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Equine Assisted Therapy and Drug and Alcohol Clients

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Presentation Content

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- Eligibility for Drug and Alcohol clients for Equine Assisted Therapy session.
 - How horses can help Drug and Alcohol clients.
 - Why horses?
 - The Eagala Model of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Personal Development.
 - Treatment Goals and Activities
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Eligibility for Drug and Alcohol clients



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- The only criteria for Drug and Alcohol clients is that they be clean and sober for a minimum of 1 month. Safety
 - Family Members of a loved one who excessively use alcohol and/or drugs. Parents, partners and their children.
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How horses can help

People who have been clean and sober for 1 month are in the Action Stage of Change.

They are beginning to:

- Change their lifestyle
- Learn how to deal with their emotions without alcohol and/or drugs, e.g. guilt, anger, shame.

Energy Walk

- Think and behave differently
- Repair broken/damaged relationships

Their family members are:

- Confused and frightened
- Worried about their loved one
- Feeling guilty, hurt, frustrated, hopeful
- Not aware of their personal boundaries

Why Horses?

The modern horse has evolved from a small dog sized animal living in forests 55 million years ago. An animal that was eaten by larger animals,

Some cultures began domesticating the horse 4,000 BC = over 6,000 years ago.

Horses have carried soldiers and hauled their equipment in many wars and a been beasts of burden.

They have ploughed fields, been ridden as a means of transport, or for pleasure, for hunting and for sports, like horse racing, polo and cutting events.

In 640 BC the physical and emotional therapeutic benefits of riding horses were recognised for returning soldiers. Hippotherapy, Riding for the Disabled.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evolution_of_the_horse

Why Horses? continued:



The horse has retained all of the instincts of a prey animal. Prey animals have eyes on the side of their head. We are predators - we have our eyes at the front of our head.

A horse's no. 1 priority is to survive. They are masters at reading the body language of humans, along with our intentions and emotions. **Nervous, shy vs angry client.**

This makes them excellent animals for therapy, personal development, leadership, team building and learning, etc., etc.

Horses do not lie. They provide instant, non-judgement, accurate feedback. In the wild they live in herds. Each member of the herd has a role within their herd. They are social beings. They are big and fast and demand respect. They use non verbal communication with each other and with humans.

The Eagala Model



The Eagala Model has 4 basic tenets.

-**TEAM APPROACH** – A Mental Health Specialist, an Equine Specialist and the horses. **Roles.**

-**GROUND BASED ACTIVITIES** - There is no horse riding. No horsemanship skills are taught, or expected. **Why no riding**-safety, leisure activity.

- **SOLUTION ORIENTED** – We believe that the client has the best answer for themselves. The focus is on the solution-not the problem or the client. **Don't rescue, experiment, problem solving,**

- **CODE OF ETHICS** – Eagala sets a standard of ethics and professionalism of Eagala practitioners.

The Eagala Model continued:

It's all about what the horses are doing. Use the acronym of

S – Shifts – **Subtle, Partner + black horse**

P – Patterns of behaviour - **Boundaries**

U – Unique behaviour – **Recovery group**

D – Discrepancies - **Incongruence**

'S – Our “stuff” - It's the client's story – **Clean language**

The power of the Eagala Model



Experiential model

Metaphors – the horse/s become Once a horse is named, that horse will behave like..... **Observe addiction, Lady and her brother/brown horse,**

Externalising.

Power Of Pause – POP.

Clients build a relationship with the horses, not the facilitators. Very different to face-to-face therapy.

Can take their experiences with the horses into their every day life,

Treatment Goals and Activities



Client led activities – the team uses the client’s experiences in interacting with the horses to support them in developing insight and finding their own solutions to their problems in order to drive change. **Picture of recovery and white pony**

Treatment led goals – the team can name the goal of the session. e.g. Relapse Prevention. **Temptation Alley (name their triggers), How to deal with other users, assertiveness skills, setting boundaries.**

Clients have the opportunity to “see” how their communication and behaviours are affecting another being which can be very different to how they believe they communicate and behave. **Black pony/addiction said no, Observation.**

White pony

A “typical” session



Every session is unique! We never know how the horses will react, respond or behave as they are free in the paddock.

Enter the paddock. MH and ES stand together + client, all facing the horses. We may have something set up in the paddock.

1st activity then debrief, correlate SPUDS with what client shares about their experience.

Ditto

Session closure-say goodbye and thank you to the horses in whatever way you would like vs making the next appointment.

Provides closure, structure and predictability. Number of sessions, paperwork

A “typical” session



When 2 or more clients are in a session, they learn how to cooperate, to listen to someone else’s ideas and to try new ways. **Pony on tarp**

Dual diagnosis clients have the opportunity to begin to address their mental health issues with the horses. **Create a picture, emotions noodles**

Benefit of a team approach - Joint decision – check in with co-facilitator = increased emotional safety for the client and the facilitators.

Trust the process.

Trusts the horses!

Pre and Post Testing used at Nexus Primary Health's HAY program



We do pre and post testing using:

DASS21- which measures symptomology for Depression, Anxiety and Stress. It is not a diagnostic tool.

Scales of Psychological Wellbeing – measures autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others and self-acceptance

Written Evaluation – Likert Scales and write about your experience.

DASS 21 results



38y/o male in early recovery from Ice

Depression – 0 = Normal Anxiety – 14 = Moderate Stress – 2 = Normal

Depression – 0 = Normal Anxiety – 2 = Normal **(-12)** Stress – 6 = Normal **(+4)**

Relapse Prevention – Temptation Alley.

Dual Diagnosis Client - 45y/o Male, Alcoholic and Depression and Anxiety

Depression–40=Ext Severe Anxiety–28=Ext Severe Stress–32=Severe

Depression-8=Normal **(-4)** Anxiety-18=Severe **(-10)** Stress-30-Severe **(-2)**

39y/o Female recently separated from her alcoholic husband, caring for her 3 children

Depression-18=Moderate Anxiety-4=Normal Stress-28=Severe

Depression-14=Moderate **(-4)** Anxiety-2=Normal **(-2)** Stress-14=Normal **(-14)**

Written Evaluations



69y/o Male-completed in/pt tx who was allergic to horses. Sessions with wife.

“I came with only one expectation-in that I would not ride a horse. This was helpful but I was anxious about the journey ahead.”

After week 1 I thought it would all be ok as the horses responded positively and so my confidence grew and I felt I made a strong contribution to the program.

The final session bought it all together, linking life experienced now and into the future and understanding the part (negative) that alcohol played.

My wife and I certainly have a greater appreciation of the interaction and communication between us both.”

Woman with 3 school aged children, drank hazardously, partner alcoholic.

“...This experience and how I can use it in the future...? Every day life?”

- 1. Scared? Do it scared!!! (or “Do it anyway”)*
 - 2. Communication can be loud and clean. It can also be misinterpreted (light brown scratching up the grass, I thought it was going to charge-turns out that’s what horses do before they lay down for a back scratch)*
 - 3. If you have a “pre-conceived idea” before you approach, the energy is “felt” and “returned” to you.” Would I do this again? YES?*
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Retention of Drug and Alcohol Clients



Many In Patient Treatment programs in the USA use Equine Assisted Therapy. Sierra Tuscon was the first centre to incorporate this modality.

Equine Assisted Therapy has shown to be effective in increasing motivation with other benefits to psychological health.

Research has shown a much better retention rate of clients who participate in Equine Assisted Therapy – up to 50%.

Equine Assisted Therapy is a novel approach. It can be used in conjunction with traditional therapies.

Any questions?

Thank you for your time and attention.

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