

Equine Assisted Therapy

Healing and Growing



Whether it's the nuzzle of a soft muzzle, a walk in a field spending time with horses can make us feel better - calmer and happier. There is documented evidence!

That is the goal of Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) a form of experiential treatment where individuals interact with horses in a variety of activities, including grooming, feeding, walking and equine games, for improving psychological health. How can EAP help?

- **Providing insight for observation and growth:** therapists can use clients' reactions to horses' behaviors to understand how clients interact with people and help them gain self-awareness. Because horses offer "instant and accurate feedback," Klontz said, they shed light on the client's thoughts and feelings before both the client and therapist are conscious of them.
- **Fostering health relationship:** "the horses offer a pure, nonjudgmental relationship" for patients. The animals "aren't concerned with their appearance or how much they weigh."

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- **Building trust:** Many clients with eating or other mental health disorders have experienced trauma, which makes it difficult for them to trust others and feel safe. Clients might be resistant to opening up to a therapist and expressing their feelings or might not be skilled in verbal communication. EAP can serve as a first step in helping individuals break through these barriers and become more comfortable.
- **Identifying and Coping with Feelings:** Equine therapy is a powerful way to get in touch with thoughts and feelings. With horses you learn to use your body and hear to feel and react in the moment
- **Communication Skills: Setting Boundaries:** Working with horses, people recognize their conscious and unconscious patterns of interacting with others. Horses do not speak, but they are excellent communicators. Learning to understand horse behavior can help people learn how others function in this world and how their behavior impacts others.
- **Overcoming Fears:** Horses are large animals which can bring up unmet needs, fears, past trauma, and feelings of inadequacy or lack of control. Regardless of the horse, people commonly fear the horse won't like them, won't pick them, or could hurt them physically or emotionally. Rather than giving in - we help facilitate - learning to tolerate and process the emotion
- **Setting Boundaries:** Working with horses can quickly expose a person's maladaptive thought and behavior patterns. Without any words at all, horses make clear when people cross their boundaries. Trying to control or dominate will not work with a horse. Similarly, being extremely detached or passive can make it difficult to lead a horse and will deter the horse from complying with a request.

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