



Equus Pura
Equine Assisted Therapy



Child and Youth Psychology Services

Equus Cura (Latin) = Horse Healing

Equine Assisted Therapy utilizes the relationship with the horse as a tool to mirror client's experiences and facilitate change.





Physiological Effect

A walking horse is the therapeutic method of physical activity reproduction, which in turn helps to develop and maintain balance and compensatory muscle contractions.

The large moving animal passes over 110 impulses a minute through the body of the rider, affecting it front to back, side to side, up and down and around the axes. Stimulating the muscle groups in the pelvis and legs area, it increases the blood flow to all internal organs and strongly resembles the human walking movements, getting all groups of muscles involved. The horse's temperature is 1-2 degrees higher than human, which gives a feeling of “warm massage” – deep, intense but gentle. Besides, the horse-riding stimulates the minor motor developments and aids with the formation of complex precise movements. This major effect of the equine therapy can not be achieved in any other way. Increased amount of endorphins and decreased level of cortisol through interaction with animals leads to calmer disposition.





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Psychological Effect

Opportunity to learn about themselves and others by actually participating in activities with the horses, and then processing (or discussing) feelings, behaviours and patterns. The presence of a horse is considered "therapeutic" in itself, since it is a dynamic and powerful living being. There's also a healing bond that can develop between humans and horses.

Equine therapy greatly helps with the psycho-emotional area, assists with the maximum mobilisation of the willing activity, socialisation and creation of more positive and harmonic relationships with the outside world, increases the motivation and the desire to achieve positive outcomes.

This huge positive impact lets the kids gain new experiences, and makes the life more fruitful, bright, rich and happy. The kid elevates figuratively and literally above the problems, above himself of yesterday. The horse becomes a real stimulus and source of living forces, awakens the desire to live and overcome the obstacles, set goals and achieve them.



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Who can benefit

Psychological benefits:

There has been a great deal of research demonstrating that Equine Assisted Therapy provides for an experiential learning environment to assist adults and children with a range of mental health conditions.



Autism and Asperger Syndrome, PTSD, Complex Trauma, Sexual Abuse, DV, Depression and Anxiety, various behavioral issues, Attention Deficit Disorder, anger management, conflict resolution, relationship problems, couples therapy, stress, substance abuse, eating disorders, at-risk youth, victims of abuse, those in bereavement, those lacking self-esteem, veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, people who are unresponsive to traditional therapies, and people with other mental health challenges.

The treatment allows for connection with the animals and aids in the **development of personal growth** within an experiential learning environment.



Speech and language development:

The horse's movement is helpful in working with children with speech and language delays and disorders for many reasons.

Approximately 3,000 facilitatory steps of movement are produced in a 20 minute session using Hippotherapy. This translates into 3,000 opportunities to form a new motor pathway for speech and language development. The horse's walk provides sensory input through movement, which is variable, rhythmic, and repetitive which leads to the sensory benefits of equine movement lasting for hours or days following the session.

The patient receives proprioceptive input, vestibular input, tactile input, auditory input, olfactory input, and visual flow all simultaneously as the horse is moving. The variability of the horse's gait enables the therapist to grade the degree of sensory input to the patient and then utilize this movement in combination with other speech-language pathology treatment strategies to achieve desired results

- Receptive language delays and deficits
- Expressive language delays and deficits
- Pragmatic language delays and disorders
- Articulation delays and disorders
- Phonology delays and disorders
- Stuttering/Fluency Disorders
- Oral motor delays
- Voice (breath support, volume, vocal abuse and misuse)
- Auditory processing disorders
- Dysarthria
- Oral/verbal apraxia of speech
- Swallowing/Feeding difficulty





Occupational Therapy and Horses:

Hippotherapy uses of the movement of the horse as a treatment strategy to address impairments, functional limitations and disabilities in children with neuromotor and sensory dysfunction. Carefully graded motor and sensory input is provided to achieve treatment goals. It can then be generalised to a wide range of daily activities.

The primary focus of classic hippotherapy is the patient's posture and movement response. The horse provides a dynamic base of support, making it an excellent tool for increasing trunk strength and control, balance, postural control (strength and endurance), addressing weight bearing, co-ordination and motor planning. The horse's movement also helps with the development of fine motor skills, visual motor skills, bilateral co-ordination, attention and cognition. The child needs to perform subtle adjustments in the trunk to maintain a stable position whilst the horse increases it's speed, slows down or lengthens and shortens its stride. Whilst this is happening the therapist can work on specific targets that facilitate co-ordination, motor planning, timing, respiratory control and attention skills through graded activities.

The treatment sessions are enjoyable and the interaction with the horse motivates many children who may otherwise avoid participating in their treatment aims. Therapy on a horse is fun and seems more like play than work. The hippotherapy setting is an ideal place to achieve occupational therapy goals.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1E7zLeDZ-kc#t=186.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1E7zLeDZ-kc#t=186)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VY00fbnitQA>



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Why it works

- Children are in an environment where they are more likely to elicit behaviours requiring intervention
- There is a large paddock and a treatment room to allow for mixed treatment modalities
- The majority of the activities are conducted on the ground with the horse rather than mounted
- Each session provides initial one on one with the therapist and child prior to working within the paddock to ensure each treatment session is appropriate for the current behaviours requiring intervention
- Children may choose to be based in the paddock and watch the horses from a distance to provide a calming environment to discuss current stressors and concerns
- Children are provided with an **Equine Journal** to aid in treatment and all sessions are supported by the Horse Instructor to ensure the safety for both the child and horse.



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Irina Aleksandrova (Bush) is Co-Founder, Educational Director and Horse Instructor

Irina holds a Bachelor of Primary Education and has worked in some of the private schools overseas and in Brisbane.

Irina has over 20 years experience working with horses from the basic day to day handling to preparing and training for competitions. By combining her educational background with passion for equine co-facilitators, she believes in achieving positive outcomes for a broad range of clients needs.

Irina provides therapeutic riding tuition to clients of various ages and developed an EAP lessons matrix and plans in conjunction with specific treatment requirements.

Irina has worked with a wide range of Children and Youth throughout her teaching career and is therefore acutely aware of assisting children in self regulation and behaviour modification techniques.

Irina is a member of the International Association of Equine Assisted Psychotherapists (EAGALA) and maintains standards for EAGALA membership and AHPRA registration.



How we do it

- The therapist chooses an activity for the client. Working together with an Equine Specialist, the therapist facilitates the activity, then discusses with the client what worked and what didn't.
- Helping clients draw parallels between the EAP session and the “real world” is what this type of therapy is all about.





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Where to find us

We are located next to 272 Brisbane Corso, Yeronga, 4104 only 5km from the Brisbane CBD

