



OHM Experiential Equine Therapy (Trauma-Informed) — What to Expect

This work is intentionally different from activity-based or recreational equine experiences. This handout is designed to reduce confusion, increase safety, and set realistic expectations before your session.

What This Is

This is **experiential, nervous-system-informed equine therapy**.

The focus is not on accomplishing tasks, learning horsemanship, or pushing comfort zones. The focus is on **regulation, choice, and moment-to-moment awareness**.

We work with:

- Your nervous system
- Survival responses (fight, flight, freeze, collapse, fawn)
- Emotional and relational patterns that show up in real time

What This Is *Not*

This is **not**:

- Riding lessons
- Team-building exercises
- Leadership challenges
- Obstacle courses or goal-completion tasks
- Being coached to "be confident" or "push through"

If you are expecting to *do* something with the horse, this approach may feel unfamiliar or even uncomfortable.



What a Session May Look Like

- Slow pacing, pauses, and periods of quiet
- Minimal instruction
- Choice-based engagement with the horse and environment
- Attention to sensations, impulses, emotions, and breath
- Stopping or shifting when activation increases

There may be moments where **nothing appears to be happening externally**. This does not mean the session is ineffective.

Safety Comes First

For high-acuity trauma work:

- You will never be forced to interact with a horse
- You may stay at a distance or observe only
- You may pause, step away, or end an exercise at any time
- Consent is ongoing and can change moment to moment

Listening to your body is more important than completing anything.

Common Reactions (All Normal)

You may notice:

- Wanting clear instructions or reassurance
- Feeling unsure, frustrated, or self-conscious
- Numbness, overwhelm, or emotional waves
- A strong urge to “do it right” or “try harder”

These responses are often **protective strategies**, not failures.



Why We Don't Use Tasks

For many trauma survivors:

- Tasks increase performance pressure
- Goals can override internal cues
- Success/failure dynamics can reinforce survival patterns

Horses respond to **regulation and presence**, not effort or control. Removing tasks allows deeper information to emerge safely.

What Is Expected of You

Very little.

You do not need to:

- Know anything about horses
- Talk about your trauma
- Push past fear or discomfort (beyond your workable zone)
- Perform, succeed, or impress

You are only asked to notice what is happening inside you—at your own pace.

Bottom Line

This work prioritizes **safety, agency, and nervous system capacity** over outcomes.

If you are feeling uncertain, cautious, or skeptical before arriving, that is understandable—and welcome in this space.

If you have questions or concerns ahead of time, please reach out. Clear expectations support safer, deeper work.