

Swimming with the dolphins



Dolphin-Assisted Therapy

If an ordinary pet has the ability to alter human life for the better, what profound effect can an extraordinary and highly intelligent being such as a dolphin have on human life!

According to the Island Dolphin Care Inc. (IDC)¹ mission statements dolphins can be described as catalysts, because they provide a favourable therapeutic environment through their expression of unconditional love and support. In the IDC mission statement it is mentioned that Ms. Deena Hoagland, a certified hypno- and psychotherapist, established IDC after she has witnessed the healing effect of dolphin-assisted therapy on her own son, who's left side of his body was seriously affected after a stroke.

Island Dolphin Care is not the only dolphin therapy centre for humans with success stories. According to a CNN article, 'Dolphin therapy: recreation or medicine?'², Dr. David Nathanson, director of the Human Dolphin Therapy Centre in Miami, is convinced that dolphin-assisted therapy is successful in treating children with a variety of disorders and was even responsible for helping an eight year old boy, who was mute since birth, to speak.

The truth is many parents, therapists, doctors and other health professionals will testify to the healing power of dolphin-assisted therapy. In the above-mentioned CNN article it seems that these people experienced dolphin-assisted therapy first hand and acknowledge that dolphins are capable of helping and or healing people who suffer from a variety of illnesses; these include developmental-, neurological-, movement- and even psychological disorders such as depression.

According to an article written by Dr. Horace Dobbs³ even the late Dr. John Lilly believed that dolphin-assisted therapy might have a profound and positive effect on the psyche of humans. In the abovementioned article, Dr. Dobbs also states that Dr. David Nathanson found that mentally handicapped children's learning abilities increased with as much as 500% after interacting with dolphins.

You may ask yourself how dolphin-assisted therapy is able to heal humans, or assist in the healing process. The truth is doctors are not sure. Some believe dolphins are not only able to use their sonar to detect defects in people suffering from certain disorders or disabilities, but also to create a therapeutic and relaxed atmosphere that helps people become more susceptible to healing. According to an article written by Deidre Mendoza⁴. Dr. Horace Dobbs believed that dolphins can use their sonic communication to positively alter a depressed person's mood, in much the same way music can.

In the light of the above, it is difficult to disregard the belief that dolphins may be "natural healers".

Dr. Kobus Scholtemeyer accompany small groups of people to suitable places in Mozambique for therapy with the assistance of dolphins.

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- ¹ Annon (2003). *Island Dolphin Care Inc.: Dolphin therapy history*. (retrieved on 23 March 2005 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.islanddolphinscare.org>)
- ² CNN interactive: Health story page (1998). Dolphin therapy: recreation or medicine. Cable News Network. (retrieved on 23 March 2005 from the World Wide Web : <http://www.cnn.com/health/9803/28/dolphin.therapy/>).
- ³ Dobbs, H. (s.a.). *International Dolphin Watch: Dolphin healing part 2*. (retrieved on 23 March 2005 from the World Wide Web: http://idw.org/html/dolphin_healing_part_2.html)
- ⁴ Mendoza, D. (s.a.). *Animal Hero: Dolphins*. (retrieved from the World Wide Web: <http://myhero.com/myhero/hero.asp?hero=ludmilalukina>)