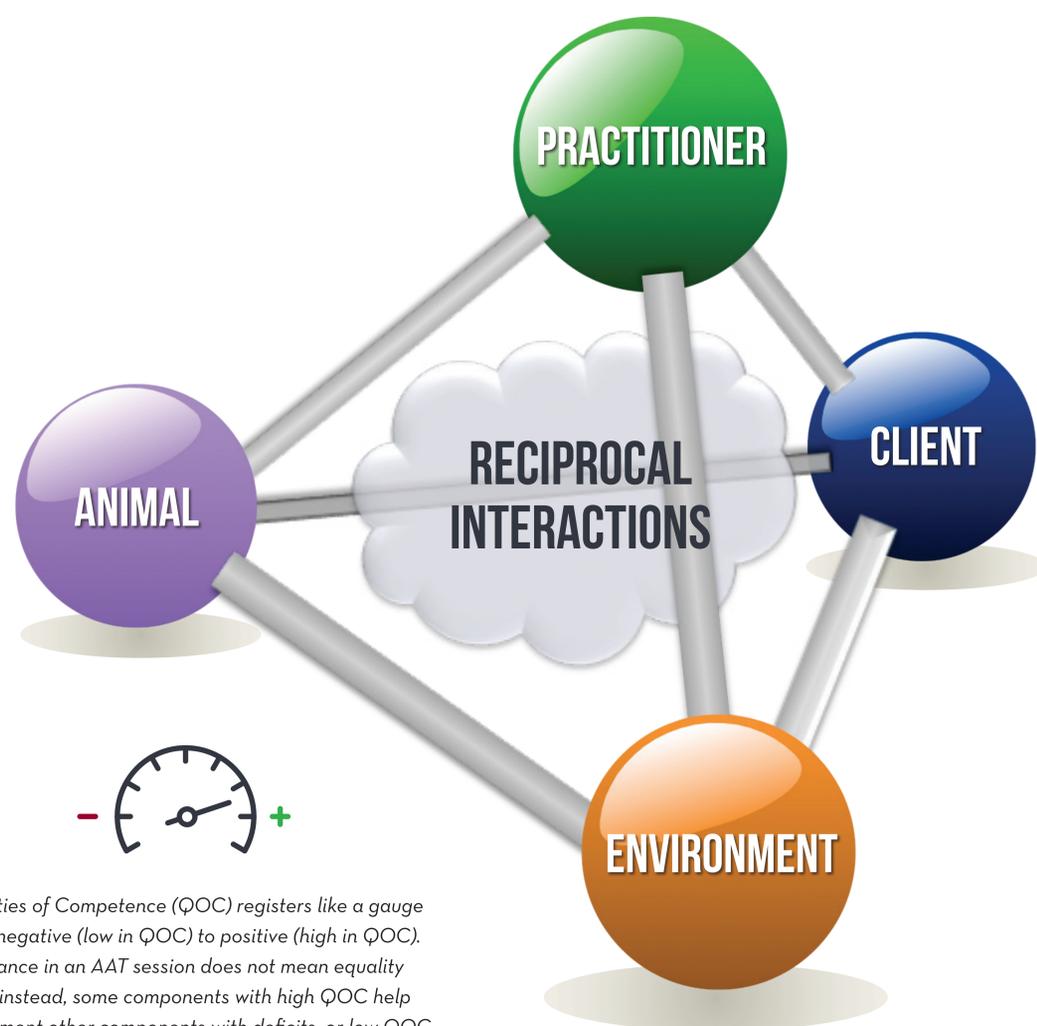


The PACE Model of Animal-Assisted Therapy: A Process to Design and Implement Sound Clinical Practice

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The PACE Model™ of Animal-Assisted Therapy



Qualities of Competence (QOC) registers like a gauge from negative (low in QOC) to positive (high in QOC). Balance in an AAT session does not mean equality and instead, some components with high QOC help complement other components with deficits, or low QOC.

The application of animal-assisted therapy* (AAT) continues to demonstrate a multitude of positive effects and outcomes within the emotional, social, cognitive, physical, and spiritual realms of human wellbeing. The PACE Model™ for AAT provides a framework that can be used to assess rigor, goals and objectives, risk management, and precautions in each AAT session, and is an illustration of the ever-changing, dynamic relationship that happens during AAT sessions. Together, these four components set the pace for AAT sessions and include the following:

Practitioner:

The identified person(s) who plans, leads, and holds responsibility for the AAT sessions. Depending on the overall needs of the identified client, animal, and environment, individuals providing AAT sessions may include more than one person and more than one professional discipline.

Client:

The identified person(s) who is receiving AAT services and may also be listed as a participant, student, members of a group, family, or individual. All sessions start and end with the client in mind. The client has tremendous leverage in changing the reciprocal interaction of the PACE Model™ for AAT.

Animal:

The identified animal(s) assisting in facilitating AAT services. One size does not fit all; therefore, best practices call for the “identified animal” to have specific training and temperament suited for the goals and objectives of each AAT session. Occasionally, ad hoc animals that are not trained will become part of the AAT session when observing the larger milieu of a session.

Environment:

The identified location where AAT services are held, as well as the greater environmental milieu. Examples of “identified locations” may be a horse stall, training center, hospital room, chicken coop, or therapy office. The larger milieu of these areas include the natural world – both indoors and outside – in which these locations exist.

The merits of the four PACE components must be considered individually and together as they create a reciprocal and evolving relationship unique to each session. Furthermore, each component in the model brings a level of skill and capacity to each AAT session called Quality of Competence (QOC) (see description to the left). AAT sessions are strengthened or limited by the QOC and synergy of all four components; it requires both art and science to combine them and create an effective therapeutic experience.

Ultimately, using the PACE Model™ seeks to maintain balance and the integrity of the session for all participants. The application of the PACE Model™ in all AAT sessions provides practitioners and administrators with a checks and balances tool for effective and efficient oversight of the design, implementation, and evaluation of AAT sessions.

Conclusion: Remember the PACE of your work for best results.

*Although listed as Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT), additional terms of Animal-Assisted Interactions/Interventions (AAI) are included with the understanding of the nuances in the practice of these terms.