**Horsemanship/Humanship Skills:**
**How Horses Makes Us Better People**

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We are here to share our experience in developing and implementing an effective equine assisted social skills program.

**Who Are We?**
Rocking Horse Rehab is a pediatric rehabilitation and family wellness center specializing in equine assisted therapies along with alternative and traditional therapeutic programs. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life of individuals with disabilities and their families by offering innovative opportunities for clinical, educational and social development through equine assisted therapies and other alternative therapeutic programs. Our philosophy is to treat the “whole child” using the expertise of our specialized staff consisting of physical, speech and occupational therapists, clinical social workers, therapeutic riding instructors, music and art therapists.

Discuss Kathy’s role as licensed clinical social worker: volunteer, program development and implementation.

**Therapeutic Approaches Utilized:** *Definitions borrowed from Wikipedia*

**Psychodrama**
Psychodrama is a method of *psychotherapy* in which clients are encouraged to continue and complete their actions through dramatization, *role playing* and dramatic self-presentation. Both verbal and non-verbal communications are utilized. A number of scenes are enacted, depicting, for example memories of specific happenings in the past, unfinished situations, inner dramas, fantasies, *dreams*, preparations for future risk-taking situations, or unrehearsed expressions of mental states in the here and now. These scenes either approximate real-life situations or are externalizations of inner mental processes. If required, other roles may be taken by group members or by inanimate objects.[1] It is mostly used as a group work method, in which each person in the group can become a therapeutic agent for each other in the group.

Developed by *Jacob L. Moreno*, psychodrama has strong elements of *theater*, often conducted on a *stage* where *props* can be used. The *audience* is fully involved with the dramatic action. Audience involvement is either through personal interest in the concerns of the leading actor, called the protagonist; or through playing some roles of the drama which helps the protagonist; or taking the form of some of the other elements of the drama, which can give voice to the rest of our wild universe; or through active engagement as an audience member.

Psychodrama's core function is the raising of spontaneity in an adequate and functional manner. It is through the raising of spontaneity that a system, whether an internal human system or an organizational system, can begin to become creative, life-filled and develop new solutions to old and tired problems or adequate solutions to new situations and concerns. A psychodrama is best conducted and produced by a person trained in the method or learning the method called a *psychodrama director*. Psychodrama training institutes exist in many countries around the world.
Although psychodrama is usually considered to be a form of psychotherapy, and has been most widely applied in the mental health fields, psychotherapy is only one of its many functions. Psychodrama is a powerful method for teaching, for training, for engendering creativity, as well as for conducting social research and phenomenological research.

Jacob L. Moreno, M.D. - coined the term “here and now”; he is known as the Father of Role Playing “A meeting of two: eye to eye, face to face.
And when you are near I will tear your eyes out and place them inside of mine, and you will tear my eyes out and will place them inside of yours, then I will look at you with your eyes and you will look at me with mine.” Jacob L. Moreno from Who Shall Survive?

"Role reversal" takes place when two individuals, intimately related, change parts and represent each other. The purpose is, of course, that each should experience not only on a mental level, but on an actual level, what happens to his partner. In terms of surplus reality, this technique has a wide variety of applications. The individual with whom the protagonist reverses roles may not be his father or wife, but an auxiliary ego, a symbolic representation. (J. L. Moreno, 1965, p. 214)

7. The empathy of individuals or representatives of groups for the internal experiences of other individuals or representatives of groups -- what they feel, think, perceive and do -- increases with the reciprocal perception of the roles in which they operate. Therefore, the training of auxiliary egos and doubles as well as of psychotherapists in general is in the direction of increasing their sensitivity.

8. The empathy of therapists increases with their training in role perception and role reversal.

12. Role reversal is indispensable for the exploration of interpersonal relations and small group research. (J. L. Moreno, Z. T. Moreno & J. Moreno, 1956, p. 418, 431-432)

The above notations on role reversal were taken from the website: [http://www.psychodramacertification.org/](http://www.psychodramacertification.org/). The "Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy Dictionary and Reference Guide" was written and created in 1985 by William Moses, Ph.D. Dr. Moses was a certified psychodramatist until 2000.

“Psychodrama affords participants a safe, supportive environment in which to practice new and more effective roles and behaviors.” (ASGPP website)

“A truly therapeutic procedure can have for its objective no less than the whole of mankind.” — J.L. Moreno, M.D. (1889-1974)
How are psychodramatic techniques helpful in equine assisted therapies?

1. **Role Reversal** – useful for therapist/instructor in understanding client/student and horse; useful for client/student in understanding horse and others; builds empathy.
2. **Role Play** – provides opportunity to practice new behaviors and coping skills.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a **psychotherapeutic** approach, a **talking therapy**, that aims to solve problems concerning dysfunctional emotions, behaviors and cognitions through a goal-oriented, systematic procedure. The title is used in diverse ways to designate **behavior therapy**, **cognitive therapy**, and to refer to therapy based upon a combination of basic **behavioral** and **cognitive** research.[1]

There is empirical evidence that CBT is effective for the treatment of a variety of problems, including mood, anxiety, personality, eating, substance abuse, and psychotic disorders. Treatment is often manualized, with specific technique-driven brief, direct, and time-limited treatments for specific psychological disorders. CBT is used in individual therapy as well as group settings, and the techniques are often adapted for **self-help** applications. Some clinicians and researchers are more cognitive oriented (e.g. **cognitive restructuring**), while others are more behaviorally oriented (in vivo **exposure therapy**). Other interventions combine both (e.g. imaginal exposure therapy).[4][5]

CBT was primarily developed through a merging of **behavior therapy** with **cognitive therapy**. While rooted in rather different theories, these two traditions found common ground in focusing on the ”here and now”, and on alleviating symptoms.[6] Many CBT treatment programs for specific disorders have been evaluated for **efficacy** and effectiveness; the health-care trend of **evidence-based treatment**, where specific treatments for symptom-based diagnoses are recommended, has favored CBT over other approaches such as **psychodynamic** treatments.

How is CBT helpful in equine assisted therapies?

1. Focuses on the “here and now” with both client/student and horse
2. Reinforces desired behavior

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) is a system of therapy originally developed by Marsha M. Linehan, a psychology researcher at the University of Washington, to treat people with **borderline personality disorder** (BPD). DBT combines standard **cognitive-behavioral** techniques for emotion regulation and reality-testing with concepts of distress tolerance, acceptance, and **mindful awareness** largely derived from **Buddhist** meditative practice. DBT may be the first therapy that has been experimentally demonstrated to be generally effective in treating BPD.[7][8] Research indicates that DBT is also effective in treating patients who present varied symptoms and behaviors associated with **spectrum** mood disorders, including self-injury.[9] Recent work suggests its effectiveness with sexual abuse survivors[6] and chemical dependency.

How is DBT helpful in equine assisted therapies?

1. Helps client/student develop distress tolerance
2. Helps client/student develop mindfulness, being “in the moment”
**Family Systems Therapy**
Family therapy, also referred to as couple and family therapy, family systems therapy, and family counseling, is a branch of psychotherapy that works with families and couples in intimate relationships to nurture change and development. It tends to view change in terms of the systems of interaction between family members. It emphasizes family relationships as an important factor in psychological health.

What the different schools of family therapy have in common is a belief that, regardless of the origin of the problem, and regardless of whether the clients consider it an "individual" or "family" issue, involving families in solutions is often beneficial. This involvement of families is commonly accomplished by their direct participation in the therapy session. The skills of the family therapist thus include the ability to influence conversations in a way that catalyzes the strengths, wisdom, and support of the wider system.

**How is Family Therapy helpful in equine assisted therapies?**
1. Acknowledges that everyone plays a role in the recovery process
2. Ensures support at home and practice of skills
3. Develops concept of “Teamwork”

**Program Development:**

“Please, Don’t Call It Therapy!”
Parents seeking EAT for their children consistently expressed two major concerns: the first was their kids were experiencing “burn out” in therapy: they’d already been to enough traditional therapists and were tired of being told they needed more therapy, tired of feeling like there was something “wrong with them.”

The second major concern: the generalization of skills wasn't evidenced in their kid’s behavior at home or at school. Jed Baker, Ph.D. notes in his book, Social Skills Training, “It is not enough to introduce a skill once a week in group. It is the constant repetition of a skill in real situations that facilitates learning in a meaningful way.”

**Normalize to Motivate!**
Calling this a training program is more palatable to kids and families.

By successfully completing worksheets on their own and with their families, students are positively reinforcing desirable behaviors such as:
- Maintaining attention and focus
- Asking for help
- Practicing calming skills
- Developing coping skills
- Improving family and peer relationships
- Improving behavior in the classroom

Because the relationship with a horse is central to all this work, kids stay motivated to better connect with their beloved horse.

Bonus: They can earn a trophy for successfully completing the entire program!
Horsemanship/Humanship Skills: A Social Skills Training Program

Horses and Humans - we’re not so different:
- Herds/Families: make up of and roles in the herd/family,
- Body language and social cues,
- Importance of relationships,
- Emotional and behavioral issues,
- Coping skills,
- Reward the positives.

Involve the family
- Family support and consistent practice is essential for the generalization of skills.

Selection of Horses
- Must include varied personalities

Normalize Issues
- We’ve all got something to work on.

Develop Coping Skills
- Connect skills with the quality of their relationship with their horse.

Practice, Practice, Practice,
- Use worksheets
- Get parental involvement
- Include periodic family sessions
- Consistently remind of the horse/human connection – be the better horse!

Problems - with Solutions
Many of my clients are dropped off and picked up by care-givers.
- Parents forget this is therapy, even forget I am a therapist.
- Parents become detached from what is happening with their child’s progress.
- Parental denial
- Know your horse and think plans all the way through
- If the task is too hard, make it fun.

Moments of Success!
- Emails – seeking guidance, reporting success
- Clients are referring their friends
- They keep coming back!
Skills Development Plan

Choose appropriate options:

___Learn to read body language
___Understand social cues
___Practice appropriate responses to body language and social cues
___Keep body language clear, calm and consistent
___Recognize the need for personal space, mine and others
___Interact with others without invading their personal space
___Practice greetings and appropriate touch
___Learn to speak directly to others while making eye contact
___Learn to verbally interact appropriately with others
___Improve personal hygiene
___Learn to identify and name those feelings I’m experiencing

___Discuss ways to manage feelings, particularly

___Practice strategies for dealing with bullies
___Practice calming strategies
___Practice volume control
___Practice flexibility
___Practice following directions
___Practice completing a task
___Practice asking for help when appropriate
___Learn to own mistakes
___Learn problem-solving and coping skills
___Practice the problem-solving and coping skills
___Practice speaking up for myself in an appropriate way
___Practice being helpful

___Other:

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Signed


Parent


Date


Signed


Child


Date


Signed


Witness


Date
Suggested Readings


Contact Information

If you’d like more information about this program, Kathy can be reached in any of the following ways:

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Or

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