

A Study Guide for A Place in the World

Prepared by Roberta McNair for
CFI Education

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Table of Contents

About the Film	4
Dolphin Boy (2011).....	4
Synopsis.....	4
Critical Reception	5
A Beaten Teenager Seeks Solace in Another Species	5
TV review: True Stories: Dolphin Boy	6
Jerusalem Film Festival 2011: Dolphin Boy	7
About the Filmmakers	9
Dani Menkin	9
From Dolphins to Shimon Peres	9
Yonatan Nir.....	11
Yonatan Nir, co-director and co-producer of Dolphin Boy.....	12
Judith Mannasen-Ramon	13
Moving pictures of the ‘Other Israel’	13
Background	15
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Trauma	15
What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?	15
Conventional Therapies for PTSD	16
Treatment, Services and Support for PTSD	16
Animal- and Dolphin-Assisted Therapies	18
Animal-Assisted Therapy	18
How animal assisted therapy helps with childhood trauma	19
Zootherapy: Animal-assisted Therapy and Healing.....	20
What You Should Know About Dolphin Assisted Therapy.....	22
Dolphins kiss wounded warriors; help ease scars of war	22
Dolphin-Assisted Therapy: Something Magical in the Water.....	23
Dolphin Reef at Eilat	27
Possible Motivation for Morad’s Attack.....	29
The Relative Status of Women and Men.....	29
From The Caliph Speaks: Boy-Girl Relationships in Islam.....	29
Women in Palestinian society	30
Rising Above: Disrupting Perceptions of Palestinian Women	30

Questions for Research and Discussion.....	32
Resources.....	34
Additional Resources on Dolphin-Assisted Therapy	34
About Dolphins.....	36

About the Film

Dolphin Boy (2011)

Directors/Screenwriters **Dani Menkin, Yonatan Nir**

Producers **Dani Menkin, Yonatan Nir, Judith Manassen-Ramon**

Cinematographers **Yaron Levison, Yoav Kleinman, Yonatan Nir, Uri Ackerman**

Editors **Tali Halter-Shenkar, Malenie Margalith**

<http://www.dolphinboyfilm.com/>,
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1929235/>

Synopses

Morad, a teenager from Kalansawa, an Arab village in the north of Israel, disconnects himself from humans after experiencing a violent attack. Conventional and accepted therapies cannot break through the barriers Morad's delicate psyche has erected for protection: He has become mute and does not engage with the people around him. Dr. Ilan Kutz, who has been treating Morad, sees hospitalization in a psychiatric facility as the last resort, since Morad's treatment has not resulted in progress. But Dr. Kutz suggests to Morad's father Asad that they first try a novel therapeutic approach that has been successful in resolving cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



Morad in the hospital.

The film follows Morad and his devoted father as they journey to the opposite end of Israel from Kalansawa (or Qalansawe) to the Dolphin Reef in Eilat, where Dr. Kutz has arranged for Morad to be treated with dolphin-assisted therapy. Morad's initial unresponsiveness to the therapist in Eilat and to the dolphins swimming past as he stands impassively on a dock seems to predict that this attempt to reach him will fail, as well. But after the second time a dolphin approaches Morad, nuzzles his hand, and encourages him to pet her, a breakthrough occurs. The audience shares Morad's first tentative words, after three months of therapy. He responds physically to his father's consistent and patient attempts at connection, and after months of silence, Morad starts speaking again.

But the trauma of the attack is still ever present, and the film shows Morad explain that he was born in Eilat and that the dolphins and staff are his family. He refuses to see his mother, even when she comes to Eilat to visit him, and he will not leave Eilat to go back to his village. Rather than being able to face what happened to him, Morad has erased his past and exists only within the safe confines of the treatment center.

Morad becomes a staff member at Dolphin Reef, and he finds a sympathetic and compassionate girlfriend among the staff. Although his social progress is positive, until he can fully remember the attack and come to terms with it, however, Morad cannot be whole. Acknowledging that he cannot maintain this pretense that denies his life before Eilat, Morad regretfully breaks off his relationship and works toward breaking down the protective barrier of memory.

This documentary is about the devastating effects of human violence on the human soul and about the healing powers of nature and of love. The filmmakers draw on footage shot by Dr. Kutz and the therapists at Eilat to flesh out

their film about Morad's long journey to recovery.

<http://www.dolphinboyfilm.com/synopsis.html>,
<http://trustmovies.blogspot.com/2012/04/dani-menkins-and-yonatan-nirs-dolphin.html>

A father never gives up. When told by doctors that dolphin-assisted therapy is the last treatment option for his son, Morad, before the boy is committed to a psychiatric institution, he knows what he has to do. He sells everything, leaving his job and family to move to Dolphin Reef on the Red Sea, vowing not to return unless the boy achieves full recovery. Morad had been kidnapped and brutally tortured by the relatives of a girl he was suspected of trying to seduce. So brutal was the attack, so deep the emotional scars, that Morad, suffering from severe post-traumatic stress disorder, disconnected himself from the world around him. This is the tale of a parent's patient and tender love, and the friendship between a teenaged boy and the group of dolphins who helped him heal in a remarkable three-year journey of recovery.

http://www.hotdocs.ca/film/title/dolphin_boy,
<http://www.israelfilmcenter.org/israeli-film-database/films/dolphin-boy>

Critical Reception

A Beaten Teenager Seeks Solace in Another Species

By Jeannette Catsoulis

Published: April 26, 2012

In defiance of its rather twee title, the documentary *Dolphin Boy* is admirably opposed to mystical pronouncements about the man-beast connection it so carefully records. More grounded in simple observation than in fanciful theories, this effortlessly engaging story of sudden tragedy and halting recovery wisely focuses on the facts and leaves the wonder to the audience.

The boy is Morad, a young Arab from a village in northern Israel who, in 2006 at age 17, sent an innocent text message to a girl in his

class and was savagely beaten by her brother and his friends. The attack left him mute, unresponsive, and suffering from what his psychiatrist, Dr. Ilan Kutz, described as a severe case of post-traumatic dissociation. When two months of conventional treatment yielded little improvement, Dr. Kutz decided to try an outlier therapy: swimming with dolphins at the Dolphin Reef in Eilat, on the shores of the Red Sea.



Filming over four years, the directors, Dani Menkin and Yonatan Nir (who is also an underwater photographer at the reef), capture every milestone in Morad's uneasy quest to reclaim his personality and recall his past. Rejecting human interaction, Morad comes alive underwater among the gentle animals, which offer company and ask for nothing, and much of his journey unfolds necessarily from the perspectives of others.

And while some of its more interesting byways are frustratingly glossed over (we need the publicity notes to learn, for example, that a Jewish girlfriend Morad meets at the reef is forced to lie to her family about his ethnicity), interviews with those closest to Morad reveal a young man plagued by post-injury nightmares and sudden rages.

"They took his soul," his devoted father tearfully says early in the film. And though the

extraordinary connection between man and animal gives *Dolphin Boy* its hook, it is the ineluctable bond between a boy and his father that provides its heart.

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/27/movies/dolphin-boy-a-documentary-by-dani-menkin-and-yonatan-nir.html?_r=1&

TV review: True Stories: Dolphin Boy

Despite the elaborate adoration of the dolphins, *Dolphin Boy* was not a very feel-good film, says Zoe Williams



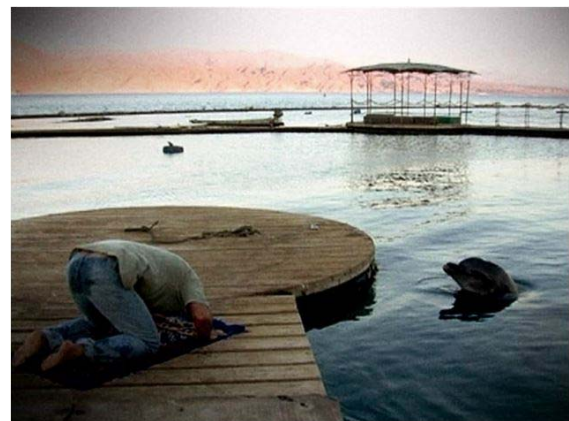
Morad and his father.

The final, compelling message of *True Stories: Dolphin Boy*, the one that made me ashamed that I didn't already know it, was how much devastation one act of violence wreaks upon one human being. I've become so accustomed to thinking of an adult—even a young adult—as essentially finished, inviolable, that I had no concept, and certainly no ready image, of how fragile is the psyche. Morad was 17 when the brother of his female classmate, along with three friends, took him to a warehouse in his village in northern Israel and beat him almost to death. Some imagined impropriety between Morad and the sister had occurred: The details of this gruesome event were kept gracefully brief, but the economy of the telling made it more horrific, its features blurred and shifting, like a nightmare.

The first shot we see of this young man is three weeks after the attack. He's sitting in the office of Dr Kutz, a specialist in post-traumatic shock who types his rhetorical questions on to a computer screen, in an echo of *Sex and the City* of which he must surely be unaware. Morad is mute, he won't focus, and he is "in a state of

profound post-traumatic dissociation": in effect, he separated himself from his body during the attack, and cannot reunite these elements. His distress is silent but painfully visible, except when he goes home, when he flies into rages. On the eve of hospitalizing him, Kutz suggests dolphin therapy.

Now, if I'm honest, there is nothing here that shunts dolphins up the therapeutic-food-chain for me. There is talk of how our gestation in water is mimicked by a friendly experience in the ocean, so that we might become reborn by a dolphin attachment, but this seems a little tenuous. Kutz talks of the "miraculous transforming power of nature and of love," but why dolphins? Why not horses? If anything, what this underlines is how little we understand the brain; how far we are prepared to take our smallest hunches in order to help one another; and how much sheer love there is between strangers, that they might find encouragement in the smallest improvement, and encourage one another with their optimism. And that's a tearjerker before you even bring in Morad's parents. Almost everything his father said reduced me to tears; when it came to his short soliloquy ("I love you ... I love you ... You are my soul") I needed dolphin therapy just to sort my mascara out.



Asad prays for his son.

There is a subtle structural brilliance to this tale, in so far as it seems straightforward and chronological, but each act, a perfect third, closes with a thud of despair: after a year with the dolphins, this previously silent boy is

laughing and saying he's having fun. But he has buried his former life, claims to have been born in Eilat (500km from his home), and will not see his mother. After another year, he has a girlfriend and a beautiful life but says: "If this would heal me, then I would be able to sleep like you at night. It does not heal me." Another year goes by, and he still has flashbacks and depression. He hits 21, and returns to his village: his progress has been astonishing, but it never eclipses the outrage that was committed against him. This is not a feel-good film. I felt that its agenda—the elaborate adoration of these daft, well-meaning dolphins—was an attempt to make it more uplifting, which was unnecessary. Something can deepen your understanding without making you feel good.

<http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2011/may/17/true-stories-dolphin-boy-review>

Jerusalem Film Festival 2011: Dolphin Boy

20 July 2011, by Ayelet Dekel

An adventure of the heart, mind, and sea, *Dolphin Boy* dives into the blue mystery of the ocean and its redemptive powers with all the suspense of a thriller. Dani Menkin and Yonatan Nir's film, tells the story of a young man's journey. After sending an innocent text message to a girl in his class, Morad, from the Arab village of Qalansua [a.k.a. Kalansawa, Qalansawe] in the north of Israel, was savagely beaten by her relatives in the fall of 2006. Although he recovered from his physical injuries, he was detached from the world, unable to speak. Five years later, at the film's Israeli premiere on July 14, 2011, Morad stood onstage in front of a full house, a contemporary hero and living testimony to an amazing recovery.

Morad's family is at the heart of this story, placing their son's recovery above all else. Their unswerving devotion and willingness to do and try anything that might help Morad, the father Asad leaving job and home to take their son to the Dolphin Reef in Eilat, while the mother and daughter remained in the village, their

unconditional love and deep faith are an inspiration to all.



Morad and his therapist at Dolphin Reef.

Yet the film does not attempt to mythologize the process or suggest that therapeutic interaction with dolphins is a miracle cure. It is as much a hymn to science, research, dedication, persistence, documentation, and the wonders of an open and tolerant mind as well as the wonders of love and the dolphins. Much of the magic of this film is that we are with Morad all the way, from the first moments of seeing a silent boy whose wide frightened eyes refuse any contact, to a man who faces the camera with warmth and confidence, talking about his experiences with honesty, intelligence, and sensitivity. Composed entirely of real-time footage and interviews, the access granted to the filmmakers for this project is exceptional, and the story of making the documentary reflects the spirit of the film itself.

Co-producer and director Yonatan Nir, a photographer and diving instructor, was working as an underwater cameraman at the Dolphin Reef in Eilat. Returning to the reef after an injury in the second Lebanon war, Nir felt the healing effect of spending time with the dolphins. Morad arrived at the reef two months later, at the recommendation of his psychiatrist, Dr. Ilan Kutz. Unresponsive to traditional therapeutic methods, with hospitalization as the only other alternative, Morad came to Eilat with his father Asad to try dolphin therapy.

Nir recalled in a telephone interview that when they first approached Dr. Kutz with the idea of telling Morad's story, "Ilan Kutz said that everything had to be done with Morad's

agreement. He warned us that we are entering a story that will take years and that we are taking a risk." The risk was twofold: the standard risk that any documentary filmmaker takes on, allowing the course of events to create a narrative, never knowing what the conclusion of the story will be; and the additional condition that "Morad will know everything that we are doing, throughout the entire process, and will approve, and that the film will only be screened with Morad's approval. This meant that there was a chance that we would not be able to screen the finished film."

In this way, the process of creating the film became part of the treatment, as Morad became an active partner in agreeing to be filmed, to make his story public, a decision that required both openness and courage at a point when he was making his first tentative steps towards connecting to the world. Dr. Kutz then gave his full cooperation to the project, giving the filmmakers 7 HDV and mini DV tapes he had made throughout his treatment of Morad, as Nir said, "What Dani called documentary gold." The Dolphin Reef gave them access to their archives, and as Morad's stay at the reef was documented from the first day, it's all there for everyone to see.

On the first day at the reef Morad can be seen sitting on the dock with Omer, his guide on the journey with the dolphins. The dolphins at the reef live as they do in nature, in a school; the contact with humans is their choice. When a dolphin swims up to the dock, Omer tells Morad, "She's here for you." Yet Morad turns away, and refuses to look at the dolphin. The next day, sitting on the dock once more with Omer, Morad reaches a hand into the water and touches the dolphin's head. It is a moment of startling beauty and amazement. It is about as close as I have come to witnessing a miracle.

Menkin and Nir take the viewer into Morad's underwater world, open, wide, flowing, blue as a vision of heaven. Yet the beauty of these scenes is enhanced by an

understanding of nature as a system of interdependence that pervades the film. This is not a story of recovery as a single dramatic event, ascribed to one source; it is a story of the journey of an individual with an inner core of strength, resilience, and love, among a community of supportive individuals: family, therapists, dolphins, friends, and even documentary filmmakers, each contributing in a different way. An ocean of love that prevails over an act of violence, *Dolphin Boy* celebrates the capacity of the human spirit to grow, change, and heal, through a deep respect for individual differences, beliefs, love and life. ...

<http://www.midnighteast.com/mag/?p=13727>



About the Filmmakers

Dani Menkin



Dani Menkin (Director/Screenwriter/Producer) directed and produced *Like Aroesti* (Israel, 1998), which won prizes at festivals around the U.S. and was known as the “Israeli Hoop Dreams.” He was supervising director and co-producer of the Israeli feature film *The Wisdom of the Pretzel*.

Menkin created a highly acclaimed television series for the National Geographic Channel, several episodes of which were bought by the Adventure One Network for broadcast in the US and around the World (1999–2002). He was also a writer, director, and producer with the successful television program *UVDA* (1998–2004), sometimes referred to as the “Israeli 60 Minutes.”

In 2005, Menkin established his own company, Hey Jude Productions, and embarked upon writing and directing his own documentaries, as well as drama features. Dani Menkin wrote, produced, and directed the award-winning HBO/Cinemax documentary, *39 Pounds of Love* (USA, 2006). The film won the

Academy Award for Best Documentary in Israel and was also on the Best Documentary short list for the 2006 US Academy Awards. In 2010 he produced and directed his first feature film, *Je T’aime, I Love You Terminal*—winner of the distribution award at the Haifa Film Festival.

He currently teaches at Syracuse University as an artist in residence, as a member of the Schusterman Visiting Artist Program.

<http://www.dolphinboyfilm.com/filmmakers.html>,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dani_Menkin

From Dolphins to Shimon Peres

By Michele Alperin / JointMedia News Service

March 17, 2012

Dani Menkin, the versatile Israeli filmmaker, thinks outside the box for both fiction and documentary.

Israeli filmmaker Dani Menkin has a nose for the unusual.

His 2005 documentary *39 Pounds of Love* grew out of a chance meeting in a bar with a severely disabled computer animator. The basic story elements of his latest film, *Dolphin Boy*, now making its way through Jewish film festivals, are so out of the ordinary that the film might easily be mistaken as fiction: an Arab boy suffering from post-traumatic disassociation after a vicious beating by his schoolmates; an intensely devoted father; a therapy facility at a dolphin reef in Eilat; and a psychiatrist willing to refer his patient to said reef.

“When you find such a good story, such a great character like the father, and dolphins, you know there is potential here,” Menkin tells JointMedia News Service. “From there on it is hard work.”

The hard work of making this film extended over four years, as the filmmakers waited for the kinds of surprises that create dramatic movement—moments due largely to the creation of trust with the documentary’s

subjects. “Being close to your characters, you get some kind of intimacy,” says Menkin, who quickly adds, “Also, we were lucky.”

Beyond the footage of the growing relationship between boy and dolphin, Menkin’s most recent documentary captures moments so apt that they almost appear scripted and rehearsed—over dinner at a campsite, a nearly silent and inexpressive Morad unexpectedly reaching out for a hug as his father tries to convince him that his life could return to normal; Morad’s father praying by the water as a dolphin rises up beyond him; and the formerly disassociated Morad breaking into tears when he returns home after a four-year absence.

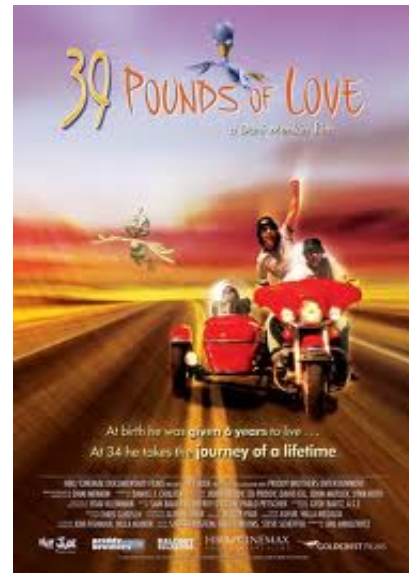
After Menkin learned about Morad’s life from underwater cameraman Yonatan Nir, the film’s co-director, he was immediately interested. “I said literally, ‘Let’s jump into the water and try to make the film; if it won’t be a movie, there will be at least dolphins,’” Menkin says.

Not knowing what the future would bring vis-à-vis Morad’s recovery, the filmmakers were relieved to note on their first visit to the reef that Morad had already made some connection with the dolphins. Psychiatrist Dr. Kutz also agreed that, if Morad recovered and gave his permission, they would have access to Dr. Kutz’s research footage of Morad’s first visits to the doctor after lapsing into disassociation.

The co-directors added complementary perspectives to this multilayered film. Nir, who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder himself after being wounded in the second Lebanon War, swam with the dolphins and understood their power to ease trauma. As for Menkin, he brought simply his love of the dolphins. “I felt like they were magical mammals,” he says, “and I wanted to be with them as much as possible, just like Morad.”

When Menkin realized that his childhood goal of playing professional soccer was out of reach, he became a sports reporter and was soon directing short television films to profile

famous players. His first long film, “Israeli Hoop Dreams”—which followed a high school basketball team to the championship—marked a transformation in Menkin’s personal identity. “When I finished this film, I felt like that’s who I am, a film maker, a director; that’s what I wanted to do,” he says.



Menkin did not study filmmaking in the university, but absorbed the skills he would need from experts in film workshops in Maine and Israel: how to tell a story quickly; how to direct actors; and, by taking an acting class, how “to understand what is going on in the minds of actors.”

When Menkin met Ami Ankilewitz, the protagonist of *39 Pounds of Love*, he wondered what Ankilewitz was doing in a bar. What he learned was simple: “He’s a cool guy who doesn’t see himself as disabled at all and wants to live life to the fullest.” But it took a cross-country journey together and “a lot of blood, sweat, and heart” from Menkin to absorb and hone this bit of wisdom.

Beyond the challenge of keeping Ankilewitz healthy during the trip, the filmmakers had to figure out how to attract an audience for a film about a man whose skeletal, emaciated body was so difficult to look at. “When we started, people thought no one would want to see this film,” says Menkin. “But I felt that if I will make

it happy, incorporate humor and his animation and music, and shape his life as a fictional story, it will work.”

Menkin has also directed a documentary for Israel’s Reshet Bet television channel on the life of President Shimon Peres, with comedian Eli Yatzpan. It turned out to be not that difficult to balance this “odd couple combination.”

“As for handling Yatzpan’s shenanigans,” Menkin says, “sometimes when you have such talent as that, you have to let him do what he knows how to do best, and not interfere.” This was easy because Peres, who Menkin has always admired, was a willing collaborator and clearly enjoyed Yatzpan’s humor. “I think for those politicians, sometimes they have so many serious meetings, some kind of comic relief is nice,” says Menkin, “and I think it’s good to show that Israeli leaders have a good sense of humor.”



Recently picked up for television distribution around the world, Menkin’s 2010 fictional film *Je T’aime, I Love You Terminal* is a romantic tale about a 30ish man who misses his airplane connection in Prague on the way to meeting his fiancée in the United States. He ends up spending 24 hours with a charismatic, free-spirited British girl, upending his life.

Whether Menkin is working on fiction or documentary, he is telling a story, but each requires a different approach to the material. For fiction, Menkin shapes the story largely

from the start, by writing a script. With a documentary, he begins with an outline and shapes the script while editing. Menkin suggests that, for him, the boundaries between these two cinematic forms are vague.

“I like to make my documentary feel like fiction and have my fiction feel like a documentary,” he says.

Both of his successful documentaries convey a strong message of hope that, for Menkin, is also applicable to his filmmaking. “You should never give up hope,” he says. “[On] any journey you take there will be obstacles, and you need to go through them and reach your goals.”

<http://www.jpost.com/Features/In-Thespotlight/From-dolphins-to-Shimon-Peres>

Q&A with Dani Menkin—a discussion with the Israeli director moderated by David Suissa, President of the Jewish Journal:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDEwftq9c8>

Yonatan Nir

Yonatan Nir (Director/Screenwriter/Producer) came to filmmaking from photojournalism and marine photography. His photo essays from many countries around the world have been featured in newspapers and magazines worldwide and won numerous prizes, including the prestigious Asian Geographic Best Photojournalist of the Decade Award.

Yonatan is a graduate of “Camera Obscura—school of art” (the department of film and television) and worked as a personal assistant to Amos Nachoum, expedition leader for National Geographic and a winner of the BBC wildlife photographer of the year competition.

Nir is an experienced diving instructor with over 3,500 dives. He worked as the underwater cameraman at the Dolphin Reef in Eilat. This is where he had first heard the story of the dolphin boy.



Being injured from a land-mine during the second Lebanon war, Nir is personally acquainted with the therapeutic influence of dolphins over the human soul.

He is the director and co-producer of *Cutting the Pain*, a documentary about a soldier who amputates his leg in order to release himself from a mysterious pain syndrome and feeling of guilt for an event in his military past. Nir also directed and co-produced *Beyond the Boundaries*, a documentary film following four injured Israeli soldiers who were invited to a ski vacation in Aspen Colorado by the Aspen Jewish community. *Cutting the Pain* was supported by the New Israeli Foundation for Cinema & TV.

<http://www.dolphinboyfilm.com/filmmakers.html>,
<http://embassies.gov.il/miami/NewsAndEvents/Pages/Film-Maker-.aspx>

Yonatan Nir, co-director and co-producer of Dolphin Boy

“Violence can be cured with the love of nature and people”

February 20, 2012

Israeli filmmaker Yonatan Nir recently attended the Berlinale, after his documentary was nominated for a Peace Film Award at the film festival. Euromed Audiovisual caught up

with him in Berlin to hear more about his path as a South Mediterranean filmmaker and about the award-nominated documentary that he co-directed and co-produced about the healing power of dolphins, *Dolphin Boy*.

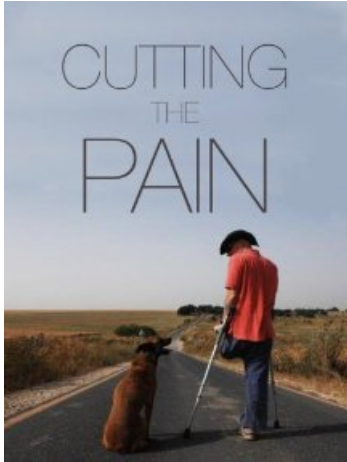
“Greenhouse and Euromed Audiovisual brought me to walk the red carpet in company of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie!” says Yonatan, who participated in Greenhouse’s fourth year program under Euromed Audiovisual II and signed a distribution agreement with First Hand Films at the Greenhouse final pitching forum in December 2009. “I don’t know where the film would be today without having the Greenhouse coaching and support.” ...

The film hopes to inspire people to seek a solution for peace in Israel-Palestine: “Dolphins can see the heart and the inside of a body, the skeleton of a human being, not his identity, race, or religion. He only looks at him as a human being,” he says. “I wish we could apply this and the same attitude in Israel.”



[Yonatan Nir speaking at the Berlinale](#)

Nir is currently directing and co-producing *Cutting the Pain*, a documentary about a soldier, who amputates his leg in order to release himself from a mysterious pain syndrome, and from feeling of guilt related to an event in his military past.



Dolphin Boy is supported by The Second Israeli Authority, ARTE, Channel 4 UK and The New Foundation for Cinema & TV, Israel. The film was commissioned by DRTV Denmark.

<http://euromediaaudiovisual.net/p.aspx?t=videos&mid=103&l=en&did=602>

Interview with Yonatan Nir:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tECIIWso0r4>

Judith Mannasen-Ramon

Judith Manassen-Ramon (Producer) is a director, producer, and researcher who has dealt with PTSD in Israeli society all her life. As a daughter of two Dutch holocaust survivors, she constantly found herself drawn to working with post-traumatic people and creating art about the subject.

For over 10 years she worked with post-traumatic homeless youth in the streets of Tel Aviv. During this period (1999–2009) she used the screening of films as well as creating films as methods to ease the distress of these adolescents.

Over the last few years, Manassen-Ramon has developed a method that employs film as a tool to aid self-expression and problem solving for adolescents. Notably, she has worked with young Ethiopian immigrants and various women's groups.

Currently, Manassen-Ramon is working on her Ph.D. in Media Psychology at Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara,

California, researching PTSD and media in the Israeli society. In addition to producing *Dolphin Boy*, she also directed and produced *Three Stories and a House* (2005), and *Ring* (2002), which aired on the Israeli Documentary Channel.

Manassen-Ramon was Manager and Director of the annual Tel Aviv/Los Angeles Master Class in Creative Filmmaking between 2005 and 2007, working with such actors, directors, and producers as Alfred Molina, Jon Avnet (*Fried Green Tomatoes*) and Cathy Schulman (*Crash*) to teach and mentor Israeli and American filmmakers. This is one of her many activities aimed at creating a bridge between American and Israeli societies.



<http://www.aicf.org/artists/Judith-Manassen-Ramon-A228/>

Moving pictures of the 'Other Israel'

November 21, 2011, by Carly Silver

Film festival focuses on Israel's minority populations

For the fifth consecutive year, Manhattan's Jewish Community Center hosted the Other Israel Film Festival. A project devoted to exposing issues facing Israeli minorities, the festival brought together directors and films from Nov. 10-17 to "foster social awareness and cultural understanding," according to the festival's website. The festival included two Palestinian filmmakers this year. "We are constantly expanding and including other

minority populations,” Isaac Zablocki, the JCC’s director of film programs, wrote in an e-mail. The films shown at the festival represent the identities of many of contemporary’s Israel’s disenfranchised communities.

Last year, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) advised “conscientious filmmakers not to participate in this festival,” according to a release on its website. The organization’s concerns included allegedly propagandistic wording in official OIFF statements and “whitewashing” of what they call Apartheid-like practices in Israel.

“This year has been quiet from the PACBI side,” Zablocki said. Only one filmmaker boycotted the festival.

“We are only [biased] towards good films. We are not afraid of showing things that challenge the Jewish community and we are not afraid of celebrating Israel. We have a very specific mission to show minority life within Israeli society,” Zablocki wrote. “We had minimal backlash from the Jewish community. The usual few crazies,” he added.

The festival opened with *Dolphin Boy*, a documentary chronicling the life of an Arab teen named Morad. Brutally beaten by his classmates, his trauma was so severe that he remained mute for months. Desperate to get his son back, his father takes him to Eilat, where Morad works with dolphin trainers and befriends the sea mammals. This juxtaposition of violence and healing recurred throughout the film.

Dolphin Boy demonstrates the personal destruction violence can have on life. “I mean it when I say, ‘Look how vulnerable we are,’” says trauma psychiatrist Dr. Ilan Kutz, who treats Morad in the film. It also documents the healing which nature can bring to that same person. Working with dolphins helped transform Morad into a fully active young man and has proven to be helpful for the damaged and healthy alike. “It’s really an ‘E.T.’ kind of phenomenon,” Kutz adds.

The film largely avoids explicit mentions of ethnic tensions in favor of emphasizing the story’s universality. “There is always an Arab-Israeli context in Israel,” Judith Manassen-Ramon, the film’s producer, said in a post-screening panel. “But the avoidance of the subject was on purpose because it’s a human story, though it is located in the Middle East and in Israel. It’s a story between a father and a son, a doctor and patient, a man and an animal, and that was the emphasis of the story and all the rest around it is what each and every viewer brings to the story, from his own world.”

<http://newvoices.org/2011/11/21/0197/>

Background

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Trauma

What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

Though it may seem like a relatively simple concept, trauma—a powerful experience that may have long-lasting effects—has not always been defined the same. Scientists continue to study experiences of trauma in hopes of finding better treatments. One particular type of trauma is known as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

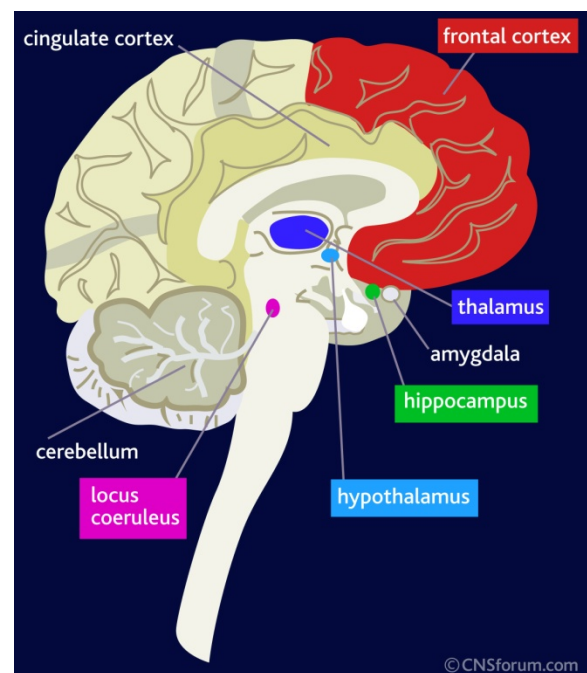
PTSD can affect many different people, from survivors of rape and survivors of natural disasters to military service men and women. Roughly 10 percent of women and 5 percent of men are diagnosed with PTSD in their lifetimes, and many others will experience some adverse effects from trauma at some point in their lives. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), about 1 in 30 adults in the U.S. suffer from PTSD in a given year—and that risk is much higher in veterans of war.

Not all “traumatic” events meet the clinical standards for trauma. The loss of a loved one or the limitations resulting from an illness may cause trauma but the shock of such events is not in itself abnormal. PTSD includes both an event that threatens injury to self or others and a response to those events that involves persistent fear, helplessness, or horror.

Recent scientific understanding shows that experiencing traumatic events can change the way our brains function. Especially with severe or repeated exposure, the brain can be affected in such a way that makes a person feel like the event is happening again and again. Repeated experience of the traumatic event can prevent healing and keep a person stuck in a pattern that may induce anxiety, sleeplessness, anger, or an increased possibility of substance abuse.

The Neurobiology of PTSD

People are programmed to respond to threats to their safety. Unfortunately, this set of adaptive responses in the face of terror, which are lifesaving in the moment, can leave people with ongoing, long-term psychological symptoms. The biological mechanisms that encourage the powerful and protective “fight or flight” response and maximize physical safety at the time, such as enabling a woman to fight off an attacker during a sexual assault, can create complex problems later.



When faced with terror, less critical body functions (e.g., the parts of the brain where memory, emotion, and thinking are processed) get “turned off” in the service of immediate physical safety. Specifically, this “fight or flight” response increases the heart rate, moves more blood to muscles in order to run and adds stress hormones to help fight off infection and bleeding in case of a wound. As a result, the traumatic experiences are not integrated at the time they happen because the body is focusing entirely on immediate physical safety. A poorly integrated traumatic experience can be unpredictable and unexpected. The unprocessed memories of a traumatic event can

Symptoms

Causes

Diagnosis

http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=posttraumatic_stress_disorder,
http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=posttraumatic_stress_disorder&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=123089

Treatment, Services and Support for PTSD

In the aftermath of a traumatic event, individual choices can make a difference. Several common coping strategies, such as substance use, appear to yield short-term relief but create problems over time and should be discouraged. Receiving proper treatment as soon as possible is key to producing positive outcomes.

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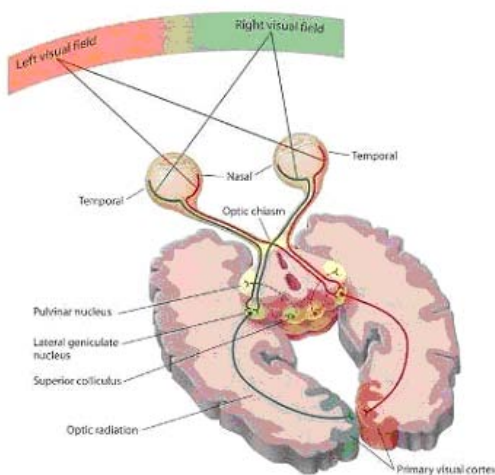
Support and compassion are critical in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event. Some people will want to talk about the event frequently, while others will find it troubling to discuss the trauma. It is important to provide support to the individual, help the individual maintain connections with others and encourage him or her to seek assistance in dealing with trauma. Since many people living with PTSD go to a primary care doctor first, it's important that symptoms be identified at this stage.

There are many different kinds of psychotherapy in the field of mental health. People living with PTSD respond better to select, structured interventions than to unstructured, supportive psychotherapy. In addition to EMDR (see below), research is being

conducted on dream revision therapy, also known as Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT).

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) employs tailored exposure to the traumatic event through a memory or another form of exposure. By tolerating the exposure to the trauma, the individual's anxiety and symptoms can gradually reduce. CBT has two different parts: a behavioral component (usually referred to as "exposure therapy") and a cognitive component that aims to correct distorted thoughts that can result in shame and self-blame. There are many forms of exposure therapy that are all designed to expose the person to triggers in a safe way so that he or she can learn to tolerate them. Newer forms of CBT may involve computer simulations or other technology to create a safe form of exposure to circumstances similar to the trauma.



Multi-sensory disabling with EMDR

Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocess (EMDR)

Developed in 1989, EMDR is an eclectic psychotherapy intervention designed for trauma that employs several strategies, including exposure to traumatic memories with alternating stimuli (eye movements are one of several options) in structured sessions with an individual certified to perform EMDR. EMDR has been shown to be effective for PTSD as it is an information-processing therapy. It is not now

clear if the alternating movements of the eyes are related to the intervention's usefulness.

Group Therapy

Joining a group of people who have been through similar experiences can uplift and support an individual who is feeling alone and isolated with upsetting and traumatic memories and symptoms. Groups can lessen shame and provide community support as well as reduce feelings of helplessness. Groups for survivors of combat and sexual assault frequently involve members living with PTSD and related symptoms. The ancient expression "pain shared is pain halved" speaks to the relief people often feel when they share their stories with others. Psychotherapy research is an active area in the PTSD field. Interest is growing in treatments that focus attention on how symptoms are experienced in the body.

Service Dogs

The use of service dogs as forms of therapy for individuals living with PTSD, especially for veterans, is becoming increasingly common. A service dog is by a veteran's side 24 hours a day to help navigate daily stressors. Some animals come to the veteran pre-trained with a set of commands, while others are trained by the owners themselves. Over time, an owner can rely upon the dog's instincts for a reality check, giving their brain a break from hypervigilance. The animals can also serve as a social buffer, an incentive to exercise and a de-escalation tool during times of stress. See the resources section for more information on service dogs.

Medications

There is no one medication that will treat all cases of PTSD. Given the effectiveness of psychotherapy and medication, they should be used together to treat PTSD and reduce symptoms. Given the common co-occurrence of depression, related anxiety disorders, aggression, and impulsivity, selecting medications that address these related problems might also reduce symptoms.

Antidepressant therapy can be useful to reduce the symptoms of PTSD. Several selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) have been approved by the FDA for the treatment of PTSD in adults and are often the first line of treatment.

Beta-blockers, a class of medications used for high blood pressure, may be helpful for some people with PTSD.

Mood stabilizers and antipsychotic medications may have a role for individuals with aggression, mood instability, or dissociation.

Sleep restoration is important. Physicians may use off-label medications to normalize sleep patterns, a key component to supporting recovery.

Complex responses to trauma have been an element of the human condition since recorded time. In the modern era, researchers are uncovering the complicated relationship between mind, brain, and body for people living with PTSD. The more that science learns about the deep level at which our experiences affect us, the more compassion, acceptance and possibilities are opening up for individuals and families living with the effects of trauma. When it comes to treating PTSD, there is much to be hopeful about once the first step of breaking through the isolation has been taken. People living with PTSD and their families should ask their health care providers about the latest developments and treatment options that flow from recent research.

Alternative Methods Gaining Ground

With the influx of soldiers returning from war, there has been a renewed interest in helping individuals living with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In recent years there has been an increased interest in administering complementary and alternative methods of aid to treatment regimens. There has been much public interest in some of these categories, including yoga, aqua therapy (such as surfing) and meditation. Although many of the recent

stories have solely examined soldiers, the techniques can assuredly be used by anyone diagnosed with PTSD.

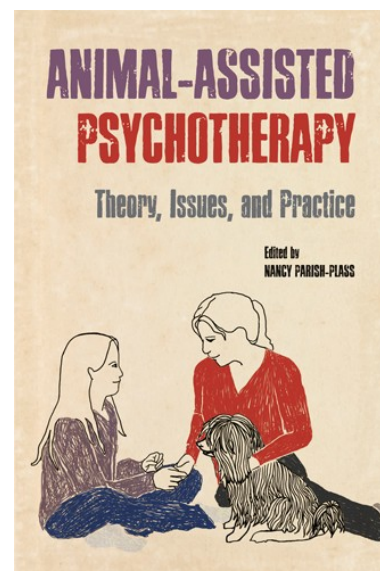
http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=posttraumatic_stress_disorder&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=123099

Animal- and Dolphin-Assisted Therapies

Animal-Assisted Therapy

It's well recognized that pets can have a beneficial effect on their owners. People with pets in their homes tend to be happier, have lower blood pressure and stress levels, and may even recover better after a heart attack than people who don't. So it's logical that researchers would be interested in whether animals can help individuals with mood disorders as well.

This practice, known as animal-assisted therapy is different from basic pet ownership. In animal-assisted therapy, the animal—commonly a dog or dolphin—is trained to be a formal part of the therapeutic process.



One randomized study published in *BMJ* of 30 people with mild to moderate depression found that those who had 10 one-hour sessions of playing and swimming with and caring for dolphins had greater reductions in their

depression symptoms than participants who spent similar recreational time in the water without the dolphins. However, dolphin therapy is not practical for most people.

Dogs, on the other hand, are a much more convenient option, thanks to being portable and easily trained. One small, Israeli study looked at the effects of dog therapy in people with schizophrenia who were suffering from an inability to enjoy normally pleasurable activities, a symptom common in depression. During weekly sessions, participants could choose from a range of activities such as petting, feeding, cleaning, or walking a dog. After 10 sessions, participants had formed a bond with and looked forward to seeing the dog and also improved their personal appearance in anticipation of the sessions. A control group who had therapy sessions without the dog did not show the same improvements.

Bottom line: Only a handful of well-designed studies have evaluated the benefits of animal-assisted therapy for psychological disorders, but the results show promise.

http://www.johnshopkinshealthalerts.com/alerts/depression_anxiety/JohnsHopkinsHealthAlertsDepressionAnxiety3636-1.html

How animal assisted therapy helps with childhood trauma

Researchers have recently found that childhood traumas and neglect can not only cause mental health problems in children, but that they can also manifest as physical disease in later life. This backs up the anecdotal findings of energy medicine practitioners who experience that emotion withheld in the body can go on to cause physical illness.



More than 1,000 children were followed from birth by researchers in New Zealand and from those results it was found there were sustained health risks from childhood abuse, neglect, social isolation or economic hardship.

The findings, which appear in the December 2010 issue of Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, suggest that childhood experiences can affect nervous, immune, and endocrine functioning. By the age of 32, the study subjects who had undergone childhood deprivations were more likely to be depressed, experience chronic inflammation and to have metabolic markers of increased health risk. These three factors, in turn, are known to put sufferers in the risk category for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and dementia later on in life.

So a therapy to help children who are suffering from trauma or abuse would be a good idea. There are several, but one that stands out is animal assisted therapy.

What is animal assisted therapy?

Animal assisted therapy is a type of therapy where animals are used as an essential part of the person's treatment.

Usually the animal in question will have been chosen because of its own characteristics and matched to the person's problem.

Animals typically used are: dogs, cats, rabbits, lizards, elephants, birds, dolphins, and other small animals. Horses are very commonly used for animal assisted therapy, though this has its own classification, under equine-assisted therapy.

As many pet owners will appreciate, owning a pet can be a very rewarding experience as well as providing companionship, physical comfort, the increased opportunity to meet others, and instilling responsibility. Animal assisted therapy works by adopting these same principles.

What can animal assisted therapy be used for?

Animal assisted therapy is thought to be a useful tool for people with mental difficulties,

including autism spectrum syndromes, people with behavioral problems or medical difficulties and to help promote a general emotional well-being.

For people with physical issues, it can aid fine motor skills and balance, and is also a useful aid for both educational and motivational purposes by encouraging long or short-term memory, increasing vocabulary and improving a person's interaction and involvements with others.

<http://www.thetherapybook.com/knowledge/Articles/Ho-w-animal-assisted-therapy-heals-childhood-trauma.aspx>

Zootherapy: Animal-assisted Therapy and Healing

HealthFiend, January 4, 2013

Not incidentally, relations between humans and animals have been studied since antiquity by the Romans, Egyptians, and Greeks, some species being raised even to the rank of divinity. There is a specific language of animals, which is materialized by sound signals, body positions or various parts of it (position of the head, ears, tail, limbs, eyes etc.) and facial gestures. Animals are genuinely able to transmit and receive feelings and emotions.

The term zootherapy was introduced by American psychiatrist Boris Levinson in 1964, after experiments on children having communication impairments. This research studied thoroughly the possibilities of using animals to treat diseases and health issues. Zootherapy is actually therapeutic use of animals (dogs, cats, horses, monkeys, fish, exotic birds and so forth), that proved to be effective in improving people's health (particularly genetic diseases that are related to psychological aspects or in fighting anxiety, stress and depression). Many people share their life with animals, and for some of them, cats, dogs, exotic birds became full members of the family.

There are known cases of dogs which are able to detect the occurrence of cancerous cysts, warn in time of impending strokes,

epileptic seizures, stabilize blood pressure, amazing cases in which dolphins make infants with autism speak, or situations in which cats have cured depression and schizophrenia. Receptive to these amazing events, doctors and psychologists made a series of experiments whose results led to various scientific researches aimed to turn this into animal therapy.

Among well-known experts in the field there's the German psychiatrist Dr. Reinhold Bergler, professor at the University of Bonn, studying the beneficial effects of this animal onto humans. In an interview published in the journal *Neue Gesundheit* is stated: "Pets have a more developed sense of smell than ours, they detect changes in our health, about which we have no idea. They also feel when our strengths drop, or when we are tormented by worry. Pets produce a more rapid relaxation (without side effects) than different medical products."



British researchers have found that when infants grow up near pets, they are less likely to catch flu or colds, or other seasonal diseases. The explanation is that the presence of animals influences the immune system in a good manner, which becomes permanently active. The condition here is that the relationship with the animal has to be a fair and positive, with clear discipline and proper hygiene. At high fashion nowadays are horses, which even generated the development of a medical branch called hippotherapy, which relieves and helps muscle of children affected by paralysis. Such a therapist uses the characteristic movements of

a horse to provide carefully graded motor and sensory input to the patient.

Fish, especially exotic ones, are also included in the scope of zoo-therapy, although they can't be petted or touched. Just looking at them in the aquarium gives people a sense of tranquility, relaxation, and delight, with their colors and undulating movements. Pets, in general, have a very beneficial influence on humans overall health status, as well as the more simple, daily physical issues.

American psychologist Leon Frankenstein said: "Beauty comes not only from cosmetics, but also our inner spirit. Tranquility, balance, and contentment are more effective against wrinkles than any beauty mask. Those who sit on the couch caressing their cat, those who compete in running with the dog in the rain or snow are less stressed ... and less stress means, indirectly, a healthier skin."

The effects of animal therapy in healing of many diseases are absolutely amazing. Due to very strong electromagnetic field surrounding them, some animals, especially dogs and cats, can be considered ideal psychotherapists in some cases. With small steps now, due to isolated initiatives, around the world have been established a number of organizations that promote zootherapy (e.g. Arizona Zootherapy Organization), which also offer various programs for clinics or hospitals, in which they show the possibilities of training specialists in this field. Pets are increasingly used in hospitals and nursing homes. Experimental studies in different clinics have shown that animals can (aside of inducing a state of relaxation) help lower blood pressure and help in faster healing of patients and reduce hospitalization time. ...

Therapy with Dolphins

Experts' opinion is that dolphins, intelligent and very emotional animals, are the most amazing zootherapy representatives. With their help, infants with speech impairments have been reportedly recovered.

Dolphin brains resemble the human brain in terms of shape, size, and number of roundabouts. Due to this fact, they have great psycho-physiological availability and can be easily trained. The ancient Greeks and Romans worshiped dolphins; they even drew them on coins and medals, as their literature described.

Training dolphins relies a lot on their skin comforting and petting, since it acts on receptors in their skin. Dolphins gladly accept these caresses and thus human-dolphin interaction and relation occurs, becoming a true friendship and a mutually beneficial cooperation.



With dolphins, very serious illnesses such as child cerebral palsy can be treated, the method being successfully used in Cuba. Since 1988, numerous dolphins in specialized centers of zoo-therapy have helped many children and adults with special needs make progress by expanding their vocabulary, developing motor skills and dramatically reduce stress. Although the meetings are conducted under the strict guidance of a therapist, often dolphins are seen to have the innate ability to change their behavior and action mode when interacting with people who have special health problems and are able to differentiate the needs of these people, tackling them accordingly. It was observed that dolphins prefer the company of children, allowing them to get on their backs and ride without sinking.

Swimming with dolphins calms spasms, induce general well-being state of the body and boosts self-confidence. Greatest results have been obtained in treating autistic children (these patients are isolated from the

surrounding world, always silent, and do not react to outside stimuli).

Down syndrome, severe hearing problems, cerebral palsy, vision problems, spinal disorders, and other diseases may be improved or sometimes even treated with dolphin therapy and specially trained staff.

Criticisms of Animal-assisted Therapy

Although animal assisted therapy has been considered a new way to deal with depression, anxiety, and various ailments, there has been criticism regarding the effectiveness of the process. According to some doctors, animal-assisted therapy is considered a temporary fix, at best. They point to the lack of official, concrete, long-term research, or official scientific reports for long-term improvement in patients undergoing the therapy.

<http://www.healthfiend.com/health/treatment-of-patients-using-animals-dogs-cats-horses-dolphins-zoo-therapy/>

What You Should Know About Dolphin Assisted Therapy

April 16, 2013 by [radams](#)

Dolphin-Assisted Therapy Saving Lives

Dolphin-Assisted Therapy or DAT is a form of psychotherapy that is becoming more popular in today's society. Animals, in general, are known to have a positive influence on people. Take for instance, the pets people take into their own homes, pets that become valued members of a family. The bond of man and animal has become stronger over the centuries.



Dolphin Therapy for PTSD

War veterans and soldiers have been traumatized by war and battles. For years, many chose to not address the condition. But, now there is dolphin therapy for those veterans who are suffering, for anyone suffering with civilian PTSD, or those suffering from any other psychological condition.

<http://www.hawaiiislandrecovery.com/blog/know-dolphin-assisted-therapy/>

Dolphins kiss wounded warriors; help ease scars of war

VALLEJO, Calif. (KPIX) – Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan suffering from brain trauma, or PTSD, tried a new type of therapy this week in California.

The men came home with invisible scars: hardened and psychologically traumatized by their combat experiences.

KPIX-TV's Da Lin said some of the men were open to talking about their injuries.

Link to video: http://wtvr.com/2012/11/10/dolphin-therapy-could-be-key-to-soldiers-suffering-from-ptsd/#oid=BuaTJONjoMhD18GNp_EYoKode5Ff3QSG

"Nightmares are common occurrences. Although they've gotten less and less frequent. But every time it comes up, it is still just as dramatic as they were," Retired Marine Sgt. Bret McCauley said.

The therapy took place in a tank at Six Flags Discovery Kingdom and included ten war veterans from a PTSD recovery program at the Pathway Home.

At first, there was a lot of skepticism from these service members. Their relationship began with just a little rubbing on the dolphins. But once they got comfortable with the mammals, the vets started dancing with the dolphins and even riding them around the tank.

In just two short hours, that emotional connection between the veterans and dolphins ended with kisses.

"I just want to feed them fish and play. I just want to jump back in right now," Iraq Army veteran Sgt. Charles Quigley said.

The experiment was such a big success that the program may expand to bring other soldiers to the park for future treatment.

As for the ten veterans in the pilot program, they left with big smiles and even paintings from the dolphins.

<http://wtvr.com/2012/11/10/dolphin-therapy-could-be-key-to-soldiers-suffering-from-ptsd/>

Dolphin-Assisted Therapy: Something Magical in the Water

Judith Simon Prager, Ph.D.

Posted: 10/07/11 11:38 AM ET

Matteo and Marco are therapists who work together. Matteo is uneducated and intuitive. Marco is fully credentialed and certified. Yet, Marco is lavish in his praise of Matteo's techniques. "I consider him an equal co-therapist," he says.

Matteo is a dolphin. Yes, a dolphin. Marco is Marco Kuerschner, head therapist at the Curaçao Dolphin Therapy and Research Center (CDTC). As I watch the two of them in the water working with a boy in a "waking coma," Marco tells me that he often takes the lead from Matteo when the dolphin suggests a procedure.

Esther Kooijman, the head dolphin trainer, told me of the time that Matteo refused a signal to gently propel a boy by his feet through the water. Instead he used his rostrum (beak) to press along another part of the child's body. When the therapist exited the water, he mentioned to the parents that Matteo had avoided the child's foot. "Oh, of course," the parent said. "I forgot to tell you that he recently had surgery on that foot." No one had to tell Matteo.

Very often the therapists tell me of their experience of working with patients in their office. They devise their plans for the day, only to find that the dolphins already know what

needs to be done when the therapist and patient come to the water. They do so without signals or instructions. Most often it is what the therapist was thinking of; sometimes, as Marco is quick to testify, Matteo has another plan, and it is a good one.

This aspect—the dolphins' seeming ability to read the patient—is only one aspect of what they seem to bring to the exchanges.

It is said that gazing into the dolphins' eyes is also a profound experience. One mother said that her child with autism looked at her for the first time after working with the dolphins. It has been said that some children begin to walk, communicate, and interact differently after these experiences. On a psychological level, depression is sometimes lifted and world views changed.

Yet, another facet of the dolphins' gifts, perhaps the most profound one, seems to be their ability to manifest unconditional love. They are infinitely patient with special needs children, and tend to favor them over their siblings who may also be invited into the water. They seem to favor children over parents, as well. They appear to home in on the most vulnerable, and they respond to them with infinite kindness.



Here is what I witnessed and learned at CDTC. There were positive, even sometimes remarkable improvements in the lives and abilities of some children with autism, with Down Syndrome, with Cerebral Palsy, and even in some in "waking comas." (Waking comas

refers to a condition in which the children seem unable to respond physically, but their brains in tests show signs of responding to commands, and can selectively think of performing a requested action).

I didn't go cynically to explore the Curaçao Dolphin Therapy and Research Center, but I did carry with me the possible concern that, should I find wonders, you might say "where's the proof" or "you're not being fair to the dolphins." And I wanted to be able to find the right message, and deliver it.



"The Proof"

In another column I'll detail the many talents of dolphins that exceed ours, and that I find nearly beyond belief. For now, I'll mention some of the studies on, and some of the speculations about, their abilities.

How could these sea animals possibly do therapy? There are many theories. Something seems to happen in the water with dolphins. When I first lay down in it, I was stunned to hear the electric sounds that filled the sea around me. The crackling was alive and felt—as much as it sounded—like the water had been turned to champagne. It's a vibration others describe as popcorn, or the crackling of a roaring fire. The water, which feels charged, awakens something within us. Divers tell me that boat captains always advise them that if they encounter wild dolphins they will come up ecstatic. Why?

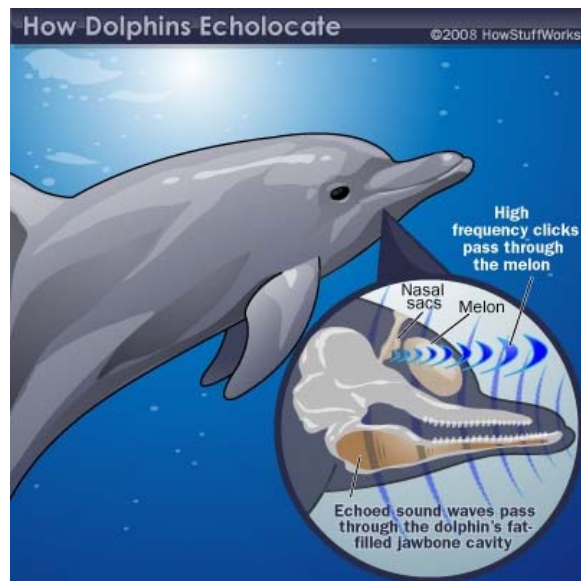
In an ongoing pilot study—Researching the Effects of Dolphin Assisted Therapy at CDTC on Brain Activity—in cooperation with the German Society of Air and Space Medicine and Research, DolphinAid, and the Neurological Clinic Vogtareuth, scientists used water-proof EEG equipment to measure how human brain waves change in interactions with dolphins. The preliminary results have been called "promising." Other research, including an accredited project on children, dolphins and depression, is noted below.(1)

One hypothesis suggests that our brain waves sync to be in resonance with the frequencies of those of dolphins when we're exposed to them. Our normal activity in everyday thought is in beta wavelength. Upon exposure to dolphins, our brainwaves have been measured to go into alpha (the relaxation, effortless alertness, peak performances, daydreaming state, producing lower anxiety and better immune system function) and theta (the meditative state). Moreover, an increase by significant measure of hemispheric synchronization (the balancing of right and left hemispheres in the brain, which is associated with heightened awareness and increased ability to learn) was registered. (2)

Since our normal activity in everyday thought is in beta, we go into alpha during the "ah-ha" phenomenon when we have a great idea while driving or showering. You've doubtless had that wonderful experience. It's a gestalt, out of time, not a linear thought to be explained in one word after another, even as you read these consecutive words here. Rather it is grasped as a whole and then later translated into its discrete units. Einstein explained it to a friend this way: "Thoughts did not come in any verbal formation. I rarely think in words at all. A thought comes, and I try to express it in words afterward." That time-free knowing is exhilarating for certain. And this may partly explain the feeling.

Then there's the sonar.

Dolphins use their sonar/ultrasound to scan the world around them. Medical science uses ultrasound in pregnancies and for diagnostic information, to promote healing and to destroy cataracts, kidney stones and gallstones. Sounds in general can influence our biology, such as our heart rate. Ultrasonic energy from dolphins is four times stronger than that applied medically. The medium through which it is transmitted, water, has an efficiency of delivering sound that is 60 times more efficient than air.



Because our bodies are primarily made of water, including the fluid that moves from the brain to the spinal cord, this interaction may be extremely defining. It may even help to reduce adhesions and scarring from old surgeries. (3) (4) They read the world around them, almost like an X-ray, with this capacity which even the Navy has discovered very useful. This is likely how Matteo knew about the boy's surgery. (5)

What about the Dolphins' Rights?

When I write about therapy dolphins, I'm not talking at all about dolphins in shows where they become circus performers. I am not talking about capturing wild dolphins and, in fact, that has thankfully been against the law in U.S. waters under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act with some modifications since 1972.

I am hoping you will see that dolphins who are involved in this important work must be treated as the care givers that they are. I am aware that this may be controversial; there are those who would say that we are taking advantage of the dolphins and all should be set free. The fact that some 300,000 dolphins in the wild die annually in nets gives the idea of "freedom in the wild" some pause.

The best answers I've heard and seen with my own eyes are that those dolphins who are doing this work mostly were born into it and seem to do it out of love, the way many people are devoted to helping others in nursing and care-giving professions.

I say that because many of the dolphins born in captivity chose to remain in the homes that they know. Experiments both in Eilat Israel and during hurricanes in the U.S. have shown that when dolphins have been offered the option of freedom and are set free to go, most chose not to. Sometimes the young males decided to explore, and finding nothing as good as they had back "home," they returned.

Moreover, setting dolphins who are accustomed to trusting humans into the wild can endanger them. They have been known to approach boats where they may be at the mercy of cruel or irresponsible people who will take advantage of them and possibly harm them.

Almost all the dolphins at CDTC were born in captivity. They have calves who grow up in domestic situations. There are many rescued dolphins—older dolphins who had been in aquariums, etc.—and for them, as it is for guide dogs and dogs and cats who visit hospitals, this is an honorable life. We are all at our best when we have a purpose.

I have seen dolphins who are treated well and treated even as partners in the therapy; dolphins who take great pride in attending to patients, and seem to do it because they choose to.

Matteo had been ill when I first met him. He had been “sent to bed” by the veterinarian and taken off the schedule so that he could recover. However, Matteo didn’t wish to be sidelined. He showed up at his position and waited for his child. “He still seeks interaction with children. It’s important for Matteo to make the decision himself,” Marco said.

Marco says that, although the dolphins are fed fish as they work, Matteo would willingly work the full hour without fish if he’s allowed to do the therapy his way. I myself saw him extending a session after the fish were gone and the other dolphins had finished with their patients, just because he had another thought about what might help the boy in coma.

The Future of Dolphin-Assisted Therapy (DAT)

Swimming with wild or penned dolphins is not dolphin-assisted therapy, although having any exchange with them, as with horses, dogs and cats, can be a therapeutic experience. Dolphin-assisted therapy requires a wide variety of physical and clinical therapists, trainers, veterinarians, vast expanses of water and great care for the dolphins and the patients. Anything short of a scientifically proven, medically correct, therapeutically approved facility may be just a jump on a bandwagon that doesn’t ultimately support all concerned and could lead to disappointment. And it is not my hope to encourage anything less than the highest levels of experience for all concerned.

While in Curaçao, I had dinner with Kristen “KiKi” Kuhnert, program director at CDTC. She told me the story of her son, Timmy, who as a toddler had drowned in a tragic accident and been revived. Sadly, he remained in a coma for many months. Desperate for help, she heard about Dolphin-assisted therapy and brought her son from Germany to America for a therapeutic experience with dolphins. On his fourth visit, Timmy woke up, not only woke up, but laughed. Although he remained physically disabled, his mind was responsive and he was able to interact again with the world.

Kiki was so impressed with the dolphins’ effect that she began an organization called DolphinAid, which raises funds around the world for those children who would most benefit from this therapy.

DolphinAid can also provide guidelines so that people can find certified DAT locations where dolphins are treated well, therapists in a variety of disciplines are provided and everything is in place for the best possible outcomes.



DAT isn’t a panacea; it is expensive, and until insurance companies believe that it will make a difference, it’s not covered. There are no guarantees and not all programs have the knowledge, standards and personnel to do it right.

But while I was at CDTC, Marco received in the mail a book written by the mother of a young man with autism who is also an artist. The young man had visited Matteo several times and their interactions had shifted him to a level at which his expression became not only verbal but was, in his mother’s words, “transformed.” In her book, *An Unexpected Life*, Debra Chwast describes her son Seth’s experience with Matteo. She talks about the “completing of the circles” of conversation, which is so difficult in children with autism, of your turn to talk and mine. She says, Seth “and Marco took turns, never interrupted each other and made circles nonstop. They did it without using a single word ... Bypassing what we call language, they had communication that was functional and joyful.” Seth’s maturity and self-determination were much improved and now he now has many gallery showings of his

artwork as a result. I looked at Marco's face as he showed me the book. He was as proud of Matteo and Seth as he could be.

And by the way, that boy in the waking coma? It's believed he's aware, somewhere locked inside (in what Marco considered "a transient state of perception"), and after only two weeks of communicating with Matteo, Marco says the boy has begun to "initiate, coordinate, and reproduce" vocalizations for the first time in two and a half years. This presented what Marco called "a quantum leap in his perspective." His parents were amazed.



You may know that I teach Verbal First Aid™ around the world. It focuses on the power of words to help the healing, and I have been thrilled with what has been accomplished along those lines. Imagine my delight when I explored for myself the magical ways that Non-Verbal First Aid exists in a dynamic with a being whose manner, beyond words, is healing. (5)

I will write in future columns about how Cranio-Sacral therapists and dolphins team up to help adults as well as children, and about the many unsung talents of dolphins.

There's something magic in the water. It is transformative, and I believe it won't be long before science catches up with it. Our next steps as conscious humans must include finding a way to learn from the dolphins and become healing beings of unconditional love, as they are.

Notes

(1) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16308382>

(2)

<http://www.aquathought.com/briefing/dolphres.html>

(3) <http://www.healingtherapies.info/Dolphin.htm>

(4) http://www.awakening-healing.com/Healing/Dolphin_and_Healing.htm

(5) [*Souls of the Sea*, Scott Taylor](#)

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/judith-simon-prager-phd/dolphin-assisted-therapy_b_996389.html

Dolphin Reef at Eilat

At the Dolphin Reef, eight dolphins (six females and two males) live together the whole year in a spacious area about 14.000 square meters separated from the open sea by a net.

These dolphins are not behavior modified nor deprived from any of their habits; hunting, playing, mating, or fighting—while the humans are merely visitors in their world. Thus, the Dolphin Reef, Eilat offers a unique chance to observe the impressive social life of bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) and the voluntary friendship between humans and dolphins.

The bond between the trainers and the dolphins is built on trust and affection.

This relationship makes a very special program possible called "Supportive Experience with the Aid of Dolphins" for children suffering from many different disorders and diseases: cancer, behavioral problems, sexual abuse, Down Syndrome, autism, ADD, ADHD, and all kinds of mental retardation.

The program initiated by Sophie Donio (Established in 1991), is a long-term program for children aged six years and above.

It is called "supportive experience" instead of "therapy" because the aim is to encourage emotional, social, cognitive, and/or physical improvements by giving a moral support and by making the children smile, rather than healing them.

The research facility, also situated in the Dolphin Reef, is called "Dolphin Behavior Research Laboratory" and was founded in 1994,

in special cooperation with the University of Berlin, Germany led by Dr. Frank Veit, till 2006. Since 2007 the research laboratory is under the supervision of Ben Gurion University of the Negev, as part of its Eilat Campus and is headed by Dr. Nadav Shashar.



The scientific research facility examines various aspects of dolphin behavior, communication, and dolphin-assisted therapy. The work of the lab is strictly noninvasive, meaning that no experiments are carried out here that could possibly harm or harass the animals.

<http://www.dolphinreef.co.il/Default.aspx?tabid=30>

The unique human-dolphin connection serves as the basis upon which the Dolphin Reef was established and developed. We believe that in order to develop, enjoy, and preserve this connection over time, we must bring to the human-dolphin encounter mutual and unconditional goodwill. What this means is that in our encounter with the dolphins, our focus is on one another, wherein we see the encounter as an end unto itself, and not a means to achieving some other end.

A person who comes to an encounter with a dolphin in a spirit of respect, consideration, and sensitivity, free of the desire to achieve anything except the encounter itself, will derive the most from it: feelings of warmth, power, serenity, joy ...

Of course, it takes two to tango. In order that the dolphin will derive the most from the encounter, it too must focus on the human as

an individual, and not on the human as a means to achieving an end.

The onus for conducting such a stress-free encounter is on us, the humans, since we have control over intervention in the dolphin's social structure and the fulfillment of its primary needs of food, habitat, and so on. The dolphin, on the other hand, can offer only itself and its friendship.

If we wish to meet dolphins who are free of the expectations that they will receive something from us, we must refrain from exploiting that same power of control to which we referred, and instead act on one of the following alternatives:

Unconditionally fulfilling the needs of the dolphin which are possible for us to fulfill, without any connection to the encounter, OR

Not fulfilling those needs at all, therefore not creating expectations on the part of the dolphins to receive anything from us, so that they continue to be responsible for fulfilling their own needs.

We believe that the preferred path leading to the optimal human-dolphin bond is a combination of the two approaches, wherein the tendency is to always lean toward the second approach (meaning minimal intervention in the incidents / needs for which our intervention is essential), while at the same time acting in accordance with option no. 1 (that is, to supply those needs unconditionally).

<http://www.dolphinreef.co.il/Default.aspx?tabid=33>



Possible Motivation for Morad's Attack

Islamic Arab society is generally conservative regarding gender roles and relationships between males and females, especially when compared to English-speaking and European cultures.

Gender roles are affected by tradition and religion in Palestinian culture:

The Relative Status of Women and Men.

As in other Arab cultures, men are at the center of Palestinian life. The family patriarch makes all decisions regarding living arrangements, children's marriages, and money. Obedience to one's father or husband is one of the highest indicators of honor in an Arab woman's life.

Religious Beliefs

Muslims are the predominant religious group in Palestine, comprising around three quarters of the population, and Islamic practices prevail in the territories. Most Palestinian Muslims belong to the Sunni sect.



Ramadan in Jerusalem

The word Islam means "submission," to the will of Allah (God) and obedience to his commands. Muslims believe that the prophet Muhammad (c. 570-632 C.E.) received Allah's commands from the angel Gabriel and that these revelations are recorded in the Koran (or Quran), the Islamic holy book. The Koran sets forth rules for everyday behavior as well as religious doctrine. Islam is inseparable from

day-to-day life, so religion, politics, and culture are all bound together in Muslim communities.

<http://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Palestine-West-Bank-and-Gaza-Strip.html>

Because religious doctrine sets the rules, any perceived violation of those rules—especially if that violation might bring dishonor upon the family—would be viewed seriously.

From The Caliph Speaks: Boy-Girl Relationships in Islam

From what I have been reading, from what parents have been telling me, and from what has been confirmed in discussions with many young Muslim brothers and sisters from countries all across the world it has become clear that more and more young Muslims are not following the guidelines for relationships between boys and girls so clearly set out in Islam. What Islam says is right is easy to remember because we are told that **before marriage there is to be virtually no contact at all between males and females** [emphasis added]. In today's world, while still a minority, an increasing number of young Muslims are having relationships with members of the opposite sex that are clearly outside the limits set by Islam. **These relationships beyond the limits of Islam range from seemingly innocent friendships, to boyfriend-girlfriend relationships, all the way to the complete sexual relationship** [emphasis added] that has been made right by Allah only for those who are married to each other.

<http://caliph.wordpress.com/articles/boy-girl/>

Morad was attacked because the brother of a girl with whom Morad attended school interpreted an innocent text message as crossing the boundaries established by Islamic tradition. In one interpretation of the rules regarding gender roles and strictures they place on women and men, the factors go beyond religion and are influenced by the secondary status Palestinians generally hold in Israel:

Women in Palestinian society

“The family honor” is the concept in whose name most of the restrictions upon the Palestinian woman’s freedom of movement are imposed. In particular, women’s individual liberty continues to be violated by the segregation of unmarried people of opposite sexes, a segregation based upon religious and traditional values as well as social conventions. Thus the unmarried woman is prevented from participating in socio-cultural activities in which men take part; this includes not only going to the cinema or to the coffee house, but sometimes even sitting together with guests in her own house. The married woman’s freedom of movement is also restricted: She too is not allowed to participate in socio-cultural activities in which men are present, unless she is accompanied by her husband.



Women prepare for Eid, the feast celebrating the end of Ramadan

.... A father’s prestige and authority over his family are [great], and only very few young people would dare to defy the “family” and marry a person of their own choice. The imposed segregation between unmarried men and women makes it difficult for love relationships to develop, and enhances the power of the head of the family: In the absence of love ties, the resistance of his sons and daughters is weaker than it might have been, and it is that much easier for him to impose upon them his own will in the matter of marriage.

... The inferior status of women in the patriarchal family is a circumstance shared by

all Palestinian women ... and sets them apart from the other part of their class, the Palestinian men

<http://libcom.org/library/changes-palestinian-society>

Although there is little to no justification for beating a boy nearly to death over an insult—perceived or actual—this information may make the reasons why the girl’s brother and his friends may have deemed it necessary to attack and punish Morad more understandable.

When an entrenched system—even one that does not actually benefit its adherents—is challenged, more than a girl’s honor is at stake. Although the status quo for many Palestinians in Israel is lower than that of even the poorest Israeli Jews, patriarchy—enshrined in the teachings of the Qur’an—is a defining characteristic for Palestinians. Holding to the tenets of Islam, therefore, raises them higher than the Western culture with which Jewish-Israeli culture is equated.

For Palestinian women themselves, however, their perceptions of themselves seem to be breaking away from the patriarchal traditions.

Rising Above: Disrupting Perceptions of Palestinian Women

By Sadiqua Hamdan

There is little literature today that highlights a Palestinian woman’s thoughts, opinions, and beliefs regarding her status in society, individuality, role within the community and marriage, the labor market, and views on the West.

Most of the available research and media pieces focus on Palestinian women in the context of religious oppression, domestic violence, displacement, and conflict. Had I not been born to Palestinian parents, I may have thought this research provided an accurate depiction of women in Palestine.

That’s when it occurred to me it would be wonderful to take a trip to the West Bank and

interview Palestinian women of all backgrounds and ages about their lives. ...

The product of my research was “The Evolution of a Palestinian Woman from 1940 until Now.” I wrote this thesis to give voice to Palestinian women’s beliefs, thoughts, and opinions in the social, educational, political, and economic scene, and to challenge the “one-size-fits-all” approach to understanding Palestinian and Arab women. In order to reach these goals, I decided to convert the thesis research into a published book.

My hope is that this book will empower women all over the world, including Palestinians, to take inventory of their lives and find ways in which to create more harmony and balance between themselves and others (both men and women), and in their societies.



Relationships—A Glimpse Into the Evolution of a Palestinian Woman

“Marriage is a nice thing if you find a good man. It used to be that a woman couldn’t look at a man just to look or talk. A woman didn’t decide whom she was going to marry. Her parents made all the arrangements ahead of time for her. The girl who got married at 14 or 15 is unheard of these days unless you come from a dirt-poor family who needs the daughter’s dowry to feed the rest of the younger kids. Now, girls wait until they are at least 19 or 20 years old before getting married. They want, rightfully so, education.”
—Rania, 53 year old mother of nine children, widowed, completed 6th grade education

A common misperception about Palestinian and Middle Eastern societies is that most women have no choice about whether to get married. Although male patriarchal structures remain intact, it is but one factor among many others, such as conservative v. liberal interpretations of religion, and culture, which affect expectations about women and marriage.

A family in Jerusalem functions very differently from a family in Saudi Arabia, even if they are both considered equally religious. The same applies to villages, towns, and cities within a country or region—what is culturally or religiously acceptable in Jerusalem, for example, may not be so in the Palestinian village of Beit Liqya.

Twenty-eight out of 55 women interviewed felt that being with a man was either very important or important. This includes seven women who believed a relationship was important as long as a woman could find a good partner or the right person. These women were not interested in being in a relationship just for the sake of it. Also included in these 28 responses were seven women who felt education was more important than getting married. This left eighteen out of 55 women who thought the idea of a relationship was nice, a matter of personal choice, or not important at all.

<http://muftah.org/rising-above-disrupting-perceptions-of-palestinian-women/>

Questions for Research and Discussion

1. Morad is a Palestinian, but his family live outside of the high-tension areas on the West Bank or the Gaza strip. (There are nearly two million Israeli Arabs who have Israeli citizenship, but most identify themselves as Palestinians.) Dr. Ilan Kutz is an Israeli Jew, working out of Meir Medical Center near Morad's village. In the opinion of Dani Menkin, co-director of *Dolphin Boy*, Dr. Kutz was part of the process to realize the "magic" that healed Morad. If it weren't for Dr. Kutz's vision, Menkin said in a phone interview, Morad would have been institutionalized and might never have come out of his catatonic state. The staff at Dolphin Reef at Eilat is predominantly Jewish, and Morad's girlfriend in Eilat was Jewish, as well.

In the article on [page 11](#), Yonatan Nir is quoted about what he hoped could be an impact from *Dolphin Boy*.

"The film hopes to inspire people to seek a solution for peace in Israel-Palestine: 'Dolphins can see the heart and the inside of a body, the skeleton of a human being, not his identity, race, or religion. He only looks at him as a human being,' he says. 'I wish we could apply this and the same attitude in Israel.'"

In interview with Judith Manassen-Ramon on [page 13](#), she responds to the observation that references to the ethnic tensions between Israeli Jews and Arabs are absent from the film:

"There is always an Arab-Israeli context in Israel. But the avoidance of the subject was on purpose because it's a human story, though it is located in the Middle East and in Israel. It's a story between a father and a son, a doctor and patient, a man and an animal, and that was the emphasis of the story and all the rest around it is what each and every viewer brings to the story, from his own world."

As you were watching *Dolphin Boy*, what thoughts, if any, passed through your mind about the ethnic relationships?

How much awareness do you have about the Arab-Israeli conflicts that have been going on since the state of Israel was established in 1948? Is this something you have studied in school or discussed at home, and, if so, does the way the film shows that the important goal was to restore Morad to health and that his ethnicity was apparently irrelevant correspond with or contradict what you have learned? Explain.

Read Judith Manassen-Ramon's quotation above. How would this have been a different film if the political context of ethnic relations had been included in the narrative?

2. Morad's beating occurred because a Palestinian girl's brother believed that a text message sent to her by Morad indicated a flirtation between the two. Refer to the information in [Possible Motivations for Morad's Attack](#), which presents the traditional rules of behavior expected between boys and girls countered with what seem to be the changing attitudes of women toward these rules.

Why do you think that, even though the "guidelines" laid out in the Qur'an proscribe personal contact between the sexes outside of marriage, the girl's brother believed that a flirtation warranted the extreme response of beating Morad nearly to death? What motivations, aside from adherence to religious and cultural traditions, do you think there might have been?

3. Although there are scenes that take place in the home village in which Asad (Morad's father) discusses the effects on the family's life and the need to see the perpetrators punished, there is no information given about the general public perception of the beating. The brother and his friends, when seen at the court, seem unrepentant and defiant.

Discuss that courthouse scene and speculate on how this long journey from Morad's grievous injuries to the ultimate vindication from the perpetrators' conviction for the crime would have been addressed and

discussed in Morad's village. Would generational differences have affected the reactions and perceptions? If so, how?

4. There also is no mention in the film of the girl who received the text from Morad or the impact this had on her life. Based on the article on [Palestinian women's changing attitudes](#) and your own reactions, how do you think that the girl reacted to her brother's actions and Morad's condition? How would other women have reacted to these events, and how might generational differences affect the reactions?

5. After seeing the film and looking through the resources on [dolphin-assisted therapy](#) (DAT), do you feel that DAT is a valid and effective form of treatment for PTSD? Explain your answer.

Arguments against DAT (and some animal-assisted therapies in general) cite the lack of quantifiable evidence of improvement in the conditions it treats. Do you agree that without data that points directly to the therapeutic interactions between a patient and a dolphin and can exclude other factors contributing to a patient's improvement (or cure), DAT cannot be deemed to be therapeutic in a clinical or medical sense? Why or why not?

If you believe that DAT is a valid form of treatment, based on what the film presented, explain how you think it helped Morad in particular.

Resources

Additional Resources on Dolphin-Assisted Therapy

Dolphin-assisted therapy works: scientific findings from Eilat and Florida. Nicole Kohn and Rolf Oerter, Department of Psychology, University of Munich, Leopoldstraße 13, 80802, Munich.
<http://article.sapub.org/10.5923.j.ijcp.20130101.01.html>

Abstract: Aim of the study was to examine whether dolphin-assisted therapy has an effect at all and how a possible effect can be explained. 220 young handicapped patients underwent a dolphin-assisted therapy in Eilat, Israel, and Key Largo, Florida, U.S.A. In a pre-post-follow-up design the efficiency of the treatment was tested by a questionnaire with a five-point Likert Scale that was administered to parents as well as teachers and therapists at home, respectively. Subjects were asked before the therapy, six weeks after the therapy, and, in Key Largo, also six months later. Factor analysis of the items resulted in four factors: cognition, emotion, conspicuous behavior, and motor skills. Internal consistency was satisfying (Cronbach's alpha lies between .600 and .926). Correlations between the teachers'/therapists' judgments and parents' ratings ranged from .411 to .533. Since the ratings of teachers and therapists at home can serve as a criterion of external validity, results can be assessed with regard to their validity. In all four domains parents as well as teachers/therapist perceived an improvement. This was also true after six months, where the raters observed further progress. Therefore, results suggest that dolphin-assisted therapy had positive effects for children and adolescents under investigation. The therapy procedure differed remarkably in Eilat and Key Largo which support the assumption that the dolphin himself and not other additional conditions is the main condition for the outcome.

Dolphin-assisted therapy: changes in interaction and communication between children with severe disabilities and their caregivers. Breitenbach, E.; Stumpf, Eva; F., Lorenzov; E.H. Anthrozoös, 2009 Sep; 22(3): 277-289. <http://www.petpartners.org/document.doc?id=639>

Abstract: The goal of this study was to test if dolphin-assisted therapy could be an effective therapeutic intervention for children with significant social and communication disabilities. Furthermore, it was crucial to determine the relative importance of the dolphin and the parent consultation factors implicit in the therapy. The method employed was a before-and-after comparison of three control groups and one experimental group. In the experimental group, all three aspects of the therapeutic intervention—interaction with dolphins, parent counseling and a curative, relaxed environment—were included. Control group 1 (outpatient therapy group) was limited to just interaction with dolphins. In control group 2 (farm animal group), the parents were counseled after the children interacted with farm animals (which replaced dolphins). Control group 3 received no treatment. The post-treatment parent questionnaire results revealed therapeutic success in the areas of both productive and receptive language, processing of non-verbal cues, social skills, and self-confidence. Observations of parent-child interaction indicated that after treatment in the experimental group, interactions of children could be interpreted more accurately, on a long-term basis. The discovered therapeutic effects occurred regardless of whether the children were in the water during therapy or not.

Randomized controlled trial of animal facilitated therapy with dolphins in the treatment of depression. Antonioli, Christian; Reveley, Michael A. BMJ. Nov 26; 2005, 331(7527):1231-4.
<http://www.petpartners.org/document.doc?id=276>

Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness of animal-assisted therapy with dolphins, controlling for the influence of the natural setting, in the treatment of mild to moderate depression and in the context of the biophilia hypothesis.

Setting: The study was carried out in Honduras. Recruitment took place in the United States and Honduras.

Design: Single, blind, randomized, controlled trial.

Participants: Outpatients, recruited through announcements on the internet, radio, newspapers, and hospitals.

Results: Of the 30 patients randomly assigned to the two groups of treatment, two dropped out of the treatment group after the first week and three withdrew their consent in the control group after they had been randomly allocated. For the participants who completed the study, the mean severity of the depressive symptoms was more reduced in the treatment group than in the control group (Hamilton rating scale for depression, $P = 0.002$; Beck depression inventory, $P = 0.006$). For the sample analyzed by modified intention to treat and last observation carried forward, the mean differences for the Hamilton and Beck scores between the two groups was highly significant ($P = 0.007$ and $P = 0.012$, respectively).

Conclusions: The therapy was effective in alleviating symptoms of depression after two weeks of treatment. Animal-assisted therapy with dolphins is an effective treatment for mild to moderate depression, which is based on a holistic approach, through interaction with animals in nature.

Behavior of dolphins towards adults and children during swim-with-dolphin programs and towards children with disabilities during therapy sessions. Karsten Brensing and Katrin Link, Institute of Biology, Domain of Behavioral Biology, Free University of Berlin, Berlin, Germany, Institut für Meereskunde, Kiel, Germany. *Anthrozoos* 16 (4) 2003: 315-31. <http://www.petpartners.org/document.doc?id=181>

In recent years, dolphin-assisted therapy has become very popular and an increasing number of facilities worldwide offer therapy programs with dolphins. In contrast to other animal-assisted therapy programs, dolphins are not domestic animals; they are mostly caught in the wild and there are still no studies on their behavior during these therapies. However, there is speculation that the behavior of dolphins toward people with mental and physical disabilities may play an important role in the success of the therapy. We observed 83 sessions with five untrained dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) at Dolphins Plus, a fenced area with ocean water in the Florida Keys, USA. Our detailed observations of contact and distance behavior between dolphins and different groups of swimmers (adults, children, and children with mental and physical disabilities) show that, in general, dolphins prefer small humans to adults. One dolphin showed a clear preference toward children with mental and physical disabilities, and we conclude that she showed assisting behavior.

Effectiveness of dolphin-assisted therapy as a behavioral intervention for young children with disabilities. Tracy L. Humphries, Ph.D. *Bridges* Volume 1, Number 6, May 2003 <http://czydelfinoterapia.pl/wp-content/uploads/Effectiveness-of-Dolphin-Assisted-Therapy-as-a-Behavioral-Intervention-for-Young-Children-with-Disabilities1.pdf>

This research synthesis focuses on the effectiveness of dolphin-assisted therapy as a behavioral intervention for young children with disabilities. The practice constituting the focus of this synthesis contains the following characteristics: (1) the therapy targets a specific goal for a child with disabilities and (2) the child's correct responses toward achieving the goal are reinforced through direct and/or indirect contact with a dolphin. All studies reviewed in this report failed to adequately control for a number of possible threats to validity or alternative explanations. Therefore, study outcomes could not be conclusively attributed to the intervention. Claims of the effectiveness of using dolphins as a procedure for improving the behaviors of young children with disabilities are therefore not supported by available research evidence.

Animal-assisted prolonged exposure: a treatment for survivors of sexual assault suffering posttraumatic stress disorder. Lefkowitz, Carin; Paharia, Indira; Prout, Maurice; Debiak, Dennis; Bleiberg, James. *Society & Animals*. 2005; 23(4): 275-295. <http://www.petpartners.org/document.doc?id=820>

Cognitive-behavioral therapy: a case report—animal assisted therapy. Eggiman, Janet. *Topics in Advanced Practice Nursing eJournal*. 2006; 6(3). (7 pages). <http://www.petpartners.org/document.doc?id=1136>

Integrating animals in psychotherapy: the dog as co-therapist in the hypnotherapeutic treatment of trauma—a case report. Mende, Eva-Maria; Mende, Matthias. *Contemporary Hypnosis & Integrative Therapy*. 2011; 28(1): 8-16. <http://www.petpartners.org/document.doc?id=1020>

Animal therapy is making strides in the treatment of post traumatic stress disorder. Elements: Behavioral Health. <http://www.elementsbehavioralhealth.com/trauma-ptsd/animal-therapy-ptsd-treatment/>

Use of animal-assisted therapy in the rehabilitation of an assault victim with a concurrent mood disorder. Sockalingam, Sanjeev; Li, Madeline; Krishnadev, Upasana; Hanson, Keith; Balaban, Kayli; Pacione, Laura R; Bhalerao, Shree. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 2008; 29(1): 73-84. Correspondence to Bhalerao, St. Michael's Hospital, Medical Psychiatry Service, 30 Bond Street, Victoria Wing 17046, Toronto, ON M5B1 W8, Canada; bhaleraos@smh.toronto.on.ca; <http://www.petpartners.org/document.doc?id=269>

Dolphin-assisted therapy triggers health breakthroughs in son and mother. Up Close: HealthPlex Clinical Services, Aug. 2005. <http://www.upledger.com/newsletters/UPCAUG05.pdf>

Dolphin-assisted therapy: claims versus evidence. Fiksdal, Britta L., D. Houlihan, A. Barnes. *Autism Research and Treatment*, Vol. 2012 (2012). <http://www.hindawi.com/journals/aurt/2012/839792/>

Dolphin assisted therapy. David Wolgroch. *Positive Health Online*, Issue 38: March 1999. <http://www.positivehealth.com/article/animals/dolphin-assisted-therapy>

About Dolphins

Q. How many species of dolphins are there in the world?

A: There are 33 species in the dolphin family. Dolphin species vary in size from the Hector dolphin (approximate length 1.3 meters) to the Orca or Killer whale (approximate length up to 9 meters).

Q. Do dolphins sleep?

A: Like every mammal, dolphins need to sleep. Since underwater life requires breathing control, dolphins have developed a special way to sleep. The two halves of the brain sleep independently, and never simultaneously. In this way, one side can always control breathing, while the other controls basic behavioral patterns.

Q. Why don't dolphins get cold during the winter or hot during the summer?

A: Who said dolphins don't get cold? In the wintertime, just as land mammals grow thick fur, dolphins increase the thickness of their insulating layer of fatty tissue (blubber).

Q. Are there dolphins in the Red Sea?

A: There are at least 9 dolphin species native to the Red Sea. The false killer whale grows to a length of almost 6 meters, but most Red Sea dolphins belong to smaller species. Most common are spotted dolphins (about 2 meters) and bottlenose dolphins (about 2.5 meters).

Q. How do dolphins behave during and after birth?

A: After a gestation of 12 months, a single dolphin calf is born tail first. Labor can last up to 2.5 hours, and the female in labor may be accompanied by an assisting animal during and after delivery. Other members of the group have been observed approaching mother and calf shortly after birth. The calf nurses for about 18 months, but may stay close to its mother for up to 6 years.

Q. Does an entire dolphin group help to raise the calves, and if so, how?

A: Even early in life, there is close contact and interaction between newborn calves and other group members, which we think helps the calves learn social skills. The assistance of other animals may also aid dolphin mothers in foraging.

Q. How do we know that dolphins used to live on land?

A: Anatomically, dolphins still possess the main features of land mammals, such as skeletal structure and the location of internal organs. Dolphins even have hair, one of the main characteristics that mammals developed on land, though dolphin hair is minimal. The fossil record reveals the evolutionary stages from four-legged land mammals to marine mammals with reduced extremities.

Q. What abilities did dolphins develop in order to adapt to life in the water?

A: Dolphins underwent many physiological and morphological changes, among which are: the streamlining of the overall body shape, development of a layer of insulating fatty tissue (blubber), and an increase in muscular oxygen storage capacity. One major anatomical change was the repositioning of the nasal opening to the top of the head, now termed the “blowhole” in dolphins and whales.

Q. Is the dolphin a fish?

A: No, the dolphin is a sea mammal.

Q. What makes a dolphin a mammal?

A: Dolphins are warm-blooded, bear live young, suckle their babies, and breathe air with their lungs.

Q. What is a dolphin’s life expectancy?

A: It depends on the species of dolphin. Bottlenose dolphins live between 35 and 40 years.

Q. To what depth do dolphins dive?

A: It depends on the species of dolphin. Most can dive to around 300 meters.

Q. For how long can a dolphin hold its breath?

A: It depends on the species of dolphin. Bottlenose dolphins can dive for about 30 minutes.

Q. How fast do dolphins swim?

A: It depends on the species of dolphin. Bottlenose dolphins can swim between 40 and 60 kilometers an hour.

Q. How does the blowhole work?

A: The blowhole, situated on top of the dolphin’s head, is actually the nasal opening. It is surrounded by strong muscles that ensure its closure during diving. When the dolphin surfaces, the blowhole opens to allow exhaling and inhaling. The dolphin cannot breathe through its mouth.

Q. What is the weight and length of a dolphin?

A: An adult Bottlenose dolphin is between 1.9 and 4.5 meters long, and weighs between 150 and 650 kilograms.

Q. What is the significance of the dolphin's tail movements?

A: Fish tails move from side to side. Dolphins, like other sea mammals, move their tails up and down.

Q. How long can a dolphin live out of the water?

A: In principle, a dolphin can live for many hours out of the water, since, like humans, it breathes with its lungs. However, a dolphin's skin must be kept damp at all times. In addition, its body must be cooled by pouring ice water on its flippers, which carry numerous blood vessels just below the surface of the skin. Finally, when a dolphin lies on the ground, as opposed to floating in the water, pressure is created on its internal organs, which can cause general stress and difficulty.

Q. Which parts of the dolphin's body are most sensitive?

A: The sensitive parts of a dolphin's body are its eyes, air hole, sex organs, and tail.

Q. How many teeth does a dolphin have?

A: Between 80 and 100.

Q. Does a dolphin lose old teeth and grow new ones?

A: No. The dolphin keeps its teeth for its whole life.

Q. At what age does a dolphin reach sexual maturity?

A: The females reach sexual maturity at about eight years of age, and the males at about twelve years.

Q. How can you tell a male dolphin from a female?

A: The male dolphin has two slits in its lower belly, one for its penis and the other for its anus. The female dolphin has only one slit, which contains both the anus and the vagina.

Q. How do dolphins copulate?

A: They copulate underwater, while swimming, lying belly to belly. The male inserts his penis into the female's vagina for several seconds. The male sex organ is controlled by a muscle.

Q. When do dolphins copulate?

A: Dolphins copulate for pleasure all year round. There are certain months of estrus during which the females can become pregnant.

Q. What is sonar and how does it work?

A: Sonar is a sensory system which dolphins use to explore their environment. The dolphin emits specific sounds (clicks), which bounce off objects in its path. The echo is received and processed by the dolphin into a three-dimensional picture of an object.

Q. Where is the male dolphin's sex organ located?

A: It is located in its lower belly. It is an internal organ, and the male dolphin brings it out with a special muscle for mating.

Q. For how many months do dolphins gestate?

A: Gestation lasts for about one year.

Q. How does the female dolphin behave during labor?

A: The female dolphin generally swims near the surface of the water, in order to allow the newborn to more easily get its first breath of air. Before birth, she swims over and over on the same path through the water.

Q. Where does the dolphin give birth—on the surface of the water, or deeper down?

A: Just below the surface of the water.

Q. How often can a dolphin become pregnant?

A: Approximately every two to three years.

Q. How many babies can a dolphin bear at once?

A: A dolphin bears a single calf at each birth.

Q. How long does birth last?

A: Birth can last for an hour or two. It is thought best if labor lasts for 45 to 60 minutes.

Q. How and where does the baby dolphin nurse?

A: The baby dolphin nurses from its mother through two nipples located in the mother's lower belly, near her sex organs. The baby nurses underwater by pressing on the nipples, which spurt milk into its mouth. The baby has no lips with which to suck, so it must nurse by pressing down.

Q. For how long does the baby nurse from its mother?

A: This depends on the bond between the baby and its mother. The average is a year and a half.

Q. For how long does the calf stay close to its mother?

A: This depends a lot on the individual calf and mother. There are certain mothers who tend to worry a lot and stick close to their calves for a long time. However, the average is about a year and a half.

Q. Why do dolphins have sonar and what do they use it for?

A: As an adaptation to life in the water, where vision can be extremely limited, dolphins developed this unique sense to explore their environment. Specifically, sonar is used for orientation, detection of prey and predators, and possibly to stun prey during foraging.

Q. How does the rest of the group treat the calf?

A: The mother raises her calf with the help of others. When she wants to rest, young female dolphins serve as babysitters. The whole group teaches the calf to fish, swim, copulate, and communicate.

Q. At what age does the dolphin start eating fish?

A: Usually at about four months, but it continues to nurse for a year and a half, on the average.

Q. What senses does a dolphin have?

A: A dolphin has all of the senses humans do, except for the sense of smell.

Q. Can dolphins see?

A: Yes, very well.

Q. Do dolphins have ears? Where are they, and what do they look like?

A: The dolphin has two ears and excellent hearing. Its ears are located behind its eyes. To an onlooker, they appear to be two little holes about the size of a pin.

Q. How can you tell that a dolphin is sick?

A: Sick dolphins usually stop eating, lose weight, and hardly swim at all, preferring to float instead. They also breathe more rapidly.

Q. How can you tell what disease a dolphin has?

A: The most efficient way is by testing the blood, stool, digestive juices, and breath. In some cases, it is enough for us to carefully watch for signs that are familiar to us from previous cases.

Q. How do you care for a sick dolphin?

A: Treatment varies. There are cases which require isolation from the rest of the group, such as contagious diseases. Most treatments use the same medications used for human illnesses, such as antibiotics.

Q. What diseases can a dolphin get?

A: They can suffer from the same diseases that people do. The most common are respiratory, skin, and digestive diseases.

Q. How do dolphins produce sounds?

A: Dolphins do not have vocal cords. Sounds are produced by a system of air sacs situated just below the blowhole. Air is moved between air sacs through valves (called “nasal plugs”), thereby creating a variety of sounds, which are transmitted into the water through the forehead.

Q. What do dolphins eat?

A: Dolphins eat saltwater fish and cephalopods, such as squid or octopus.

Q. How much do dolphins eat?

A: Each dolphin eats according to its size and appetite. On the average, an adult dolphin eats about 12-15 kilograms of food a day.

Q. Do dolphins swallow their food whole, or chew it?

A: The dolphin swallows the fish, which is digested in its stomach.

Q. If a dolphin doesn't chew, why does it need teeth?

A: The dolphin uses its teeth for hunting, and sometimes also for self-defense.

Q. Do dolphins fight with each other?

A: Absolutely. Sometimes they fight for fun, but sometimes they fight over females, or to get attention.

Q. How do the males relate to each other?

A: The males protect the group. The young males constitute a certain threat to the adult, breeding male, and there may be battles for the position of dominant breeder.

Q. Are dolphins naturally friendly to humans?

A: Even in nature, dolphins have been seen approaching ships and fishing vessels, apparently out of curiosity and interest.

Q. Could a dolphin attack a person?

A: There are no known cases of dolphins attacking humans—dolphins by nature are not aggressive. If a human bothers a dolphin, the dolphin simply swims away from him or her.

Q. Do dolphins mate for life?

A: No, dolphins live in a sort of harem—a single male copulates with and impregnates a number of females.

Q. Is physical contact important for dolphins?

A: Yes, especially in terms of comfort, pleasure, scratching, and sexual stimulation.

Q. Which are more intelligent, dolphins or humans?

A: This question is impossible to answer, as there are no objective criteria for defining intelligence, especially when comparing entire species.

Q. Why are dolphins killed in Japan?

A: Japanese fishermen consider them to be competitors. They believe that by killing dolphins, they increase the supply of fish.

Q. Why isn't the killing of dolphins stopped?

A: This would be a difficult task for a number of reasons. First of all, global water pollution directly affects the dolphins' quality of life. Commercial fishermen also cause great harm to the dolphin population; these fishermen represent a group with considerable political and financial resources.

Q. In which seas are dolphins found?

A: In all the seas of the world, and in rivers as well.

Q. Do dolphins live in a group?

A: Yes, the social life of dolphins is very important to their survival.

Q. What is the social structure of the group?

A: In general, a group of dolphins consists of a dominant male, adult females, and calves (babies). The young males swim together at some distance from the rest of the group. When a young male feels strong enough, he tries to take the place of the dominant male.

Q. Is dolphin language the same all over the world, or does it vary?

A: We do not yet know enough about dolphin language. We still don't understand the structure of their communication, so we can't compare different regions.

Q. Is a dolphin's brain bigger or smaller than ours?

A: Comparing absolute size and weight, the average bottlenose dolphin brain is about 20% bigger than the average human brain. In general, it is more informative to include additional measurements in these comparisons, such as the extent of cortex convolution, or the ratio of brain volume to body surface area (the encephalization quotient).

<http://www.dolphinreef.co.il/Default.aspx?tabid=32>