



**dreamcatcher™**  
nature assisted therapy

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### **What to Expect When You Come to Dreamcatcher™**

- Please drive SLOWLY when you enter the property and watch for pedestrians and animals on the driveway and in the parking lot.
- Please do not bring your pets to Dreamcatcher™.
- Upon arrival, please check in with Admin inside the white office. Visitors are welcome to relax in our indoor waiting room, on the front deck, in their vehicle or at the blue bench once they have checked in, but for safety and confidentiality, please do not wander the property or approach any animals or other visitors.
- Please not idle your vehicle while on the Dreamcatcher™ property due to the adverse effects the exhaust has on our animals, visitors, and environment. If you must idle your vehicle, please park with the rear of the vehicle facing the tree line.
- Your therapist will meet you as close to the start of the appointment time as possible. Please be aware that sometimes inevitable situations occur and your therapist may be running a little late. This is rare and not a common practice at Dreamcatcher™.
- Therapy sessions are scheduled for 50 minutes, allowing therapists to properly document notes regarding their previous session before the next client arrives.
- For the safety and security of the client, we ask all adults to wait on site for the duration of their dependent's appointment. In some situations, caregivers are able to leave site while their dependent is in session, however; this requires discussion with the therapist beforehand.
- You may request, at any time, to be in your dependent's therapy session. This may be granted at your therapist's discretion.
- There is a washroom located inside the office to the right of the client entrance and an outhouse located at the end of the parking lot. Please access either washroom at any time.
- Methods for payment are cash, cheque, email money transfer, Visa, Mastercard, and fees are due at the beginning of each session. Please see the administrative staff next to the office entrance to make payments and to book or reschedule any appointments.
- Please ensure your dependent is properly equipped for the weather! Snow boots, ski pants, mitts and toques are recommended in the winter. Rubber boots are best in spring as areas around the farm can get quite muddy when it rains! Shorts, t-shirts, hats, and sunscreen are advised in the summer. All participants are required to wear closed-toed shoes when working with the animals and no jewelry please.

### **How do Dreamcatcher™ Programs Work?**

**WHO are we?** We are a team of Registered and Provisional Psychologists, Clinical and Registered Social Workers, Mental Health Counsellors, Psychotherapists, and Practicum Therapists skilled in providing a variety of therapeutic and counseling techniques to help you or your loved one.

**WHO usually attends our program?** Our program is open to everyone who may be experiencing challenges in their lives. We work with people of all ages and from all walks of life and are well known for helping people of all ages who have trouble getting help. This might be due to:

- No success to date in alternate forms of counselling
- A previous negative experience with therapy or counselling
- Not having the skills to do traditional talk therapy or counselling
- Having difficulty forming relationships
- Having organic impairment, complex issues, developmental delays, or disabilities

**WHAT mediums of therapy do we use?** The best therapeutic medium is chosen based on your or your loved ones' interests and therapeutic goals. Mediums may change from session to session based on treatment goals. These mediums include:

- Animal Assisted Therapy, Equine Facilitated Counselling, Nature Assisted Therapy
- EMDR, ART, CBT, DBT, Play or Sand Tray Therapy, Narrative Therapy
- Art Therapy, Music Therapy, Traditional talk therapy
- and more

**All therapeutic modalities are person-centered and solution focused.**

**HOW long does it take for people to “get better?”** This depends entirely on the individual person, as well as the nature and severity of the issues they are facing. Treatment is individualized and every client will respond differently. For those who have had negative therapeutic experiences or who have complex therapeutic issues, the process can take much longer. Successful change within the populations of people we work with typically occurs within 6 months to 2 years. It is important for sessions to be consistent and continuous.

**WHAT is your responsibility in the process?** Sometimes therapists will provide the client with “therapeutic homework.” It is imperative for the client to practice what they are learning with this homework in their home, work, or school settings as recommended by the therapist. Whether the client is an adult or minor, some therapeutic sessions may involve the client’s family members or caregivers. If the person in therapy is a minor or a person with disabilities, it is often necessary for caregivers to update the therapist on how things are going in the person’s life either through scheduled consultation in between sessions or in the actual sessions. These requirements will be discussed with you by your therapist.

### **How Animal-Assisted Therapy Works**

**HOW it helps?** Animals help to break the ice by acting as a social buffer, allowing clients to connect with the animals and build a trusting relationship with both the animal and therapist. Animals provide unconditional love and acceptance, and through this interaction clients can overcome obstacles and learn to communicate in new, exciting ways. Working with animals has proven to be a powerful motivator that fosters personal growth.

**WHICH animals do we work with?** Dreamcatcher™ works with a variety of animal species that are actively involved in our Animal Assisted Services (AAS) program, including horses, donkeys, sheep, goats, chickens, fish, dogs, and cats. All Dreamcatcher™ animals have been properly screened, trained, and certified to work in practice.

**WHAT to expect when working with therapy animals?** If the client has chosen to work with animals, the first session will involve a meet and greet with the animals to get to know them, learn about them, discuss client goals, and begin to build a treatment plan. Choosing the animal to work with is important and while clients may want to work with a specific animal, the therapist may need to match the animal that is most suitable for meeting the client’s goals or to maintain safety. It might mean learning to build necessary skills before working with that animal. In most cases, the therapy session will involve only the client, therapist, and animal; however, there may be times where a trained and qualified animal handler may be present during the session with prior consent from the client or client’s guardian. There also may be times where an animal is unavailable for session. This may be because the animal is already being worked with, has just worked in a previous session and needs to rest, is feeling unwell, or they may not be feeling up to working. Dreamcatcher™ animals will remain in their pens, coops, and pastures unless they are being worked with in another location such as the barn.

**HOW does Canine-Assisted Therapy work?** We currently have two therapy dogs in the program, Sir Fable and Randy. These dogs are not owned by Dreamcatcher™, rather they are owned by the therapists that handle them. Each handler and their therapy dog have completed the proper screening, training, and certification steps. Only client’s who work with these therapists can participate in canine-assisted therapy as part of their treatment plan. The same procedure applies to working with therapy dogs as with other Dreamcatcher™ animals: a meet and greet will occur and a treatment plan that involves the therapy dog will be discussed.

**WHERE do the therapy dogs stay while on-site?** When the therapy dogs are not in session or with their handler, they remain in the therapist’s office with the door closed and a sign indicating their presence. When a session is occurring in the office and the dogs are not being worked with, or if the client is comfortable with them, they may lay in their beds freely. When they are outside, they are always leashed unless they are being worked with and engaged in an activity that requires them to be off leash or for training and socialization purposes. Our therapy dogs go outside periodically for bathroom breaks, to play, or while in session. Dogs will not interact with other clients or visitors unless consent is given and the dog is not in session.

**WHAT if a client is afraid of dogs?** If a client is afraid of dogs, the therapist will work with the client to come up with a plan to ensure the client feels safe and comfortable. This might mean not interacting with the dog, finding another space to work in, or with notice, the therapist can leave their dog at home. Or, if the client is interested, they can work on getting to know the dog from a distance.

**HOW do you maintain animal ethics?** For animal welfare, animals have 5 basic freedoms: *Freedom from thirst, hunger, and malnutrition; freedom from discomfort; freedom from pain, injury, or disease; freedom from fear and distress; and freedom to express most normal behaviour.* Our therapists and handlers are trained to recognize and respond to the stress signals of the animals they work with while they are interacting within their environment, with people, and with other animals. Our top priority is the safety, wellbeing, and ethical care of our animals and for those interacting with them. Dreamcatcher™ has policies and procedures in place to ensure our therapy animals are not overworked, are given adequate time to rest between each session, and have designated days off from work to rejuvenate. Our animals have a team of staff and volunteers that take care of them everyday by ensuring that they have access to food and water, that their environments are clean, and they are monitored for injuries and other health concerns. All Dreamcatcher™ animals and therapy dogs receive veterinary care regularly, are dewormed and vaccinated annually, and have other professionals such as farriers, sheep shearers, equine masseuses, and nutritionists visit regularly or as needed.