

Healing Touch

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Shari Sternberger, Rigel's owner, takes a hands-on approach to helping him heal. She's a schooled and certified Healing Touch Practitioner for animals and people. She's trained to assist with surgeries, injuries, wound healing and illness, reduce anxiety, address behavioral issues and more. And since she can't tell Rigel to take a load off and sit still, she's doing all she can to help him recover as quickly as possible.

Ancient Wisdom Meets The 21st Century

By Harriet Meyers

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Age-old Insight

Centuries ago, enlightened cultures knew how to heal the body using chakras and meridians — centers of energy that link the body and mind. Today we are beginning to understand the wisdom of these treatments.

Healing Touch is a holistic therapy that uses age-old techniques to balance and align the energy fields that surround the body. Our bodies and those of our dogs and other animals radiate, absorb, conduct and transmit this energy.

The theory is that by balancing the energy within and surrounding our bodies, we facilitate physical and psychological health, healing and well being. In the case of Rigel's surgery, the balance of energy contributes to increased circulation, muscle relaxation, the release of toxins, an enhanced immune system and a body primed for and receptive to healing.

Yellow Labrador Star ruptured the cranial cruciate ligament in both hind legs, requiring the identical surgery twice in a six-month period (tibial plateau leveling osteotomy known as TPLO). Both TPLO operations were handled by the same surgical team in the same veterinary hospital, yet recovery the second time around was easier and faster.

“The only difference in treatment the second time was the therapy Shari performed,” said Star’s owner, Denise Iannatuono. “But the difference in Star was absolutely incredible.”

After asking for Denise’s permission, Shari “went into Star’s energy field” through a process she uses to conduct distance work. She concentrated on helping the dog prepare for and receive the surgery, seal the wound, manage the pain and heal.

Partnership with Medicine

Shari emphasizes that Healing Touch works in partnership with conventional healthcare. “It does not replace traditional medical or veterinary care, medical diagnosis or medical treatment, nor do we prescribe medications or perform surgery. What it does do is add a non-invasive, gentle, compassionate treatment to the range of options for patient care,” she said.

The human medical community has recognized Healing Touch as an alternative treatment since 1989, and today more and more hospitals throughout the United States and the world have incorporated this therapy into their patient care systems. Healing Touch for Animals® (HTA) was founded by Carol Komitor, a certified massage therapist, certified hospital-based massage therapist, equine sport massage therapist and veterinary technician for 13 years.

Rigel was prepped for surgery early in the morning, but he was fifth in line, so he had a long waiting period. Every hour, the vet’s staff sprayed him with essential oils of rose and lavender provided by Shari, keeping anxiety levels down for the dog and the veterinary staff, too. Before, during and following surgery, Shari used her skills to enhance the surgery’s success.

“He had a tough time at first with the pain medications,” Shari said. She introduced pain management techniques to make him more comfortable and energy work to make it easier for his body to accept the medications. At his follow-up check, the vet tech said Rigel’s range of motion was a little better than normal.

Modern Applications

Non-traditional holistic treatments sometimes generate questions and skepticism from people who want cold, hard proof that they work. For the past 10 years, medical centers and hospitals have conducted research that is proving that Healing Touch has much more than a placebo effect.

For example, Stanford University is currently running a clinical trial with breast cancer patients to test whether energy therapy can reduce the strong side effects of chemotherapy. The National Institutes of Health has studied the treatment's impact on healing. Other hospitals are considering whether treatments help pre- and post-cardiac patients.

When it comes to our dogs, the proof is in the pudding. HTA reports that the therapy has reduced anxiety and stress, helped mitigate emotional traumas, prepared dogs and horses for competition and aided in preparation for medical treatments and with follow-up care.

"After her first surgery, Star was barely functioning for several days," said Denise. "When we picked her up from the vet the second time, she immediately tried to jump into the truck. The first night, I slept on the first floor with her. When I woke during the night, she was missing. I frantically searched the entire first floor. Then I heard the thump of a wagging tail coming from my second floor landing. I could not believe that she was able to walk up a full flight of stairs to the second floor."

Shari started her schooling for Healing Touch for Animals in 1999, taking classes and participating in an elaborate certification program. She's the eleventh person to earn certification in HTA and abides by a strict code of ethics. In addition to studying and working with people and animals, she volunteers at a veterinary hospital. She works with pre- and post-op patients, calms puppies at their first vet visits and soothes dogs and their owners during the euthanasia process.

"I've always had an extremely strong connection with my dogs," said Shari. In 1990, Shari and her husband helped found National Capital Therapy Dogs, Inc. (NCTD), the local affiliate of the Delta Society to share the human-animal bond with patients in healthcare facilities.

"I enjoy working with animals. They are energetically clean and pure, and they give me a very clear message when they're finished with the treatment," said Shari. "The joy comes when I see the positive outcomes we achieve by including Healing Touch in a patient's treatment plan."

[Learn More About Healing Touch](#)

Shari Sternberger is a certified Healing Touch Practitioner for animals and people with a private practice in Highland. You can learn more about what she does by visiting her website, www.elementsofenergy.com .

To learn more about Healing Touch for Animals, go to www.healingtouchforanimals.com .

If you're interested in Healing Touch for people, visit the Healing Touch Program™ site at www.healingtouchprogram.com .