Why The Horse Matters:
Utilizing equine assisted interventions to connect with difficult clients

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A little about me……..

- Began incorporating AAT & AAlis in 2010
- Trained in canine AAPT, canine AAT, EAGALA and have completed the PATH ES in Mental Health training.
- Implementing AAlis in Counselor Education
- Clientele:
  - Developmental Trauma
  - Sexual Trauma
  - Gender Concerns
  - Anxiety

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Trauma Definitions

- Developmental Trauma & Complex Trauma

“...captures the intertwined relationship between adverse caregiving and victimization experiences and subsequent survival-based adaptations that alter normal developmental trajectories across the lifespan.” (Naste et. al, 2017)
t vs. T

- Small t
  - Bullying, divorce, job change due to lay-off, interpersonal conflicts.

- Large T
  - Natural disasters, sexual assault, mass shootings, terrorist attacks, near death experience (i.e. car accident)
Challenges of Trauma
The neurobiology of it all.....

NORMAL INFORMATION PROCESSING AND PTSD MALFUNCTIONS IN THE BRAIN

**Prefrontal Cortex**
- **Normal Brain**: Complex thinking, decision making, and appropriate behavior
- **PTSD Brain**: Dysfunctional thought processes & decision making; inappropriate responses to situations

**Hippocampus**
- **Normal Brain**: Transfers and stores information into memories
- **OCD Brain**: Stores memories incorrectly and affects memory retrieval

**Hypothalamus**
- **Normal Brain**: Releases hormones like cortisol to help manage and direct efforts to stressor
- **PTSD Brain**: Overactive, which leads to imbalances in hormone levels and increases stress and anxiety

**Amygdala**
- **Normal Brain**: Sets off fight or flight in response to danger
- **PTSD Brain**: Sets off fight or flight in response to memories or thoughts about danger

Image from www.emdrspokane.com
Hyperarousal
- Hyperaware or vigilant
- Overly quick or intense reactions
- Feeling a lack of emotional safety
- Overwhelming emotions

Window of tolerance

Hypoarousal
- Shut down, flat or numb
- Hard to think, disconnected
- Feeling shame, can’t say ‘no’

Able to think and feel at the same time
Six main areas...

- Safety
- Attunement
- Psychological Flexibility
- Self-Compassion
- Connection
- Assertion Skills

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The horse is a mirror to your soul. Sometimes you might not like what you see. Sometimes you will.
- Buck Brannaman

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.
- Maya Angelou
Psychological Flexibility
Assertion Skills

When you know yourself, you are empowered. When you accept yourself, you are invincible. - Tina Lifford

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Connection

Human – Human

Human-Intrapersonal

Human- Animal

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Self-Compassion

Self-Kindness + Common Humanity + Mindfulness

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References:
