

Healing With Horses

Wisconsin's leader in Equine Assisted Therapy

Who is Trinity Equestrian Center?

"Trinity Equestrian Center is a 501©(3) non-profit horse ranch located 3 miles south of Eau Claire. Since 2002, we've served underprivileged, at-risk and special needs kids and families in West-Central Wisconsin.

It is our fervent belief that 'when you change a person's perception of themselves, you have changed their future.' That, coupled with our extreme confidence in this form of therapy, has caused us to expand with full force into Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Learning.

Our mission is to partner with our horses in order to help heal the mind, body and spirit of all. We encourage you to learn more about EAP & EAL and get involved with us at Trinity Equestrian Center!"

Toni Mattson, Co-Founder and Director of Programs & Ministries



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What is EAP & EAL?

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) and Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) incorporate horses experientially for emotional growth and learning. It is a collaborative effort with a treatment team of three: a licensed therapist, an equine specialist and a horse.

Horses excel as co-therapists. Their sensitivity, intelligence and social nature make them uniquely effective in animal-assisted therapy. Horses provide rich metaphors that relate to clients' lives, allowing them to relate their interaction with horses to their own life experiences. It allows them to share their feelings and issues in a way that is both dynamic and less threatening than traditional therapies.

Unlike traditional office sessions, which rely almost entirely on self-report, equine facilitated sessions allow for direct obser-

vation of behaviors, emotional responses and patterns, in real-time situations. The experiential nature of EAT allows a therapist and client to practice new behaviors in a dynamic situation with a living creature. Equine therapy is similar to "role-play", but with the added benefit of authentic reaction from a living animal



EAP and EAL connect clients and horses on a very deep level.

who exercises choice. Rather than discuss a new behavior in an office setting, clients can try a new behavior with the present support of their therapist, and process the results of taking a new action.

EAP is a powerful and effective therapeutic approach that has an incredible impact on individuals, youths and families. It addresses a variety of mental health and human development needs including behavioral issues, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, substance abuse, eating disorders, abuse issues, depression, anxiety, relationship problems and communication needs.

Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) has many of the same approaches and goals as EAP, but is less focused on deep therapy and more focused on building pro-social skills.

This therapy is often conducted in groups and is very effective in promoting healthy relationships, personal responsibility, confidence, creative-thinking, problem solving, leadership and teamwork.

These innovative therapies are linked to far-ranging success in the development of positive mental health and well-being.

Content Sources:
EAGALA.org
HorsesenseOTC.com
Flyingchange.org
Wildhorse Farms, LLC

Why a Horse?



No one who knows horses can deny that they have a full range of feelings, attitudes, preferences, and personalities. It's easy to assume that horses are less intelligent than humans, because they don't hold board meetings, play the stock market, or score well on the SATs. Horses display their intelligence, logic, and intuition in many ways *that we don't recognize* because we speak a different language.

Just like us, horses feel fear, anger, grief, relaxation, happiness, and affection. They play, fight, and communicate in relationships which share many of the same dynamics of our own:

Trust, Respect Boundaries, Mutual Support & Affection

Far more than most people know, horses are social and emotional animals in that they react and respond. A gelding in the field will call enthusiastically to an approaching friend. A mare whose foal dies will grieve. A horse abused by a human will develop fear and distrust.

Just like us, horses are motivated to seek relief from pain, fear, and emotional pressure.

They seek creative solutions to meet their needs, and like us, if they cannot find successful solutions they will express that pain outwardly.

Horses too, can experience depression, panic attacks, attachment disorders, behavioral issues, post traumatic stress, learned helplessness, and emotional shutdown. They can also demonstrate and teach such healthy behaviors as honest communication, trust, healthy boundaries, leadership, pa-



tiency, assertiveness, affection, and nurturance.

Pairing a person and a horse with similar backgrounds, feelings, and behaviors creates a powerful non-threatening mirror in which a client can see themselves with compassion, understanding, and objectivity. By relating their horse's experiences with their own, a client is able to get in touch with their feelings, "own" their behaviors and beliefs, and explore new

choices. Learning empathy for the horse is the beginning of looking on themselves with the same acceptance and unconditional love.

To be trusted by a horse, you must be trustworthy; to be respected by a horse, you must first give respect. As prey animals horses are brilliant observers of nonverbal communication, and like humans, react negatively to disrespect, impatience, and lack of self-control. Even our most veiled intentions easily are detected by horses and responded to accordingly. The lesson learned by the client is that by taking responsibility and making new choices, the horse responds in a more positive manner.

There are infinite possibilities to include horses for emotional growth. The greatest benefit is that through learning with the horses, positive behaviors are not only taught, but experienced. It's a unique encounter where clients are able to immediately integrate the learning they have directly experienced.

The immense value of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Learning is that they promote change through action.

"To be trusted by a horse, you must be trustworthy; to be respected by a horse, you must first give respect."

Who is EAGALA?

Founded in July 1999, the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) is a non-profit organization developed to address the need for resources, education, and professionalism in the fields of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) and Equine Assisted Learning (EAL). EAGALA is committed to setting the standard of professional excellence in how horses and humans work together to improve the quality of life and mental health of individuals, families and groups worldwide.

EAGALA's certification program trains professionals in EAP and EAL. The EAGALA Model provides a standard and structure for providing Equine Assisted Psychotherapy/Learning sessions. Practicing within a model establishes a foundation of key values and beliefs, and provides a basis of good practice and professionalism.

The **certification program** upholds EAGALA Model professionals to standards of practice, ethics, and safety through their ethics committee and ongoing renewal and continuing education expectations. Trinity's *Healing With Horses* Therapy Program has two EAGALA Certified Equine Specialists (ES) and one EAGALA trained ES along with two Mental Health Professionals working in our program.

How it Works

EAP is an experiential program, meaning clients learn about themselves through taking part in activities. Each session may include basic horse activities such as grooming, feeding, and ground training as well as more strategic equine experiential activities that help to focus on the determined treatment goals of each independent client.

Clients take part in an equine assisted activity, and then discuss feelings, behaviors, and patterns. Remember, the horse becomes a mirror of the feelings and behaviors the client brings with them. Clients often lack language for how they are feeling or awareness of their emotions and behaviors. Interacting with the horses gives them an opportunity to safely put words to their emotions and own their behavior.

Within the interaction between a client and a horse, the client is provided opportunities to become more self-aware through experiencing the metaphor of how the horse relates to them,

their herd, and their environment, and how they relate to the horse.

The opportunities for experiential metaphors are almost limitless. Nearly anything found in our relationships with other people, our family dynamics, emotional reactions, behaviors, and choices can be played out in an equine learning or therapy session.

The horse's response to the client can provide valuable insight into the client's behavior, emotions, and approach. By understanding how behavior affects their horse, a clients can begin to see how behavior affects others, and ultimately, how it affects others response to them. Through exploring new ways to interact with their horse, they can begin to learn new constructive ways of interacting with the people in their lives. The mental health professional helps relate and apply this learning to the client's own life and relationships beyond the barn environment by sharing insights and asking questions. While the facilitator makes every effort to remain non-directive, they may gently probe and ask questions

to help the clients reach their own solutions.

EAL is also experiential learning and refers to a type of learning that occurs when a person is interacting directly with people, animals, and their immediate environment. It is learning by doing - a here and now experience with great emphasis on goal setting.

Through the trial and error process of completing an activity with the horses, clients learn and practice new strategies that can be transferred to achieving their goals outside the arena. Many pro-social skills are related to EAP, such as improved responsibility, compassion, integrity, problem solving, communication, esteem, patience, confidence, well-being and overall wellness.

Horses can inspire people to live in a positive, meaningful and connected relationship with those around them.

A horse is an incredible therapist!

"The horse acts as a mirror of how we respond to others and how our behavior impacts others."

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Facts

We have found, when we put a client and a horse together:

- a client finds EAP more interesting than talk therapy.
- EAP keeps clients on task and engaged.
- individuals and families are more willing to attend sessions and interact in the process.
- horses provide immediate feedback on which behaviors work... and which don't.
- sessions create metaphors that illustrate situations that are encountered in life and help them make changes in attitudes as well as behaviors.
- horses provide emotional support and bonds that are helpful in the therapy process.
- sessions help both clients and therapists get to the root of the problems much more quickly.
- sessions provide clients with the ability to express and communicate in ways that traditional therapies do not.

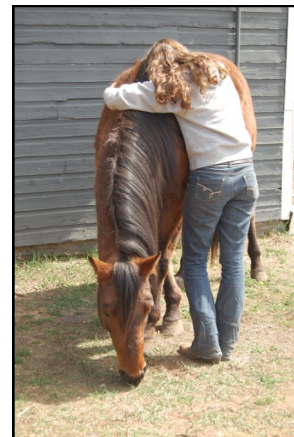
EAP is now used throughout the world to address many behavioral & learning challenges, as well as mental health issues.

Successful Outcomes

- A girl who has been sexually abused learns about healthy boundaries and experiences safe touch through grooming a horse.
- A boy with ADHD learns sequencing and planning of tasks and the ability to stay focused through equine activities such as grooming and ground work, which require these types of skills to be successful.
- A preteen improves his communication and social skills by playing a therapeutic game with his horse.
- A group of young men learn to cooperate and work together in a equine-based, team-building exercise.
- A teen girl who is oppositional learns about how she impacts others through trying to clean the hoof of a challenging horse who refuses to cooperate.
- A group of teens participate in an Equine Assisted Learning session and discuss their interpretations of the activity, the horse's response and how it relates to them individually, discovering new ways of coping, reacting and behaving.
- A timid girl learns to be assertive by directing a horse into and out of her space in a groundwork exercise.
- A combat Veteran with PTSD reconnects with his emotions and therefore reconnects with his wife and two young daughters.

Issues Addressed

- Learning Difficulties
- ADHD
- Behavioral Disorders
- Bullying & Boundary Issues
- Absent/ Divorced Partners
- Depression
- Abuse & Neglect
- Impulsivity
- Poor Coping Skills
- Post Traumatic Stress
- Asperger's Disorder
- Grief & Loss Issues
- Drug and Alcohol
- Poor Decision Making
- Issues with Authority
- Stress Management
- Anxiety Disorders



EAP helps our returning Veterans with PTSP & more.

Understanding the strategies for combat survival as well as what symptoms might be exhibited in post war veterans upon reintroduction to civilian life is what makes this form of therapy so effective.

The issues that EAP is particularly effective for are PTSD, depression, addictions, grief issues, identity



problems, panic attacks, sleep disorders and religious or spiritual problems.

The EAP experience allows an immediate forum to explore different ways to address and help begin to solve these concerns by:

1. A nature induced sense of well being and calm.
2. An ability to make future plans and be goal directed.
3. An ability to communicate feelings & thoughts openly
4. Shedding emotional armor to bring intimacy back into one's life.
5. Increasing skills in problem solving.
6. An ability to cope effectively with emotions and behaviors.

Many Veterans have said, "We don't just sit around and talk about our fears. Here we actually get to do something about managing them."

Taming the Wild Horse,
Windhorse Farms, LLC