

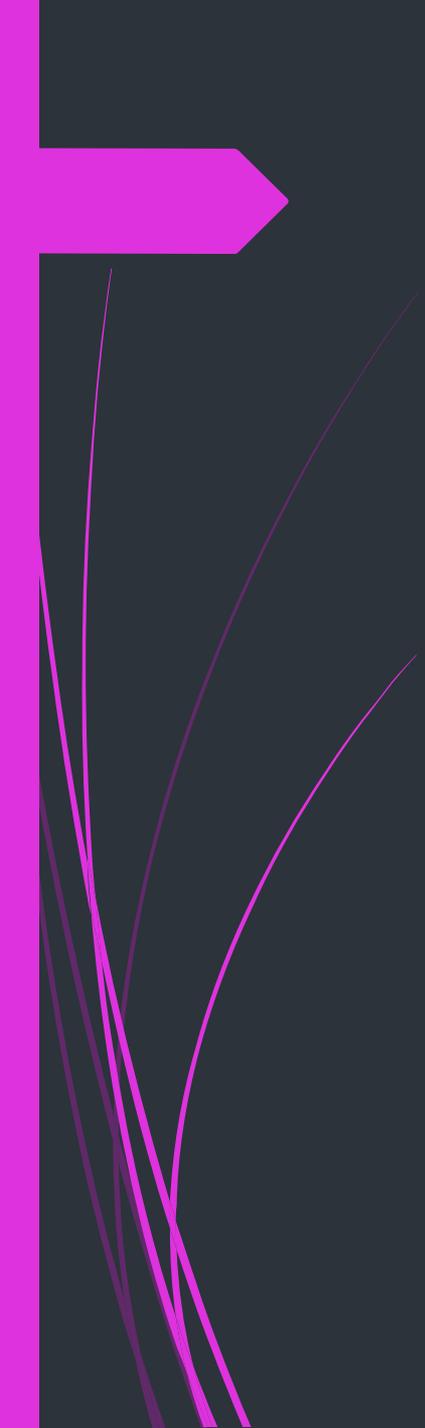
How to Prevent Lesson Horse Burn Out

Your perfect lesson horses are becoming cranky, what can you do?



Purpose

- ▶ This presentation is designed to help you understand the different aspects of your horses' life that you can check in order to maintain a happy, healthy and fit lifestyle for horses in therapeutic riding programs.
- ▶ A therapeutic riding lesson should take place in a therapeutic environment where everyone (including the horses) feel safe, comfortable and secure with their surroundings.



Volunteer & Staff Connections

- Match up volunteers or staff with the same horses to build relationships (in lessons and exercising the horses)
- When horses know what to expect they are more at peace and have less anxiety about the unexpected



Horse Selection for Participants

- ▶ Make sure to take the time to match up students with horses appropriately. Take time to consider the different aspects of the match before assigning horses.
 - ▶ Weight – is the size of the student appropriate for that horse?
 - ▶ Personality – if the horse is slightly anxious make sure to try and give that horse more calm, quiet students.
 - ▶ Movement – is the gait of the horse appropriate for that student? Some students need more movement for stimulation, some students can't handle a bigger stride because of balance. Try to recognize the need of the student so the horse is chosen appropriately and can offer the best movement for that particular student.



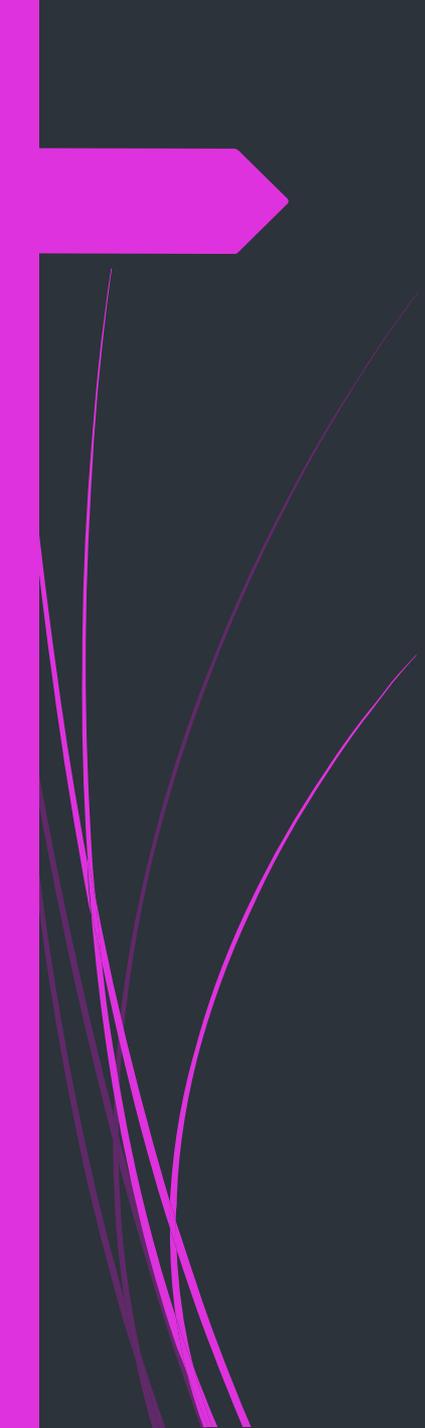
Volunteer & Staff Continuing Education

Volunteer C.E.

- ▶ Horse handling clinics for leaders and those who want to be leaders
- ▶ Offer one on one trainings for those who have little horse experience
- ▶ Tack C.E. (saddle fit, etc.)

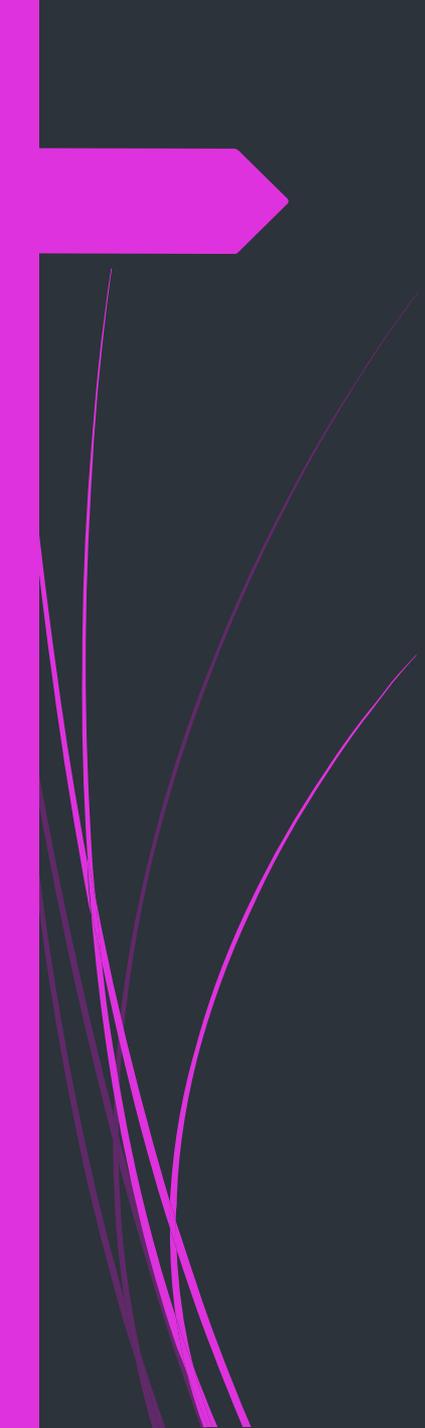
Staff C.E.

- ▶ Bring in outside trainers to give riding lessons
- ▶ Have less experienced horse staff attend all horse handling clinics
- ▶ Offer one on one lessons in horse handling or riding to interested staff



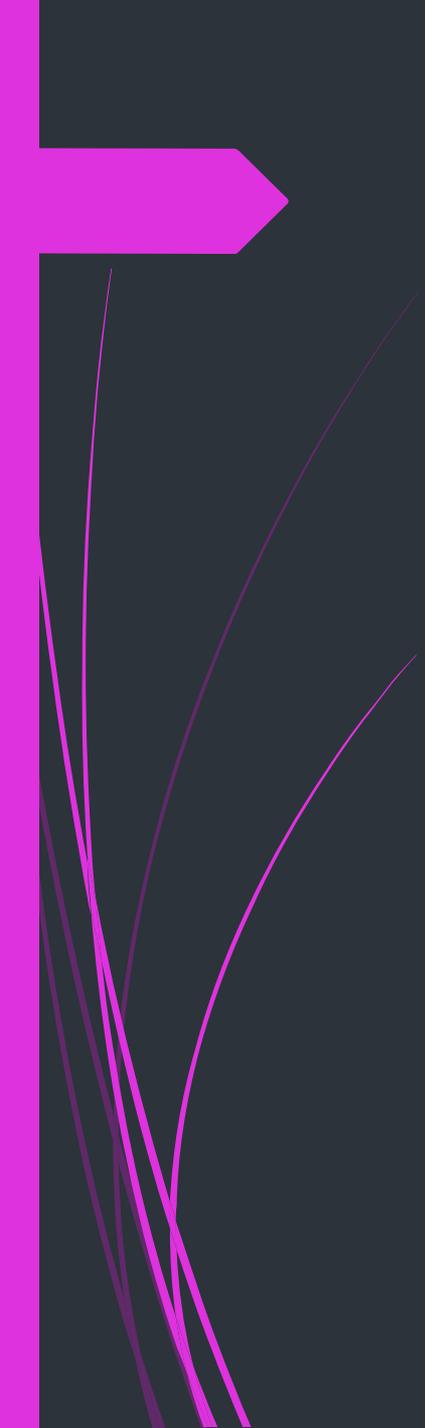
Volunteer & Staff C.E.

- It is important not to skip over the small stuff (such as making sure to acknowledge your horse when they do something correct).
- Speak to the horse so they know what to expect (transitions up or down).
- Take time to understand the needs and behaviors the horses are trying to communicate to us – then take the time to teach others



Fitness Program

- ▶ Diversify their exercise routine (such as a trail ride, an arena ride and a lunge or long line each weekly).
- ▶ Stimulate their minds – do different exercise routines (ex/ add poles) to keep things fresh and take them different places if you are able.
- ▶ Therapeutic riding horses need to stay well muscled to handle some of their unbalanced riders appropriately so keeping a consistent exercise routine is crucial in keeping a happy, healthy horse.



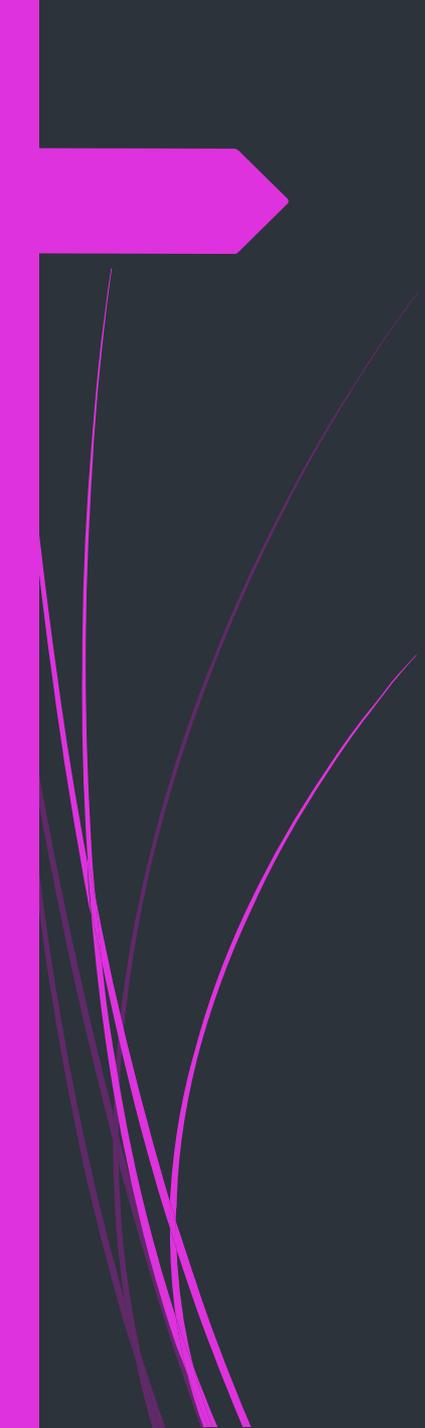
Feed

- ▶ Horses live to graze. Feeding horses frequently is a more natural lifestyle for them and will minimize their anxiety.
- ▶ A horse's main diet should be forage so if you do not have access to grass pastures make sure hay is fed 3-4 times a day.
- ▶ Diet can affect not only your horse's health but attitude as well. Make sure to get your hay tested and check with your veterinarian or feed specialist to make sure your horses are getting enough nutrition from your grain and hay combination.



Overall Health/ Alternative Therapies

- ▶ Making sure horses stay up to date on their dentals, vaccines and physicals by their veterinarians is great but they should also be exposed to alternative therapies if they are available to you in your community.
 - ▶ We use chiropractic, acupressure and massage therapy for our program horses. Many local massage therapists or acupressurists are willing to donate their time to these horses that give so much. They may also be willing to teach staff or specific volunteers some techniques you can use on a regular basis.

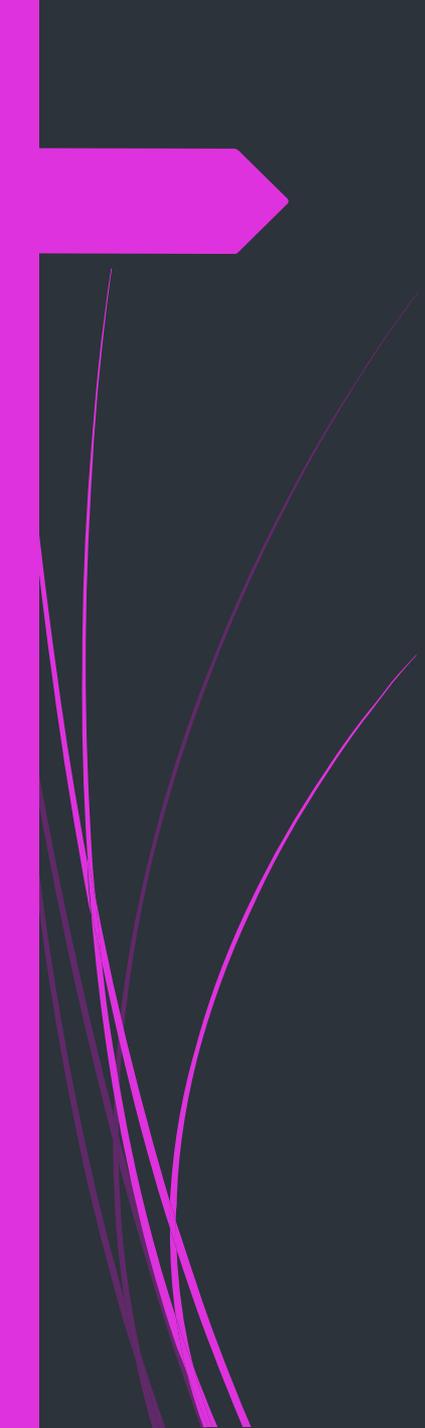


Environmental

- ▶ Make sure your herd dynamics encourage a peaceful pasture.
 - ▶ We want our horses to get along not only to prevent injury but also to allow bonding in their herd.
 - ▶ Take extra effort to recognize their bonds. This will increase the dynamic of their social environment.

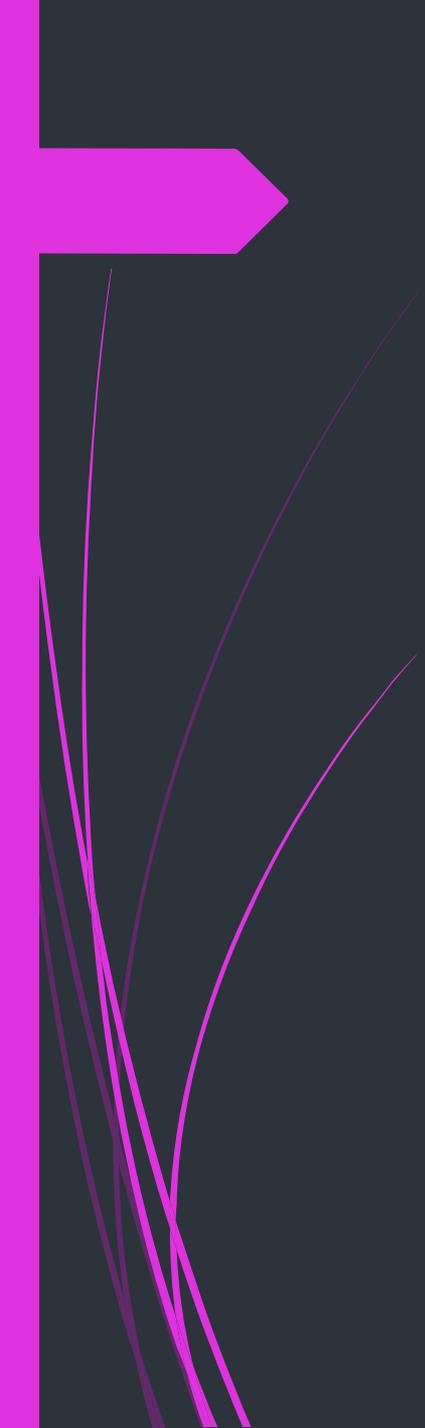
Tack Fit

- ▶ Saddles need to fit the horse, then you can add the padding. Bring in an expert to saddle fit your horses and have them teach one of your staff so they can continue to fit the saddles as the horses' bodies change. Horses' weights tend to change with the seasons (more grass=bigger horses) so try to saddle fit the horses at least twice a year.
 - ▶ Take time to fit each saddle to each horse, then the right pads for that saddle, then the right combinations for the different students (extra shock absorbers, different half pads, etc.). This will alleviate back pain which will keep your horse much happier.
- ▶ Give C.E. on saddle fit so that the people who tack the horses continue to tack them correctly – when they know the why and the how to, they are more likely to take the time to make sure it's correct.



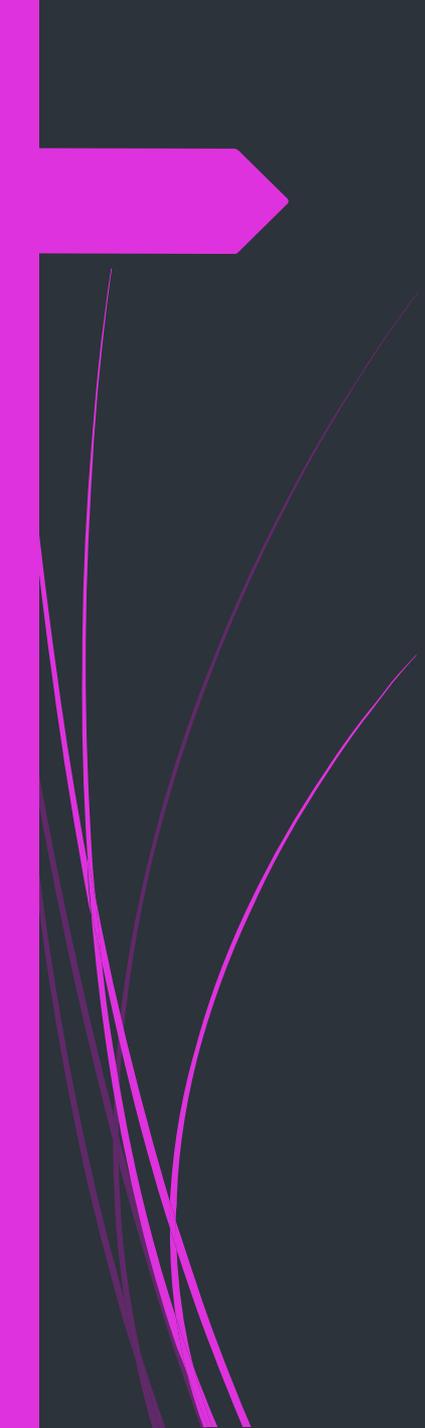
Overall Horse Maintenance

- ▶ Try to keep up with the routine hygiene of your horses. Have volunteers come to groom or bathe a few (or clean sheaths/udders if you can convince them).
 - ▶ Volunteers typically like to come out and just spend some quality time with the horses – it's nice to just bond without the horse having to work right after.
- ▶ During colder months we heat our horses backs with hot pads (rice pads) prior to their lesson to loosen up their back muscles – taking these little steps improves their comfort and overall well being.
 - ▶ When you encourage staff and volunteers to take the time to perform these extra details it creates a feeling of partnership/ownership in your horse care.



Summary

These were tips and ideas on how to keep your horse happy and healthy to increase their longevity in your therapeutic riding program. There are many different methods out there to explore that may have a positive impact on your herd.



Our horses are the heart of our programming, so their care needs to be a number one priority in order to keep them healthy and content doing the important job of changing people's lives.

Everyone needs to take a step back and look at how their horses are being cared for, and then, accept the challenge to do it better.