

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy: A Clinical Model for Trauma: 2017 Final Report

'Words are limited in their ability to access trauma.'

Bessel Van Der Kolk, MD, The Body Keeps the Score



“When I’m with the horses, the suicidal thoughts go away.”

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

95 % of veterans report a reduction in symptoms in at least one category. *

- 88 % reported decreased physical tension
- 87 % reported decreased cognitive problems (less scattered)
- 91 % reported decreased anxiety
- 47 % reported decreased pain

*Based on 243 data sheets; analysis performed by Dr. Nicola Philpott, former professor of statistics, University of Minnesota.

131 veterans were served.

- 86 veterans served via 484 individual sessions
- 45 veterans served via MST and family support workshops
- 15 CBOC SW’s attended/received CEU’s for *‘Healing Trauma from the Bottom Up: a Neuro-Sequential Model of Trauma.’*

“When I’m with the horses, the pain becomes background noise, giving me the break that I need.”

**EQUINE
PSYCHOTHERAPY
NO SHOW RATE
LESS THAN 2 % -
FAR BELOW THE
NATIONAL AVERAGE**



BUILDING COMMUNITY :

- Two Veteran graduates of the Equine Psychotherapy program have become state certified **Peer Support Specialists** and will serve Veterans at PEACE Ranch beginning Spring 2018
- \$62,000 in donated services to veterans and the VA (PEACE Ranch donates 100% of their facility and personnel)
- Community Supporters: Schmuckal Foundation, Oleson Foundation, TransCanada Corporation, Yagle Brothers Marine Corps League, Traverse City Elks Lodge 323
- Collaborative community relationship since 2013 that multiplies resources, provides 'friendly' access, promotes engagement in other VA services.

WHY HORSES?

Equine Psychotherapy, an experiential therapy, allows individuals with trauma to resolve their trauma with the support of clinical, certified staff using the neurosequential model of brain development – from brainstem (simple) to neocortex (complex): regulation, relationship and finally reason.

“My wife still expects road rage – I don’t react like that anymore.”



REGULATION:

Working with horses is a sensory experience, this is regulating to the lower brain. Regulation has to happen before a client can move on.

RELATIONSHIP:

Horses are relational, this builds connections from the lower brain to the midbrain or limbic system, essential for self-awareness, other awareness, empathy and connection.



REASON:

Horses offer opportunities for real time problem solving, creativity and insight –the final piece of the trauma puzzle.

In summary, the VA/PEACE Ranch Collaboration offers veterans:

- A clinical, research based trauma recovery model
- EAGALA certified staff with military designation
- ‘User friendly’, experiential, therapy that plays to veteran strengths
- Increased Awareness & Community Outreach
- Increased access through community partners
- Increased Engagement in other VA services
- 5 years demonstration of significant outcomes for veterans and their families



*“For real change to take place, **the body** needs to learn that the danger has passed and to live in the reality of the present.”*

Bessel Van Der Kolk, MD: The Body Keeps The Score

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