Equine Alliance
Equine Assisted Psychotherapy
Learning and Personal development

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What makes it different from other Equine Therapy's

- Evidence Based Practise
- Accountable to a governing body
- Mandatory Ongoing professional development
- Ethical standards
- Based on Psychological Theories
Psychological Theories

- Experiential
- Gestalt
- Person Centred
- Reality
- Psychodynamic
- Systemic
- Rational Emotive
- Transactional Analysis
- Cognitive Behavioural
How this differs from Riding and other Equine Therapy programmes

- Client led
- Non-directive
- Focus on mental health and human development
- Interaction on the ground
- In-the-moment experience
- Explore ‘being yourself’
- Attention to the non-verbal
- Relational dynamic
- Choices and Differences
- Awareness & Insight
- Questions

- Instructor led
- Directive
- Focus on horsemanship skills
- On the back of the horse
- Progressive syllabus
- Work towards ‘be like me’
- Attention to instructions
- Performance dynamic
- Right and Wrong
- Knowledge & Skills
- Answers
Safety

- A priority
- Physical & Emotional
- Respect for the horse
- Boundaries
- Confidentiality
- Observe and Respond
- An on-going process- not a one time lesson
- Integral to the therapeutic work
- Transference issues for the therapeutic team
- Ongoing professional Development and supervision requirements
The EAP Relational Dynamic

CLIENT(S)

Mental Health Professional

Equine Professional

Horses

THERAPEUTIC TEAM
What is Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Learning/Personal Development

• Horse as messenger, teacher and guide
• Bringing together two professional worlds – horse and psychological therapy
• Collaborative approach – therapeutic team approach
• Short term, brief therapy
• Experiential in nature
• Activity and Processing
• Being and Doing
• A unique relationship dynamic
What are the benefits?

• promotes self-awareness and reflection.
• increases in self-confidence and self-esteem.
• leads to better communication, particularly non-verbal.
• helps with identifying strengths.
• improves relationships.
• gives sense of responsibility for self and others.
• develops self-discipline.
• increases problem solving skills.
• assertiveness grows.
• develops trust and respect.
• helps with focusing and working under pressure.
• plenty of opportunity for fun and humour!
• It works!
What Happens?

• challenges client open and honest.
• quickly breaks down defensive and aggressive reactions. Masks fall away.
• gives rise to immediate cause-and-effect situations.
• captivates and holds attention.
• promotes change from self limiting, dysfunctional patterns to more healthy ones.
• can be serious and fun all at the same time.
• can be directive (activity lead) or non-directive (reaction lead) to suit the client or group.
• gives opportunities for unique experiences to be generalised.
WHY HORSES

• Horses are prey animals and evolved in the presence of predators.

• To survive they developed exquisitely tuned senses, to the degree that they are able to read the heartbeat and breathing rate of others. Therefore they can sense the emotional state of others around them, even when these emotions are subconscious or suppressed.

• Horses naturally reflect each other’s emotions via behavior and body language.

• They are masters of the here and now, which we call mindfulness. These natural skills of horses can be used therapeutically.

• The horse in therapy is a giant conscious biofeedback machine for the human client.
Horses are large and powerful, which creates a natural opportunity for some to overcome fear and develop confidence.

The size and power of the horse are naturally intimidating to many people.

Accomplishing a task involving the horse, in spite of those fears, creates confidence and provides for wonderful metaphors when dealing with other intimidating and challenging situations in life.
Personality

- They have distinct personalities, attitudes, and moods.
- An approach that seems to work with one horse, does not necessarily work with another.
- At times, they seem stubborn and defiant. They like to have fun.
- In other words, horses provide vast opportunities for metaphorical learning.
Mirror and Metaphors

- Horses have the ability to mirror exactly what human body language is telling them. Many people will complain, “The horse is stubborn. The horse doesn’t like me,” etc. But the lesson to be learned is that if they change themselves, the horses respond differently.

- Using metaphors, in discussion or activity, is an effective technique when working with even the most challenging individuals or groups.
Sentient, Survival instincts

- experts at picking up on human behaviour and feelings
- constantly challenge clients to be honest and to have congruency between spoken and body language.
- they assist clients to be aware of the difference between passive, assertive and aggressive energy and how to regulate themselves
In the Moment

- Operate in the here and now
- There sensitivity to the human condition makes them particularly powerful in helping people to be more aware and honest themselves in non-threatening and accepting ways
- promotes self-acceptance and engagement in issues.
  - They learn problem ownership and problem solving
  - the impact of their behaviours on others
  - lowers their defences and habitual reactivity thus being more receptive to new ideas
Adolescents grow intellectually and emotionally through feedback from their environment.

With EAP/EAL change develops by learning through consequences of actions and developing new responses and actions rather than insight which is in this age group typically immature.

Horses have no agenda, are non-judgemental and give immediate feedback. Horses are honest, which makes them especially powerful messengers.

They can foster change and provide healing by responding to sensory and somatic experiences in a way therapists cannot.
Emerging evidence base with promising studies in this young field of research, moving from qualitative to quantitative research.

www.EAGALA.org/Research
www.equineassistedinterventions.org
Psychosocial Functioning 12-18 yrs

• Intrapersonal Distress, Anxiety, depression, fearfulness, hopelessness self-harm
• Somatic distress, headaches, dizziness, stomach-aches, nausea, bowel difficulties, pain and weakness in joints.
• Interpersonal Relationships, cooperativeness, aggressiveness, arguing and defiance.
• Critical Items, paranoia, hallucinations, delusions, suicide, mania, eating disorders, OCD
• Social Problems aggressive behaviour, truancy, sexual problems destruction of property, substance abuse.
• Behavioural Dysfunction, complete tasks, assignments, concentration, frustration impulsivity, hyperactivity
Mann and Williams (2002) found that 82% of the youth in Equine-Assisted Family Therapy demonstrated clinically significant improvement from treatment from an average of 5 sessions.

Each of the clients had failed to make progress in previous conventional methods of therapy according to their parents. Conduct Disorders demonstrated the most clinically significant improvement followed by Mood Disorders and Psychotic Disorders. All three diagnostic categories demonstrated above average improvement compared to other approaches, in a shorter time with a lesser cost.
Statistics- Geauga County Juvenile Court, USA

Statistics provided by the Geauga County Juvenile Court show improved recidivism rates for juvenile offenders since attending the EAP programme at the farm. 1998, 67% did not recidivate within 3 months of termination of traditional therapy. 2000, 79% did not recidivate within 3 months of treatment EAP.

The court nicknamed the EAP programme the “Last Chance Corral”.

Linda Myers, Stoney Fox Farm, Ohio USA
Narrative synthesis of equine-assisted psychotherapy literature: Current knowledge and future research directions


4x publications in peer reviewed journals, 20 x unpublished master thesis and dissertations
Total of 8 x quantitative studies, including 1x meta-analysis
Most studies in school aged children & adolescents,
No research in under 4 yo and older adults
Patient experience vs of MH, ES?
• Whispering to Horses: CSA, depression and the efficacy of EFT

T. Signal et al, Qld

**Age groups:** child 8-11, adolescent 12-17, adult 19-50 yo

Referred for sexual abuse

**CDI / BDI Ax** at intake (T1), after in-office Rx (T2), after EFT (T3)

**Outcome:**

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<th></th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
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<tr>
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<td>16.08</td>
<td>16.25</td>
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Study of EAP on Cortisol levels
P. Pendry, A.N. Smith, S. M. Roeter (2014)

What are the causal effects of equine assisted interventions on human development and well being?
• Saliva cortisol measured in school kids (n=131)
• Randomized: 2 groups (Rx= 53, waitlist = 60)
• **Treatment:** 11 week Equine Assisted Learning program
• **Outcome:** afternoon cortisol levels and total cortisol concentration per waking hour were significantly lowered in Rx group vs control
• **Why?** EAL includes Human-animal interaction, stress Mx, relaxation, mindfulness, caregiving/grooming all increase Oxytocin
• Oxytocin dampens HPA axis => lower Cortisol => effect on MH?
"Animal-assisted therapy with chronic psychiatric inpatients: equine-assisted psychotherapy and aggressive behavior.”

In this randomized controlled study, equine and canine forms of AAT were compared with standard treatments for hospitalized psychiatric patients to determine AAT effects on violent behavior and related measures.

METHODS: The study included 90 patients with recent in-hospital violent behavior or highly regressed behavior. Hospitalization at the 500-bed state psychiatric hospital was two months or longer (mean 5.4 years). Participants were randomly selected to receive ten weekly group therapy sessions of standardized equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP), canine-assisted psychotherapy (CAP), enhanced social skills psychotherapy, or regular hospital care.

Violence-related incident reports filed by staff in the three months after study intake were compared with reports two months preintake.

RESULTS: Effect of EAP > canine therapy > social skills group in this study on reducing violent behaviour in psychiatric inpatients