

**Therapeutic Horsemanship For Veterans: Lessons and Application**

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**Do you know the Lesson Plan structure?**

Parts and pieces

Objective - The objective is a sentence that includes:

- 1) mounted/unmounted skill,
- 2) verb/action (perform, demonstrate, attempt, etc.),
- 3) measurement (3 repetitions, 4/5 attempts, 2x each directions, from H to E, 3 steps, 30 seconds, etc.),
- 4) conditions (gait, assistance level of leader and sidewalkers, prompts).

Prep

Briefing Volunteers, Setting up arena, grooming and tacking or gathering tack, safety checks, etc.

Mount – followed by safety & stirrup check

Warm-up

Activity – safety check before transitions

What, How, Why, and Where

Cool Down/Wrap-up

Dismount

Untack/Groom

Treats

(Credit: lessonsintr.com)

**What are the ideas of Progression? – lessonsintr.com**

USDF Pyramid of Training vs. Dressage for Mere Mortals, Lauren Baker

USDF’s version is more complicated and not as easy to grasp. Lauren Baker’s version is more appropriate, because when you put a rider on a 1,000 lb. animal the first time, let’s face it, their first instinct is – staying on, or survival!

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**Veterans... Do you know the client?**

They are Adults

They are capable, able, smart, funny, etc.

They are different than many of our typical clients

They have a sense of humor

Be Prepared!

Get to know more about PTSD, Anxiety, TBI, addictions, paralysis, amputations, etc.

DO NOT cross the boundary of your expertise

Understand your limitations

When things come up

Stories, anxiety, competitiveness, etc.

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**Is my program right for them?**

Horses

Size, weight carrying ability

Ability to deal with anxiety/stress

Health

Personality

Training

Instructors

Experience teaching different ability levels

Professionalism

Adaptability

Horsemanship skills

Funding

Intake and Evaluation

History

Stability

Physician and Mental Health Professional

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**Our Program Ideals– Forget perfection, Have fun, Safely!**

The following ideas are just that, ideas. Take what you want, leave what you don't.

Groundwork – herd dynamics, horse behavior, trust, respect, lead mare, leading through obstacles, join up, etc.

Grooming and Tacking – taking care of our horses, learning to properly saddle your horse

Riding Basics – balance, control, use of aids, etc.

Building on Basics – steering patterns/obstacles, going outside the arena, going on short trail ride

Challenging the rider – using challenging obstacles/activities to increase the skill set, taking the horse and rider relationship up a level

**Lesson 1 – Round pen/Join Up Exercise**

Objective: Participant(s) will demonstrate proper technique round penning a horse for 3-5 minutes and achieve “join-up” with the horse one time with prompts and assistance from the instructor as needed (Credit: Monty Roberts)

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**Lesson 2 – Leading like you mean it**

Objective: Participant(s) will demonstrate effectively leading horse through a simple obstacle course 2-3 times with minimal assistance from volunteers at the walk. (Credit: Dr. Allan J. Hamilton)

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**Lesson 3 – Riding Basic**

Objective: Rider(s) will successfully perform 6 walk/halt transitions, and 4 changes of direction with assistance from leaders and sidewalkers, as needed.

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**Lesson 4 – Obstacles**

Objective: Riders will demonstrate correct use of rein and leg aides 3-5 times through an obstacle course, with assistance as needed, at the walk. (can add seat aide and/or learning sitting trot on long side)

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**Lesson 5 – Obstacles in the “OPEN”**

Objective: Riders will demonstrate proper control of their horse and appropriate use of leg and rein aides (and seat if you like) 3-5 times through the obstacle course in the field, with limited assistance, at the walk.

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**Lesson 6 – Simple trail ride**

Objective: Rider will demonstrate correct use of leg and rein aides to perform 3-5 walk/halt transitions and changes of rein through a simple trail ride with limited assistance as needed, at the walk.

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**Lesson 7 – Leading through Challenge Course**

Objective: Participant(s) will successfully demonstrate correctly leading horse through challenge course, with minimal assistance, 2-4 times as needed to ensure horse and handler are comfortable and familiar with course, at the walk.

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**Lesson 8 –The Challenge Course**

Objective: Riders will perform 3 walk/halt transitions and correct use of rein and leg aides 1 time through the challenge course, with minimal assistance, at the walk. Riders will demonstrate correct posture and leg aides at the sitting trot 1 time down each long side of the arena.

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**Other add on ideas:**

- Lessons based on the seat and body position
- Games that are challenging (careful of too much competition)
- Lessons based on 2-point
- Lessons based on the trot
- Progression in any area (repetition with some creative changes)
- Breaking the “challenge course” up into multiple lessons
- Be creative! But be careful not to “hold their hand” too much
- We typically begin and end each lesson with grooming and tacking/untacking

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**Questions?**

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