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Overview of Dogs Training Programs in Correctional Institutions

Обзор программ ресоциализации
с участием собак в пенитенциарных
учреждениях

Абстракт

Положительные мнения о влиянии присутствия животных и отношений с ними на людей стали основной причиной внедрения программ ресоциализации с участием животных. Такие программы реализуются в домах престарелых, в рамках трудотерапии для людей с инвалидностью, а также и в тюрьмах, поскольку они имеют социально-ресоциализирующий характер. Цель программ состоит в том, чтобы поддержать заключенных в развитии их социальных и психологических навыков, таких как усиление эмпатии, ответственность, эффективное общение и терпение. Участники этих программ оценивают их положительно, указывая на субъективное ощущение развития положительных эмоций. В статье автор представляет краткий исторический обзор использования отношений с животными для улучшения психосоциального состояния людей, описывает преимущества таких программ и их важность и роль в пенитенциарных учреждениях.

Ключевые слова: собаки, ресоциализация, тюрьма, пенитенциарные учреждения

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Abstract

Positive opinions about impact that relations with animals have on participating humans were the main reason for introducing animal-based resocialization programs in correctional institutions. As a form of occupational therapy, they aim at increasing and improving social and psychological skills of imprisoned individuals. They aim at creating and increasing empathy, improving communication and its effectiveness, building sense of responsibility and patience. Participants of such programs underline the positive impact on their well-being and subjective sense of wellness. In this text, I present the short history of using relations with animals in improving psychological and social competencies of humans. I also discuss the positive effects that such programs have on the effectiveness of correctional institutions.

Keywords: dogs, resocialization, prison, correctional institutions

Social Skills and Human Nature

The social nature of humans has been proven by psychological as well as biological research. This research demonstrates the strength and importance of social contacts in proper (meaning-functional) human development and in everyday life. The need for social contacts is shaped by individual subject's predispositions and it is also structured by cultural factors, but with no doubt, it requires certain level of social skills. Some of them are genetically inherited, but some are shaped by socialization processes.¹ Such skills are the repertoire of verbal and nonverbal behaviors in the context of a personal repertoire that works as a mechanism by which people affect their environment through achieving results and eliminating or avoiding undesirable outcomes in the social context.² Among those skills are: communication, listening, observation, interpretation, as well as the ability to keep a promise, liability and empathy.

The development of social skills is based on primary socialization, followed by secondary socialization at educational institutions and own activities of the person. For convicted individuals, the development of social skills has failed at some stage due to various reasons (such as early education neglect, lack of proper care and attention in childhood as well as lack of adequate role models in early childhood or strong negative impact of peer's influence in adolescence, and in some cases also health problems resulting in behavioral inadequacy). This lack of properly developed social skills leads to crime commitment and penalty, which, in severe cases, includes imprisonment.

Penitentiary Systems: Focus on Punishment and Focus on Readaptation

At the turn of 18th and 19th centuries, two parallel penitentiary systems based on European models, Auburn State Prison system (prison located in Auburn, New York) and Pennsylvania system³ were developed in the United States. Auburn model was based on silence, corporal punishment and group labor supported by pray-

¹ Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: Harper Collins, 1998).

² Owen Hargie, ed., *The Handbook of Communication Skills* (London: Routledge, 1984).

³ Judith Ryder, "Auburn State Prison," in *Encyclopedia of Crime and Punishment*, ed. David Levinson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2002), 84–86.

ers. In terms of architecture and management it became a model copied throughout the United States. It used congregated cells. Only in 1821, the idea of solitary cells was adopted from the Pennsylvania model, which promoted isolation of prisoners from the society and themselves. Both systems were widely criticized, which resulted in the formation of the progressive model of correctional institution.⁴ This model provided some form of control to prisoners themselves—those who followed the rules and adjusted their behavior to expectations and thus were able to shorten their sentences. 19th century followed the ideas of Voltaire i Cesare Beccaria, strengthening the mode of thinking, according to which correctional institutions' task was to enable prisoners' effective comeback to social life.⁵ The leaders of the reformatory movement supported different ideas of correctional institutions, promoting the classification and segregation of various types of prisoners and their individual treatment. They argued for an access to vocational education, employment, indeterminate sentences and previously mentioned rewards for good behavior, as well as conditional releases.

Correctional facilities serve the controlling function in the society and relocate problematic behaviors outside of the society. This, however, is not a satisfactory solution—the real challenge is to bring back to social life persons who are released from prison. The contrast between correctional institution's routine and everyday life outside of penitentiary system creates serious demands, therefore proper preparation should take place in advance. In order to meet this goal, resocialization programs are run in many of the facilities.

In numerous countries,⁶ penitentiary system is based on punishment, which means isolation and deprivation of social needs. The prisoners isolated in designated areas are excluded from socio-cultural environment and forced to live in artificially structured and managed institutions of totalitarian character.⁷ Such a limitation of freedom and free will is meant as a punishment. But it also creates situation of an even stronger than before punishment disability in social skills, as prisoners see neither the need for responsible behaviors nor the need to take care of themselves (the institution satisfies all their needs) or anybody else (there is nobody to take care of). Punishment by imprisonment poses a serious question as to how the

⁴ Andrew Coyle, *The Prisons We Deserve* (London: Harper Collins, 1994).

⁵ Todd R. Clear, Dina R. Rose, and Judith A. Ryder, "Incarceration and the Community: The Problem of Removing and Returning Offenders," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 47 no. 3 (2011): 335–351; Paweł Moczydłowski, "Sociologist as a Social Designer: Prison System Reform in Central Asia: Kirghizstan Pilot Project," *Prace Instytutu Stosowanych Nauk Społecznych*, no. 5 (2003): 241–270.

⁶ Paweł Moczydłowski, *The Hidden Life of Polish Prisons* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1992).

⁷ Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Doubleday, 1961).

direct consequences of such procedures contribute to prospective “improvement” of socially adequate behaviors demonstrated by prisoner.

Punishment reflects one way of thinking about prisons.⁸ Another perspective is set by the goal which is defined as the return of the prisoner to the society. This perspective sets different types of tasks for correctional institutions: they are meant to teach their inmates how to develop socially accepted behaviors. This, however, is obviously *an aporia* in the situation of isolation from the society, meaning that it is very difficult to be able to re-educate in the area of social skills without the social context provided for training: “In fact, it was unrealistic to believe that rehabilitation was possible in an environment chock full of society’s most flagrant, violent, and repeat offenders. Prison is the worst possible environment to attempt lasting moral or social reforms.”⁹ In some countries the resocialization programs that are offered to imprisoned persons stay in obvious contradiction with their theoretically designed goals. The most dubious form of resocialization is one of the labor options offered to prisoners in Polish correctional institutions—in some prisons the inmates perform labor duties in slaughterhouses and other meat production facilities. Rabizo¹⁰ describes this type of penal work as a clear form of exploitation: not only of animals but also of humans. Involving in such types of activities should be completely prohibited, judging its possible impact on prisoners’ social skills: empathy and ethics.¹¹ The need of developing and improving social skills for those remaining in correctional institutions is important and urgent, especially because jailed persons lose contact with the reality outside of the prison.

Therapeutic Role of Human-Animal Bond

This gap between institutionalized life and life in freedom can be filled by resocialization programs using animals, especially dogs. Therefore, some of resocialization programs conducted in prisons use the presence of animals. Resocialization pro-

⁸ Andrew Coyle, *Understanding Prisons. Key Issues in Policy and Practice* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2005); Michael Adler and Brian Longhurst, *Discourse, Power and Justice: Towards a New Sociology of Imprisonment* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁹ Paul J. Larkin, “Death Row Dogs, Hard Time Prisoners, and Creative Rehabilitation Strategies: Prisoner-Dog Training Programs,” *Catholic University Law Review* 66, no. 3 (2017): 549. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://scholarship.law.edu/lawreview/vol66/iss3/7>.

¹⁰ Ilona Rabizo, *W kieracie ubojni* (Poznań: Oficyna Wydawnicza Bractwa Trojka, 2018).

¹¹ Amy J. Fitzgerald, Linda Kalof, and Thomas Dietz, “Slaughterhouses and Increased Crime Rates. An Empirical Analysis of the Spillover from “The Jungle” into the Surrounding Community,” *Organization & Environment* 22, no. 2 (2009): 158–184.

grams with animals are a specific type of ecological programs which are conducted also in order to teach professional skills to the prisoners for future employment.¹² Many authors underline valuable meaning of social bonds created in relations between humans and animals.¹³ This may have a profound impact on reeducating prisoners to live in the society and prepare them to function in human social context. In such situation, the presence of animals can be used as a powerful tool.

The history of using animals in various forms of therapies providing psychological support in addition to classical medical treatment is quite long and reaches the 19th century. Out of the British mental institutions where presence of animals was introduced as supportive element in healing process, the first to be mentioned as using animals in therapies supporting classical medical treatment was William Tuke from York Retreat, to be followed by Bethlem Hospital, which followed this pattern of therapy from 1860.¹⁴ But the history of therapeutic application of animals' presence in improving human welfare has a much longer tradition, reaching ancient times. Use of animals in resocialization programs in prisons is believed to have started by an accident: a psychiatric worker at the Oakwood Forensic Center noticed improvements in inmates' behavior after they began caring for an injured bird found in the yard,¹⁵ which made the facility conduct an experiment by allowing one of the two wards to care of a pet. After a year, the officials discovered that the ward with animals saw a reduction by half in the incidence of violence and suicide attempts, as well as in the amount of medication used. This is claimed to be the first attempt of the use of animals in rehabilitation/resocialization programs in prisons.

To tackle the initial moment of recognition for human-animal emotional bond is almost impossible. Some researchers argue that domestication of the first species, the dog, started human-animal relation almost 15,000 years ago.¹⁶ Certainly, this

¹² Sander van der Linden, "Green Prisons Programmes, Recidivism and Mental Health: A Primer," *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health* 25 no. 5 (2015): 338–342.

¹³ Kelyn Allen, Barbara Shykof, and Joseph L. Izzo, "Pet Ownership, But Not ACE Inhibitor Therapy, Blunts Home Blood Pressure Responses to Mental Stress," *Hypertension* 38 (2018): 815–820; Bente Berget and Camilla Ihlebæk, "Animal-Assisted Interventions; Effects on Human Mental Health—A Theoretical Framework," in *Psychiatric Disorders—Worldwide Advances*, ed. Toru Uehara (London: IntechOpen, 2011), 121–138. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/20973>; Bente Berget and Bjarne O. Braastad, "Animal-assisted therapy with farm animals for persons with psychiatric disorders," *Ann. Ist. Super. Sanità* 47, no. 4 (2011): 384–390; Froma Walsh, "Human-Animal Bonds I: The Relational Significance of Companion Animals," *Family Process* 48 (4) (2009): 462–480; Aubrey H. Fine ed., *Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy: Theoretical Foundations and Guidelines for Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Academic Press, 2010).

¹⁴ James Serpell, *In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

¹⁵ Odean Causak, *Pets and Mental Health* (New York, London: Routledge, 1988).

¹⁶ James Serpell, *In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Konrad Lorenz, *Men Meets Dog* (London: Routledge, 2002).

process drew human attention to some of the skills of dogs, which were used, and later intentionally strengthened in the process of conscious genetic selection for effective breeding. Based on this process, dogs which assist humans in contemporary world differ significantly from their ancestors. But due to selective process of breeding, dogs surrounding humans nowadays demonstrate high level of recognition of human emotions, they communicate with humans very well and have enormous adaptive ability, which allows them to adjust to even most difficult living conditions. Communication in dogs, both verbal and nonverbal, is an unusually complex phenomena,¹⁷ and this complexity is probably the most important aspect in creating human-dog relation. Nowadays dogs are very responsive to humans, they need human company, enjoy it and learn very quickly. Due to huge differentiation of breeds one can select a dog for every type of living conditions created by humans. Many specific breeds of dogs would not be able to survive in the wild due to physical characteristics generated during breeding process (for example brachycephalic breeds) and mental aspects as well (for example neotenic behavior of contemporary domestic dogs).

In brief, mentioned specificity of a dog as a species made it a most effective service animal, used in wide range of services for humans: support dogs (providing emotional support even in post-traumatic stress disorder—PTSD treatment), rescue dogs, special service dogs (police, customs), assisting dogs (supporting persons with disabilities and those suffering from diabetes, etc.).

Record of scientific evidence on role of human-animal bonds is most commonly rooted in three sources: works of Konrad Lorenz¹⁸ in the area of ethology (based on his discovery of imprinting mechanism, but also examination of human-dogs' relations), psychological background provided mainly by Boris Levinson¹⁹ in children psychology and Bowlby's attachment theory,²⁰ as well as the concept of the self. Third source of explanations for human-animal bonds is biophilia concept formed by Edward O. Wilson,²¹ where he states that bonds with natural environment are crucial element of human mental health. As Wilson claims in biophilia hypothesis, human's relationships with non-human animals are motivated by survival needs—as animals provide assistance in acquiring food and safety. There is an instinctive bond between human beings and other living creatures, as Wilson states, and this

¹⁷ Turid Rugaas, *On Talking Terms With Dogs: Calming Signals* (Wenatchee: Dogwise Publishing, 2006).

¹⁸ Konrad Lorenz, *Men Meets Dog* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁹ Boris M. Levinson, *Pet-Oriented Child Psychotherapy* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher Ltd., 1969).

²⁰ John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

²¹ Edward O. Wilson, *Biophilia. The Human Bond With Other Species* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

explains why random persons get involved into saving animals but also, why humans do enjoy surrounding themselves with nature.

Bowlby was focused on relations between people; however, many authors argue nowadays to expand the definition to include the relationship between human and animal as well.²² In his theory Bowlby postulated three types of attachments between caregiver and infant: secure attachment, avoidant attachment, and ambivalent attachment. An attentive and consistent caregiver is thought to convey emotional regulation and security to the infant and result in the infant's development of a healthy self. Any disruption in attention and consistency can result in avoidant or ambivalent attachment, thought to be associated with difficulties in self-regulation, in developing relationships, and in self-concept. This theory can be applied on the human-animal relations, where one of the participants of relation is an animal. This concept was developed by Sable.²³ Wider interpretation of Bowlby leads to thinking of human-animal bonds as form of social support and companionship, which are crucial in dealing with stress, critical situations management and which increase well being. This way of thinking is a base for using animals as companions is minimizing empty-nest syndrome, reducing stress in traumatic situations, and many other emotionally demanding situations in human life.²⁴

Serpell²⁵ had argued that humans develop relationships and attachments with animals similar to those with other people. He underlined the role of human-animal relations inadequate development of social skills, arguing that animals' company can replace absence of other humans. This way of thinking was adopted to create resocialization programs involving animals' presence and participation. In this way the spectrum of animals' usage was broadened and transferred from therapy (animal assisted therapies) to the area of resocialization and therapy support by animal assisted activities (AAA). From a psychological perspective animal can be treated as "self object" providing not only support, but also a sense of cohesion, self understanding and increased self-esteem (animals do not differentiate between persons with disabilities and those who do not suffer from disabilities—by fully accepting person as companion, they provide sense of acceptance).

²² Aviva Vincent and Kathleen J. Farkas, "Application of Attachment Theory to Equine-Facilitated Therapy," *Society Register* 1 (1) (2017): 7–22.

²³ Pat Sable, "The Pet Connection: An Attachment Perspective," *Clinical Social Work Journal* 41 (1) (2013): 93–99.

²⁴ Nona Kilgore Bauer, *Dog Heroes of September 11th. A Tribute to America's Search and Rescue Dogs* (Irvine: Kennel Club Books, 2011).

²⁵ Serpell, *In the Company of Animals*.

There is also extensive biological evidence of positive influence of animal presence on humans in form of releasing oxytocin.²⁶ Not only petting dogs, but also dogs gaze stimulates releasing oxytocin—the hormone responsible for bonding and affection, as well as sense of happiness.

Readaptation Programs with Animals

Using human-animal relations in improving human welfare and health is primary an American concept, also applied in the area of resocialization of prisoners: “Correctional officials have found that PDPs have reduced the number of infractions and incidences of violence within their walls, as well as the rate of recidivism for participating inmates who leave the walls behind,”²⁷ Cooke claims that up to 2019 there have been over 330 dog programs run in the USA and abroad.²⁸

In practice, prison dog programs vary in forms and methodology. There are programs where inmates stay in institutions and dogs are delivered for training sessions, or in some cases to share the cell with inmate. In the opposite form, inmates are driven to shelters and there they do train dogs, clean kennels, groom dogs and feed them as well as help in reparations in the shelter. In some of the programs inmates train homeless dogs in order to increase their chances for adoption, but there are also programs which are meant to train service dogs for persons with disabilities. In some programs inmates socialize and train only puppies and young dogs (later sent for professional training) but in some—humans work with adult dogs.²⁹

²⁶ Johannes S. J. Odendaal and Roy A. Meintjes, “Neurophysiological Correlates of Affiliative Behaviour Between Humans and Dogs,” *The Veterinary Journal*, May 2003; Maria Petersson et al., “Oxytocin and Cortisol Levels in Dog Owners and Their Dogs Are Associated With Behavioral Patterns: An Exploratory Study,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): 1796; Miho Nagasawa et al., “Intranasal Oxytocin Treatment Increases Eye-Gaze Behavior Toward the Owner in Ancient Japanese Dog Breeds,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017):1624; Mary Renck Jalongo, “Making It Real: Neuroscience and the Narrative Mode in Prison Dog Programs,” in *Prison Dog Programs. Renewal and Rehabilitation in Correctional Facilities*, ed. Mary Renck Jalongo (Las Vegas: Springer, 2019), 255–274.

²⁷ Paul J. Larkin, “Death Row Dogs, Hard Time Prisoners, and Creative Rehabilitation Strategies: Prisoner-Dog Training Programs,” *Catholic University Law Review* 66, no. 3 (2017), 544. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://scholarship.law.edu/lawreview/vol66/iss3/7>.

²⁸ Barbara J. Cooke, “Exploring Types of Programs: Dog Rescue, Rehabilitation and Training,” in *Prison Dog Programs. Renewal and Rehabilitation in Correctional Facilities*, ed. Mary Renck Jalongo (Las Vegas: Springer, 2019), 37–51.

²⁹ Cooke, “Exploring Types of Programs.”

With growing popularity and value of human-animal relations, concept of resocialization programs with dogs is also used in Poland.³⁰ My initial research in Poland, shows that programs are not structured, they are not precisely defined, and no goals are set. This project is undertaken in order to improve resocialization programs and their social effects. Conclusions drawn from American structure, organization, goals, evaluation of programs can be implemented in the Polish penitentiary system resulting in social welfare growth.

There is already extensive literature covering the subject of using animals' presence in resocialization programs in correctional institutions. For instance, Jalongo³¹ in edited volume provides wide description of evidence-based research on dog training in prisons for rehabilitation, presenting animal assisted resocialization in interdisciplinary perspective. In this volume, one can find case studies and evidence-based studies. She also provides research background for further use of animal assisted programs in prisons. Aysha Akhtar in her book *Our Symphony with Animals: On Health, Empathy, and Our Shared Destinies*³² writes extensively about using animal's presence in correctional institutions. Also, Paul Larkin elaborates on this subject.³³

Process of using animals in resocialization programs in prisons also evokes moral and ethical dilemmas: who should be allowed to participate in therapies using dogs? (Public opinion is especially critical on allowing animal abusers to work with animals—on the other hand from the point of view of resocialization, controlled and supervised contact with animals may be very beneficial here). There are some other ethical questions especially from pro-animal organizations. First of all, they question the status of animals, being used as tools in such programs. Secondly—animals' welfare must be considered as well. This is related to both physical, and emotional welfare. Bonding humans and animals can be beneficial for both, but this can also be difficult in the situation of separation.

³⁰ Monika Czerw, "Animals in resocialization," in *Society. Integration. Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference. Volume III*, May 26th–27th, 2017, 149–160.

³¹ Mary Renck Jalongo, *Prison Dog Programs. Renewal and Rehabilitation in Correctional Facilities* (Las Vegas: Springer, 2019).

³² Aysha Akhtar, *Our Symphony with Animals: On Health, Empathy, and Our Shared Destinies* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2021).

³³ Paul J. Larkin, "Prisoners, Dogs, Training, and Rehabilitation," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, August 31, 2018. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3242348>.

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