



HYPOTHETICAL

Equine Assisted Therapy

Equine/Horse assisted therapies are seen as complementary medicine and are usually recommended as additions to other therapies.

Therapeutic (horseback) riding is the use of horses and equine-assisted activities in order to achieve goals that enhance physical, emotional, social, cognitive, behavioral and educational skills for people who have disabilities. It not only focuses on the therapeutic riding skills but also the development of a relationship between horse and rider. It uses a team approach in order to provide treatment for the individual with the guidance of riding instructor.

Horses provide a unique neuromuscular stimulation when being ridden through their one of a kind movement. Also, horses can act as an aid by giving those with disabilities a companion to care for; brushing, bathing, and currying have a relaxing and calming effect.

Horse and Rider

The communication established between the rider and the horse is based on the primary communication that is mainly emotional, and promotes self-esteem and confidence to the patient, similar to maternal communication from conception to the first year of age.

Changing behavior of parents and families

Through Equine Therapy parents and relatives of patients acquire a sense of confidence in them which allows them to support their self-reliance and self-esteem.

Benefits, in details

The amount of benefit gained through therapeutic riding differs from person to person based on many factors such as the type of disability, severity of disability, motivation of the rider and connection between horse and rider. Unlike exercise machines that only focus on one muscle group at a time and do not use natural body movements, riding forces the rider to make use of the entire body to steer, control, adjust the horse and maintain balance. Because horses require not only physical skill but also cognitive skill for achievement, riding reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the rider. While most traditional therapeutic techniques often reach a plateau where the patient may lose motivation, the pleasure and excitement of riding acts to encourage patients to work through the pain and discomfort.

Physical

- Improved balance and muscle strength
- Improved coordination and faster reflexes
- Increased muscular control
- Improved postural control
- Decreased spasticity
- Increased range of motion of joints
- Stretching of tight or spastic muscles
- Increased endurance and low-level cardiovascular conditioning
- Stimulates Sensory integration
- Improved visual-spatial perception
- Improved gross and fine motor skills

Psychological

- Improved self-confidence
- Increased self-esteem and self image
- Development of patience
- Emotional control and self-discipline
- Expansion of locus of control
- Improved risk-taking abilities
- Sense of normality
- Socialization and improved interpersonal skills
- Increased perception of quality of life and life satisfaction
- Stress reduction

Educational

- Learning horseback riding knowledge and skills
- Learning safe behaviors for riding

Types of disabilities and conditions

There is a very wide variety of disabilities that can benefit from the therapy provided through horseback riding including:

- ADD/ADHD
- Traumatic brain injury
- Spinal cord injury
- Stroke
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Muscular dystrophy
- Cognitive Defects
- Autism
- Addiction/Substance Abuse problems
- Amputations
- Cerebral palsy
- Spina bifida
- Mental retardation
- Behavioral problems
- Learning disabilities
- Emotional problems
- Hearing, speech and visual impairments
- Orthopedic conditions