



Life Lessons with Horses™

'Equine Assisted Therapy'

Wednesday 6th April

Campaspe/Murray ASD Special Interest Group

Life Lessons with Horses' Jenny Kennedy presents:

The Equine Connection' an introduction to Equine Assisted Therapy

- Introduction

My background

30years experience with horses

4yrs training in and researching 'Natural Horsemanship' & Equine Assisted Therapy

15 yrs working in Children's services

Diploma of Children's Services

Diploma of Community Welfare Work

Trainer and Assessor/Adult Educator

Life Lessons with Horses (Equine Assisted Therapist)

- 'Natural Horsemanship'

What is 'Natural Horsemanship?'

Using the least possible force to achieve communication and outcomes

Using language horses can easily understand

Making the wrong thing hard and the right things easy

Building horses' trust and confidence in you

Being the gentle/assertive herd leader

- Things we know about horses

As a herd and prey animal, horses rely on complex communication with each other to survive

They communicate predominantly through body language

They rely on animal group organisation. Different members of the group have different level of status.
Horses need a leader.

They have a slower heart rate than us

They breathe slower than us

Have a calming effect on people

Horses are not judgmental, they simply respond to behaviour

- Things we know about people/children with Autism

Each client is different, has different needs/likes and dislikes

May find it hard to communicate verbally

May find it hard to communicate/identify/understand theirs and others emotions

May have high anxiety levels

May struggle in social situations

May find routines, rhythms and repetition calming or stimulating

Learn better when they feel calm - When stress levels go up; learning goes down

- The connection

Equine Assisted Therapy fosters socialisation in a calm and relaxed environment, an opportunity for learning is created

Interactions with horses can increase a person's responsiveness (focus is taken off the client) therefore clients have been found to be more willing to express themselves, sometimes through the animal

Horses provide pleasure and sensory stimulation

Horses help us understand ourselves

- Research

Animals help people to increase their self-concept and reduce stress (Levinson1969)

Horses are believed to be unique in the manner in which they respond to humans and, due to the sensitivity they show the environment, they are believed to have the ability to read people in terms of their feelings and intentions (Roberts et al. 2004) Especially when people try to hide these feelings from the world or even themselves, horses can respond to the internal state of the human being, which is described as an innate ability to mirror body language and feelings back to the client (Roberts et. Al.2004, Shultz 2005) From Beyond Blue to Green-The benefits of contact with nature for mental health and well-being

Interactions with horses has been shown to improve client motivation to attend counseling sessions as well as participate and co-operate during therapy (Trotter et al 2008) From Beyond Blue to Green-The benefits of contact with nature for mental health and well-being.

Equine assisted therapy studies found an overall improvement in self-esteem and internal locus of control along with considerable decreases in hostility and aggression in a study on at risk adolescents (MacDonald 2004)

Participants have shown clinical improvement in physical, psychomotor, and psychological parameters, as well as improvements in communication, social skills, self esteem and self discipline (FRDI, 2004)

Interaction with horses promotes self-regulation of cognitive, behavioural and emotional states, enabling the participant to apply self-regulation in 'external' family or social environment (Ewing et.al.,2007; Hancox, 2005; McCormick and McCormick, 1997)

- Conclusion

Life Lessons with Horses aims to:

Help clients feel comfortable and confident in their learning environment (re: Maslow)

Use Narrative therapy to help clients Identify and build on individual skills and intelligences (re: Gardiner)

Build foundations for positive social interactions and emotional development (re: Ewing, MacDonald)

- Testimonial

Hi my name is Joanne Speight, I am the parent of Belinda who suffers from Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, Clinical Depression, and Very High Anxiety.

Belinda has been very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with Jenny and her horses for the past six month. Some of the advantages that myself, Husband Michael, Belinda's siblings and Belinda herself have experienced are as followed.

- Belinda does not like to socialize with people or animals. The horse therapy has encouraged Belinda to socialize, and as the months have passed it has become easier, less stressful and enjoyable for Belinda.
- Belinda has difficulty with communication. Belinda has learnt over the last few months to talk, listen and take instructions from Jenny. From the horses, she has had to learn what the horses are saying to her, for example, she has learnt to read their body language and this continues to be an ongoing lesson.
- I feel it is important to get Belinda to spend time outdoors which she usually dislikes. As the time has passed with Jenny and the horses, we can see that Belinda does enjoy being outside in this instance. I believe it has become a routine each week, and Belinda likes things to be familiar, have a routine and everything the same each day, week, month.
- Belinda's Clinical Depression and her High Anxiety has always been difficult to control. Belinda is on medication, and we have tried many Specialists and therapy's over the years, most have not worked. The horse Therapy has worked well so far, we have found Belinda suffers less from Depression and has lower anxiety levels. Belinda is much more relaxed after she has been with Jenny and the horses, she also tends to want to talk more in a family environment. Her general wellbeing appears to be happier and more content. We have found, if Belinda misses a week with the horse therapy, she becomes grumpy and discontent. I believe the horse therapy has a real calming effect on Belinda, as this has a flow on effect to our home environment.
- Belinda has always had a very low self- esteem. After horse therapy her self- esteem improves. Belinda has been able to expand socially, she has tried hard to join in group conversations not just in a family environment. This is not Belinda's usual character, I believe Jenny and the horses are continually building her self –esteem and her confidence.
- Belinda takes a very long time to trust and have confidence in people. I can see with each month that passes Belinda is growing and trusting Jenny, the horses and others around her. We are enjoying this program and the great steps Belinda is taking because of the horse therapy and look forward to the future. " As a Mum, I have never said this before, I look forward to the future instead of being afraid of it". I feel my family is moving forward and getting the benefits of Jenny and the horse therapy. THANKS JENNY

When I asked Belinda what she gets from the horse therapy her answer to me is " I don't know, I just like Jenny and the horses and going there" and that statement came with a smile. THANKS JENNY from Belinda XXXX

Regards

Joanne Speight

Kay Franklin

"(Life Lessons with Horses sessions) opened my eyes to the reality of how everyday life is associated with how we feel about ourselves. I benefited from the fact that when she (Ritzie) trusted me, it was because I was a leader, not a victim. It was a positive experience. I feel that all sorts of people could benefit from this because it actually teaches life skills, showing you how you can be more confident. If you can get a horse to trust you by your behaviour, you also have the power to affect the way people see you and how you see yourself."

