明愛青少年及社區服務

Gato House (貓空)

A drug rehabilitation project using animal-assisted interventions

The understanding of drugs addiction

When we feel disconnected or alienated,

We experience pain.

Addiction, depression, anger and violence

are ways we cope with pain.

For healing ,

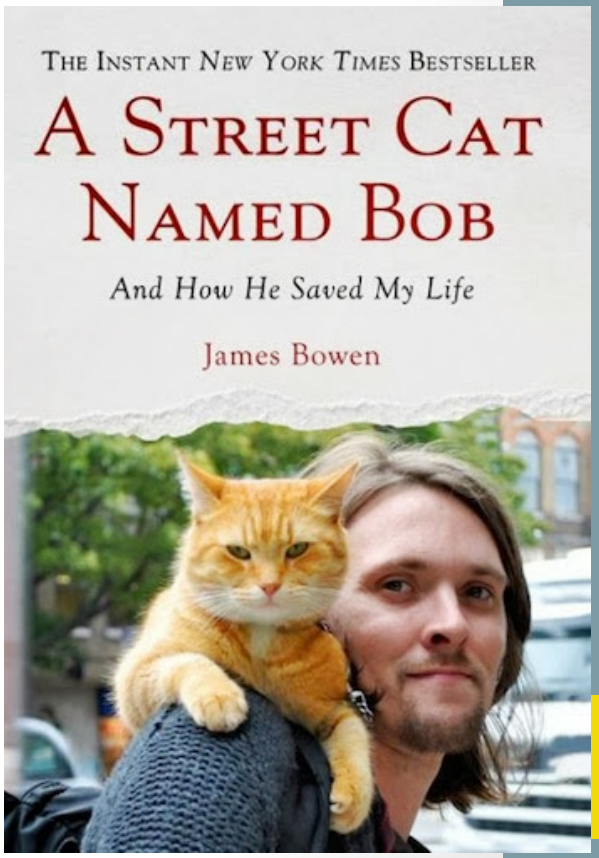
we must address the emotional wounds

that are the root causes of our pain.

The emotional reasons and needs behind pain have to be addressed and heard, while recognizing the power and strengths of every individual's lived experiences…

Background of Gato House

- The idea came from a book…

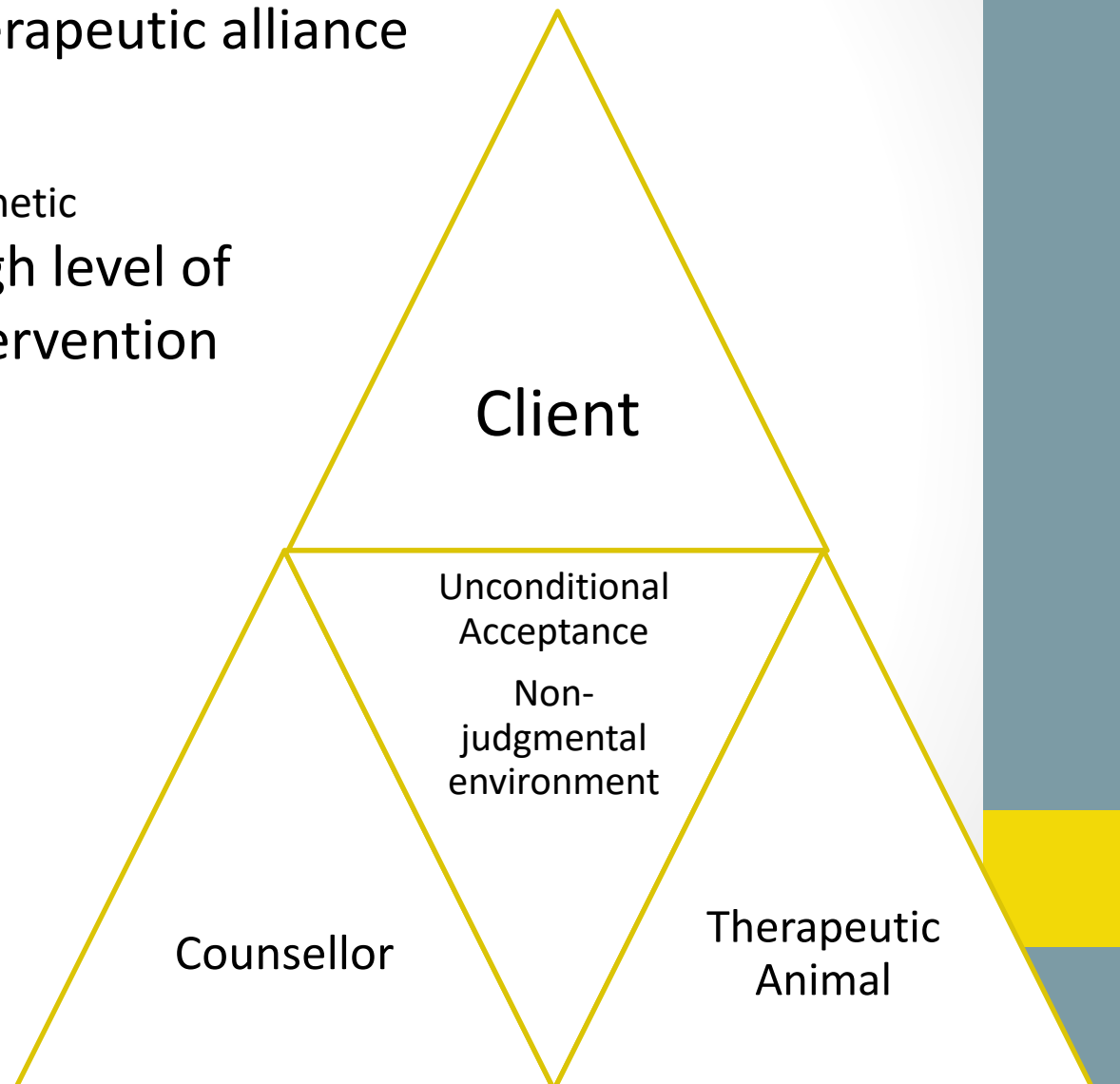


Background of Gato House

- Funded by “Beat Drugs Fund”
- Starting from July 2015
- Service Target:
  - Substance misusers aged 30 or below
- Objectives:
  - Helping substance misusers /ex –users to channel and reflect on their emotions e.g. anxiety, depression and loneliness;
  - Strengthening therapeutic alliance; and
  - Enhancing autonomy and forging new identities.

Animal – assisted Therapy : Human Animal Interaction

- Animals to enhance therapeutic alliance
  - Confidentiality
  - Here ‘n’ Now
  - Being genuine and empathetic
- Participants showed high level of engagement during intervention



Home-like cat relaxation room

Animals' stories as metaphors

- According to Chandler (2017), the involvement of animals helps to lower client's defense and resistance. The story of animals "helps to tap more deeply into suppressed and even repressed client feelings and experiences" (Chandler, 2017, p. 213)
- Elements of an animal's story help client to explore and reflect on similar experiences, leading to unique outcomes that are beyond the original problem-saturated narrative (i.e. drug abuse related story)
- Explore and consolidate needs and values from unique outcomes and rebuild identity other than that of drug abusers.

Animals' stories as therapy metaphors

Miss Hak Ding Hopelessness	**Miss Ga Ga** Defensive	**Miss Nat Nat** Single mother	**Nat Nat's sons and daughters** Family dynamic Parenting style

Animals' stories as therapy metaphors

Miss Dau Dau

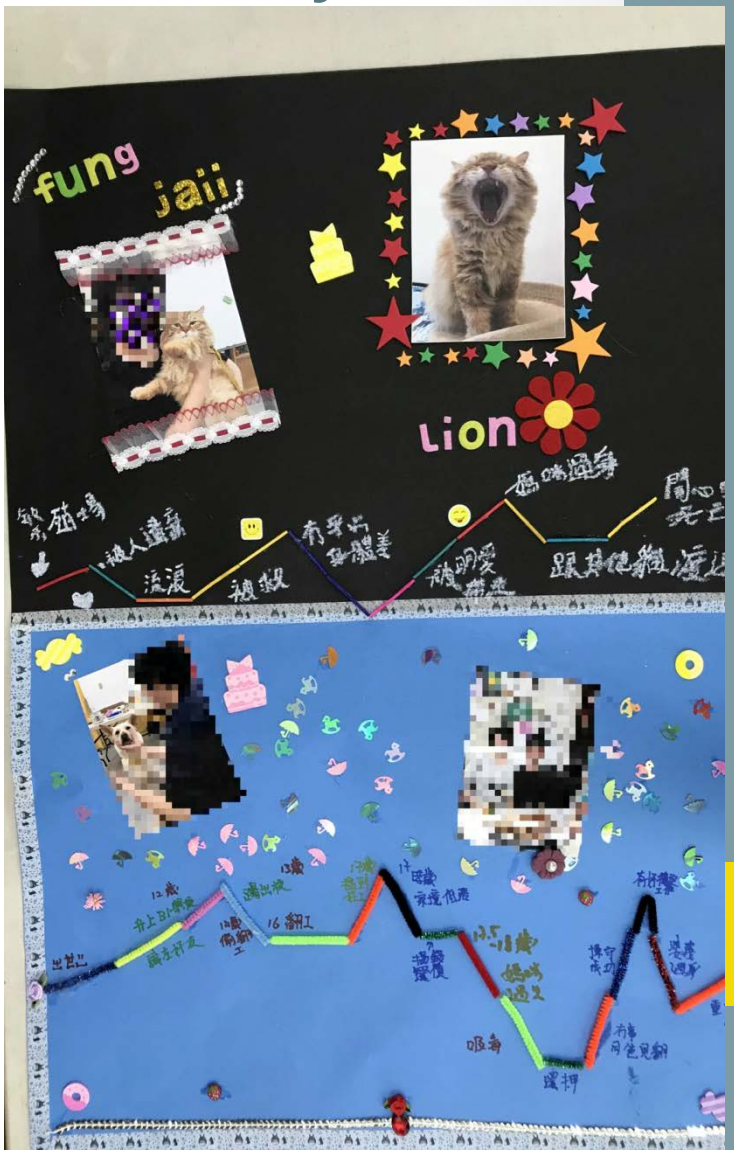
Mr. Lion

- Mother-and-son relationship

Animals' stories as therapy metaphors

- The six major characters / witnesses in Nat Nat's story
- Who are they? What do they represent? What are your / their feelings, needs and values?

Connecting with the Animals' story, client will also review their own story



- Explore unique outcomes other than the original problem-saturated narrative (i.e. drug abuse related story)
- Explore important needs and values from the unique outcome and build new identity .

Components of Gato House

Individual Counseling

- Channeling negative emotions during treatment
- Re-structuring daily life
- Developing a sense of competence and responsibility

Counseling Group

- Using card games to facilitate clients to sharing their emotions and experiences

Cat adoption

- Three cats were adopted by clients
- Positive changes include:
  - Increased motivation to work
  - Emotions become more stable
  - Increased motivation to re-structure daily life
  - Decreased drug-taking behavior
  - Developing new roles and new narratives

Animal Welfare

- Health of therapeutic animals is a priority;
- Stress-free situation for therapeutic animals;
- Counsellors have sufficient knowledge about the physical and psychological health of therapeutic animals at work; and
- Full medical support from CityU VMC & Maple Veterinary Hospital and for therapeutic animals

Thank You!

Thank You!

Award-winning photographer：Crystal To