Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Addictions Recovery

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Join us as we discuss the power of experiential therapy in addictions recovery! Specifically we will be looking at how Equine Assisted Psychotherapy is particularly well suited to address the inherent issues that present themselves with addictions. Through explanation of the main tenets of the modality, why horses, the process itself and the particular benefits of this type of therapy, attendants will be able to see through assessment graphs, testimonials and case studies the effectiveness of equine assisted psychotherapy in addictions recovery.
Our Time Together

- Who We Are
- Programming Overview
  - Experiential Therapy
  - EAGALA Model EAP
  - Why Horses
  - Presenting Issues
  - Examples of sessions
- Stories, Testimonials, Graphs
- Q&A
Today’s Team

Representing the Equine Assisted Growth & Learning Association (EAGALA)

**Lynn Moore** – MA, LADC, CCDP, EAGALA Adv Certified, Mentor and Trainer

**Heather Jeffrey** -- EAGALA Advanced Certified, ES, CTC

- Acres for Life, Center for Growth & Learning - an EAGALA Distinguished Program located in Chisago City, Minnesota.
- 10 years in business providing EAGALA Model EAP Services
  - Hazelden Treatment Center
  - County Drug Courts
  - Sober High Schools
  - Individuals and Families struggle with addiction and co-occurring mental health disorders

There are EAGALA facilities all around the country and the world who provide addictions recovery services!
Today our focus will be on EAGALA Model Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) as our chosen modality of Experiential Therapy.

• Experiential Umbrella:
  ○ recreation,
  ○ expressive arts,
  ○ drama, music,
  ○ wilderness,
  ○ sand tray etc.

• Commonality -- clients taking an active role in experiencing the therapy

• Helps client realize obstacles, let down their guard, uncover strengths, take responsibility for choices and actions, practice new skills instead of them remaining theoretical etc

• Equine Assisted Psychotherapy as experiential therapy is further enhanced by the addition of other living beings, the horses, with which to interact and learn from!
Provides education, standards, innovation, and support to professionals providing services in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Learning.

Committed to setting the standard of professional excellence in how horses and humans work together to improve the quality of life and mental health of individuals, families and groups worldwide.
The EAGALA Organization

• Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association
• Professional non-profit association founded in 1999
• Currently with 4500 members in 49 countries around the world, and 600 programs providing EAGALA Model services.
• 4 main tenets of EAGALA Model:
  – Code of Ethics
  – Solution Oriented
  – Team Approach – Mental Health Professional and Equine Specialist
  – All on the ground, no riding
EAGALA Model EAP and Experiential Therapy

- An experiential method that provides a hands-on approach to learning
  - Learning comes from a different part of the brain and creates a body memory
  - Not about the “why” which can often keep clients stuck, instead works from the “how”
  - Creates new pathways and possibilities and patterns
- You “feel” the learning not just intellectualize it – helps move from theoretical change into action!
- Short term, interventional type of therapy/learning. Can be primary or adjunct.
- Sessions structured to address treatment goals – not horsemanship!
- Uses therapeutic metaphor
- EAGALA Model uses a Team Approach – Requires both a Mental Health Professional and an Equine Specialist working with clients and horses to address treatment goals
What do you see?
Why Horses

- Large, powerful animals
- Social creatures
- Distinct personalities, attitudes and moods
- Requires focus
- Provide immediate feedback
- Live in the ‘here and now’
- Do NOT judge, shame or blame
- Requires trust
- Offer opportunity to create metaphor of the who/what of addiction/recovery/mental health – assists in ‘getting out of their head’
Presenting Issues

• Co-Occurring Disorders
  – Depression, Anxiety, Trauma, Abuse
• Shame/Guilt
• Grief and Loss
• Disconnected from feelings, self
• Multiple, times in treatment
• Experiencing Judgment – self and others
• Expectations of Self:
  – ‘Shoulding all over self’
  – Not asking for help
• Little to no HOPE
Benefits of EAGALA Model
EAP Programming

• Fresh perspective – Engaging belief that ‘this could be different’
• Getting out of the head and into the heart
  – Connecting with emotions – self awareness
  – Horses require you to stay in the moment – ‘Be Present’
• Acknowledging, naming and owning the disease of addiction – in actions, not just in reciting the words
• Put recovery into action!
• Opportunity to put learnings into action – knowledge transfers into behaviors
  – Confidence building – Reclaiming Strengths
  – Creative problem solving and decision making
Benefits of EAGALA Model
EAP Programming

• Practice new life skills in an emotionally safe environment –
  – Free from judgment of others
  – Easier to TRUST the horses than people
  – Experience being in relationship –
    • self and others
• Feeling the power of ‘Fellowship’ & belonging again
• Practice setting and holding healthy boundaries
• Experience surrender
• Practice accessing resources
• Improve communication skills
  – Practice asking for help
  – Improve verbal and non-verbal
Why EAGALA Model / Experiential Therapy pairs well with traditional treatment...

- Toolbox – putting it to work not just carrying it around
- Feeling feelings/triggers – react or respond?
- Moves learning from head into the rest of their body
- Experience what it is like to move life into recovery instead of trying to fit recovery into old life – scenarios
- Take a real look at obstacles and practice different solutions and possibilities
- Able to see what client is stuck in “recovery talk”
- Client is able to practice what they are learning Before they leave treatment
- Get in touch with strengths – what is going in the place of addiction
Key Points about the Method

• Importance of ‘Holding the Space’ for feeling
• Words or No Words
• Providing the place to be, to reconnect, to let go
• Opportunity to utilize resources or not
• “Trust the Process” – stay out of the way
• Importance of team approach of Mental Health Professional and Equine Specialist – minimal negative impact on client session, personal awareness of countertransference
Session Structure

- EAGALA Model
  - Let the client tell their story
  - Listen to horses and build session accordingly
  - Team, Team, Team
  - Clean Language/Less is more
- Brief check in
- Experiential time
- Brief processing or not
- Most times in large, open space – metaphor of life and recovery
- Most times multiple horses – varying sizes, shapes, colors, experiences – client can choose
- Can be individual and/or group sessions – benefits of each
Activities Examples

• “We invite you to step into life and recovery and see what you connect with…”
• “What are three things that you need to live a full life in recovery…”
  - Build representations and move horse through
• “Create a representation of a Strength/Obstacle in your life…”
• “Create a representation of the life you want…”
  - Include triggers that lead you from it and the steps that would bring you back
• “Create a representation of your support community..”
• “Create your relapse – build the path that takes you to it, move a horse through, where along path are you still at choice…”
• Past, Present, Future - “as you move to those points being aware of letting go of what no longer serves you as well as claiming a strength that you take from that…”
• Share your story with a horse (s)
• Recovery Life Raft
Testimonials

- “At first I was afraid to say 'No' but now I see that I can say 'No' and other people will hear it.”
- “I used to make choices without thinking of what other options were there for me... I've learned to slow down, look around and think!”
- “I didn't feel forgotten today... thank you.”
- “I have good ideas, my opinion matters, there's the 'hand' of friends, peers to help us 'back up on our feet'”.
- “I confronted so many fears and by doing so I learned so much to carry with me through my life.”
- “All I know is there is something 'magical' about these animals. How they sense our feelings and react as such. Not only are they beautiful and intelligent. They are insightful and gentle. It worked for me! Thank you so much!”
- “Your program made tackling some not so easy topics doable. Now we share a common language from which to communicate more successfully.”
- “This is a wonderful way to take learning and put it into practice... immediately.”
- “I gathered more information about my client in one session at your farm than I would have gathered in 10 sessions in my office.”
- “Incorporating equine activities into our overall program curricula helped move our clients along at a faster pace and to a deeper level than our standard would ever have done.”
Stories and Q & A
Thank you!

Contact us if you’d like to learn more about how EAGALA Model EAP can help your clients!

www.eagala.org