

Equine Assisted Services

Equine-assisted therapy involves the use of one or more horse alongside the use of specific theories of psychotherapy to meet the wellness goals of the client. Equine-assisted services are any activity, recreational or therapeutic, that involve horses. While recreational services may be less-structured and without specific objectives, they may still be healing and supportive. Both service providers and therapists may offer equine-assisted interventions.

Human Animal Bond

Horses and humans are hardwired for connection. Physical touch, an important part of developing secure attachments, is a large part of this approach, which makes it unique to other types of therapy. Touch enhances and expedites a sense of connection and promotes both emotional transfer and healthy neurobiological development.

Horses are shown to provide social support to their human companions, and greater social support leads to greater overall wellbeing. Both the emotional states of the human and horse are affected through the human-animal bond, and the wellbeing of each is improved by the relationship. In humans, reciprocity is shown to improve social functioning and is key for healthy attachments.



Common Animal Factors

Positive change happens with increased motivation, strong therapeutic relationships, empathy, and emotional safety. These common factors promote positive change. Because horses do not hold grudges and live in the present moment, we can consider them to possess unconditional positive regard. Horses respond to the emotional states of the people with which they work by attuning to their emotions. This attunement is similar to the process of empathy in people.



Healthy Attachment Processes

The therapeutic bond is strengthened because horses are non-judgmental and non-critical, which are key factors in feeling accepted. As a result, attachment to the horse may come before attachment to the human provided by emotional safety. With this initial trust and a foundation of safety, the human-animal bond bridges the gap from client to practitioner.

This is important since a strong therapeutic alliance predicts better outcomes.

Through emotional and social competency, improved attachment mentalization, and positive self-regard, symptoms of insecure attachment are addressed while simultaneously building more secure internal attachment models.



Support for ...

Specific empirical support for high-risk youth, persons on the autism spectrum, persons experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety and/or PTSD, and Indigenous populations.



Taylor Ormiston MC, RCC

604.764.6360

unequus@gmail.com

www.connectuniqueus.com

Salmon Arm, BC
& virtually

Services

Clinical Counselling:

- equine assisted therapy
- eye movement desensitization and reprocessing

Equine-Assisted Learning

Groups & Workshops:

- mental health & healthy coping
- addiction recovery
- grief and loss
- building healthy attachments

Consultation & Mentorship:

- program and exercise design, case conceptualization and treatment planning, ongoing support for equine-assisted service providers or organizations looking to implement EAS



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