

EQUINE ASSISTED THERAPY

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Abstract:

Equine Therapy is also called as Equine Assisted Psychotherapy is a form of therapy involving interaction between horses and patients. It involves activities such as feeding, grooming of hair and leading a horse which are supervised by a specialist in mental health with a support of horse professional. The major goal of the therapy is to increase skill and attributes like accountability, self confidence, responsibility and problem solving skills. It also helps in behavioral and emotional changes. From the ancient Greek horses are used as therapeutic aid. The literature were documented that the therapy was prescribed for some diseases like Gout, Neurological Disorders and for persons with low morale. The therapy was introduced in 1946, at Scandinavia after an outbreak of poliomyelitis. This therapy has having some supportive evidence for its effectiveness against managing some conditions like, Anxiety, ADHD, Addiction Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder etc. when an individual riding a horse, it stimulates the areas where they never had exercise thus improves balance and mobility of the body. This therapy helps the individuals to develop a work ethic, identify and process feelings. This therapy also helps to develop Trust on each other. Peoples with spinabifida, Scoliosis or Down syndrome should have a consultation before getting this therapy.

Key words: Equine Assisted Therapy, psychotherapy, horse professional, mental disorders

Introduction

Equine Therapy is also psychotherapy to use horses in an effective tool for a man or woman to increase self-understanding and assist in emotional growth. It is a form of experiential therapy that involves interactions between patients and horses. It involves activities like having patients do simple exercises such as haltering, leading, and grooming a horse, that are supervised by a mental health

professional and also by a horse professional. The equine therapist can observe and interact with the patient in order to identify behavior patterns and process of thoughts and emotions on during and after therapy¹.

Components of Equine Therapy

The experience created a very **special bond** between client and horse involves the following characteristics:

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Communication skills
- Assertiveness
- Affection
- Empathy
- Confidence
- Self-control
- Acceptance
- Mutual trust





The Purpose of Therapy

The horses are chosen as therapy animals based partially on their ability to withstand a great deal of distraction and tolerate unpredictable or erratic behavior. Like humans, the horses also have moods, feelings, Quality and characteristics. They are also large in size and their image is associated with strength and power².

1. Interacting with a horse it builds confidence, decrease fears and prepares an individual to solve the different challenges in life.
2. Equine method of therapy also teaches responsibility, assertiveness, good work ethics and the skill of communication.

3. Ultimately, the sessions spent with the horses are focused on demonstrating how to build positive relationships in any life situations including home and work.
4. The most valuable lesson is centered on understanding that the success and gratification in life comes by engaging in a continuous physical and mental effort to reach the anticipated goals.

What Conditions/Disorders Does Equine Therapy Treat?

It is a successful integrated treatment programs for adults and teens, who are being treated for

- Substance Abuse & Addiction
- Behavior Disorders
- Mood Disorders
- Eating Disorders
- Learning Differences
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
- Autism
- Asperger's
- Grief/Loss
- Dementia
- Sex Addiction
- Compulsive Gambling
- Bipolar, Depression and Related Conditions.
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Confidence setbacks
- Relationship problems

Types of Equine Therapy

Equine Therapy has many interchangeable terms, which all involve the use of horses, and are as follows:

Equine-Assisted Therapy (EAT)

Equine Assisted Therapy that involves activities with horses and its environment to achieve therapeutic goals more than just riding the horse. The therapist will ask the client to perform some task with the horse. The client might be asked to guide the horse from one end of the corral to another, using only the sound of voice. The client will complete the task to the best of their ability and then discuss the process used by the client to complete the task. The discussion session allows the client to improve language skills. The listening of instructor helps to improve the ability of listening and follow directions etc... the communication between the client and horse, especially helpful for those who are affected by anxiety and worry about the past or catastrophic thinking about the future. This type of activity encourages a person to think about present and focused on the task at hand³.



Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) is used To Treat “Behavioral Issues, Attention Deficit Disorder, Substance Abuse, Eating Disorders, Abuse Issues, Depression, Anxiety, Relationship Problems and Communication Needs.”

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) is not only involved in riding, it includes taking care of horses and also ground exercises. The clients are learning about themselves and others by participating in activities with the horses, and then

discussing feelings, behaviors, and patterns. The main goal of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy is to help the client in social, emotional, cognitive, or behavioral ways.⁴

Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL)

Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) is an experiential learning process through which Clients develop knowledge, values and skills for educational, professional and personal goals through equine-assisted activities, and from direct experiences outside a traditional academic setting. In the Equine Assisted Learning Programs, the participants engage in un-mounted, horse-related, group based skill building activities, and discussions.⁵

Equine-Facilitated Learning (EFL)

Equine facilitated learning (EFL) is a process of learning through experiences, which integrates equine-human interaction to provide self understanding and understanding of others, thus helping to develop socially and emotionally. The interaction with equines provides chances to learn critical life skills such as self-awareness, confidence, trust, respect, honesty, leadership and communication.

Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP)

Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy is a treatment approach within the classification of Equine Assisted Therapy that provides the client with opportunities to enhance self-awareness and re-pattern maladaptive behaviors, feelings and attitudes. EFP is provided by a certified mental health professionals working with an appropriately credentialed equine professional.⁶



Conclusion

The horses are chosen as therapy animals based partially on their ability to withstand a great deal of distraction and tolerate unpredictable or erratic behavior. The equine therapist can observe and interact with the patient in order to identify behavior patterns and process of thoughts and emotions on during and after therapy. The interaction with equines provides chances to learn critical life skills such as self-awareness, confidence, trust, respect, honesty, leadership and communication

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