

# **EQUINE ASSISTED ACTIVITIES**

## **TRANSLATION & DEFINITION OF COMMON TERMS:**

### **TR –Therapeutic Riding**

Definition: Perhaps the most commonly-known equine-assisted activity, therapeutic riding is a global term that embraces all equine-related activities for children and adults with challenges covering a wide range of cognitive, physical and emotional conditions. A therapeutic riding program is often taught by a nationally-certified instructor.

### **EAT –Equine Assisted Therapy**

Definition: Practices in this category all share one important commonality: that they are led by a credentialed, trained professional/therapist in a specific scope of practice, working towards clear treatment goals/outcomes that are documented. (*The Natural Connection website*)

There are two distinct sub-fields in the helping and healing professions:

#### **1. Equines in Mental Health/Psychology**

Known by various names (equine-assisted mental health, equine-guided counselling, equine-facilitated psychotherapy, and so on), this type of intervention seeks to improve functioning on a variety of levels: emotional, psychological, social/relational, behavioural, cognitive and physical... This form of experiential therapy may or may not involve riding, and usually consists of groundwork with the equines within the therapist's scope of practice/specialization, at times supported by an equine professional/handler. These interventions seek to actively engage clients in ways not possible with traditional talk therapy.

#### **2. Equines in Physiotherapy/Speech Therapy/Occupational Therapy**

Known as hippotherapy (from the Greek 'hippo' meaning horse), this type of intervention is a rehabilitation strategy using the equine's movement in order to influence the motor and postural control of the rider. The equine's movement is the tool the therapist will use and modulate in order to promote the goals identified in the assessment of the client. The client passively interacts with, and responds to, the equine's movement, which the therapist analyzes and grades based on what is appropriate for that client.

It can be used exclusively by physiotherapists, occupational therapists or speech-language pathologists who add their own specialization in their treatment. A medical professional and a horse professional should work with the rider, determining a specific program to meet the needs of the rider (*Champagne, D. 2007, Winter. Therapeutic riding and hippotherapy - Related yet still different. CanTRA Caller,3*)

### **EAEI –Equine Assisted Education/Learning**

Definition: Practices in this category often share characteristics of both equine-assisted activities as well as equine-assisted therapy in the helping and healing professions. Known by various names (such as equine-guided development, equine-assisted learning, equine-facilitated coaching, equine-guided education, equine-facilitated experiential learning, etc.), they are commonly described as interventions that foster personal growth, self-development, self-awareness, life skills, spiritual development, and so on. Some practices specifically target corporate leadership or business team building.

Equine-assisted education/learning is not necessarily led by a credentialed therapist, although it can be. Such practices are also often led by persons in other scopes of practice, such as educators, teachers, energy healers, shamanistic practitioners, personal/life coaches, business coaches, etc. They can also be led by other individuals with an interest in personal development who have taken training related to equine-assisted education/learning, though there is considerable concern about the safety and ethical risks that exist when under-qualified individuals lead interventions that deal with personal/emotional/healing issues. (*The Natural Connection website*)

## **BENEFITS:**

- Development of mobility, balance and coordination
- Improvement in muscle tone and strength
- Increased self-confidence through improved self-image
- Improved learning, concentration, spatial awareness
- An incentive and opportunity to take responsibility and control
- New skills learned in an equine environment can be transferred to daily living
- Motivation to achieve goals
- Independence, integration and sense of achievement
- Learned respect for self and others
- Improved communication and social skills
- Boundary setting and empathy toward others
- Responsibility and accountability
- Problem solving and cooperation
- Overcoming challenges in a non-threatening environment

## **RESEARCH SITES:**

Federation of Horses in Education and Therapy International -HETI  
Hyperlink; <http://www.frdi.net/journal.html>

[The Natural Connection Research Articles and Links](#)