

An Equine-Assisted Co-Treatment Model for Traumatized and At-Risk Youth: the Interprofessional Collaboration of Occupational Therapy and Mental Health

Molly DePrekel, MA, LP

Sheryl Butler, MA, OTD, OTR/L

Participant Outcomes

1. Participants will learn the distinct value of a co-treatment model with equine partners to impact clients with trauma.
2. Participants will gain a basic understanding of this model of care.
3. Participants will gain a working knowledge of the role that equines can play in trauma recovery.

Therapy with the Help of Horses



Equine Assisted Therapy (EAT)

- a collective term for all types of therapeutic activities using horses which use riding as a tool in a therapeutic process” (Hawkins et al., 2014).
- a broad category which includes the therapeutic use of horse for treatment purposes to improve gross motor, social and self-help skills” (Ratcliffe & Sanekane, 2009)
- correct and clear use of the terminology for EAT is important for clinicians and researchers. (White-Lewis et al., 2020)
- New research studies with significant results are increasing in frequency and rigour (White- Lewis et al., 2017)

Research Overview: Equine Assisted Therapy (EAT), Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP), Equine Assisted Occupational Therapy (EAOT)

The level of research around EAT and EFP is low to moderate. Identified Gaps in research:

- **Lack of “globally accepted” terminology impacts the quality and rigor of research**
- **There is limited consensus of best practices.**
- **Literature is just beginning to emerge on EFT (Selby & Smith-Osborne, 2013)**
- **Challenges researching traumatized and at-risk youth (attrition bias)**
- **There is limited research utilizing occupational therapists.**
- **No studies found combining EAOT and EFP**
- **EFP for Youth Survivors: Existing studies are not replicable and existing treatments have not been manualized (O’Haire et al. 2015)**

Evolution of the Model

2012 Sexually Exploited Youth

2020 Covid

Pause and pivot

2021-back in person OT and Mental Health
1:1s

Found the magic

Added Occupational Therapy to contract and
developed cotherapy



Ghost

Psychotherapy Models

Sensorimotor Psychotherapy (SP)

Adaptive Internal Relational

Network (AIR Network) -

competency based

Dialectical Behavior Theory (DBT)

Eye Movement Desensitization
and Reprocessing (EMDR)

Cognitive Behavior Therapy
(CBT)

Polyvagal theory

Attachment Theory

Animal Assisted Interventions

Trauma Informed Care

Self-Regulation

Learning to stay in window of optimal arousal

(WOT/Sensory Modulation) Window of
Optimal Arousal

Assertiveness

Boundaries

Horse skills

Nonverbal communication

Internal Locus of Control/Interoception

Neuroplasticity



Bingo

Occupational Therapy

OT Frame of References:

Ayres' Sensory Integration (SI)

Model of Human Occupation (MOHO)

Trauma Frame of References:

Porges Polyvagal Theory

Perry's Neurosequential model

Attachment Theory (Bowlby and Ainsworth)

Hippotherapy (HPOT) - focused on using the movement of the horse to facilitate motor development, maintain physical function, sensory processing, attention and focus, emotional regulation, skills building

Mental Health session (EAOT) - trauma-informed focus on working with the equine partner for co-regulation, improving self-confidence/self-efficacy, sensory processing (Interoception), coping strategies, problem solving.

kOT's Impact on Program Outcomes

- **New Learning**
 - Movement
 - Playfulness
 - Sensory Profile
- **Functional Improvements**
 - Strategies for school and work
- **Gain Perspective**
 - Understanding the body from a development perspective
 - Meeting participants where they are at (developmentally)

(Butler, 2023)



Rose and Ida

Hennepin County Program

- Referral sources - Mental Health Case Workers, Probation Officers, and Child Protection Workers
- Inclusion Criteria - youth traumatized and at-risk for sexual exploitation
- Ages 12-21
- Gender Inclusive
- 14 weeks
- Co-therapy (7 weeks) - OT/MH all clients
- Group Milieu (7 weeks) - curriculum based (MH)
- Co-therapy - Individual treatment unable to be successful in group setting (OT/MH)

Outcomes - Primary Stakeholder

Attendance, Effectiveness, Efficiency

Quantitative :

- Pre/Post Projective Assessment
- Self-Sufficiency Matrix (Initial, Interim, Completion)
- Discharge Survey

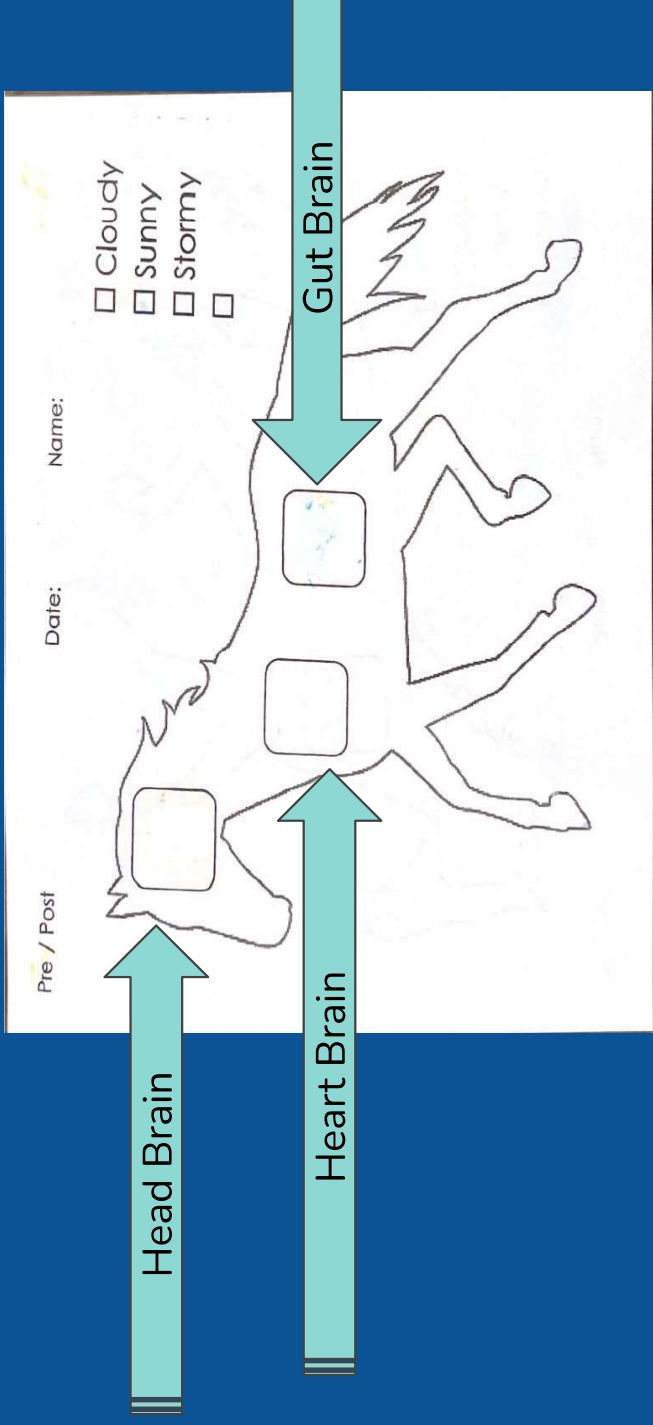
Qualitative :

- Discharge questionnaire



Karl

Pre/Post Projective Assessment



Self-Sufficiency Matrix: Initial, Interim, Completion

Pro-Social Activities

- 1: In a crisis situation; in "survival mode"; Not engaged in any pro-social activities.
- 2: Socially isolated and/or no social skills and/or lacks motivation to become involved
- 3: Sporadically involved and/or minimal social skills or motivated to become involved
- 4: Some community involvement (advisory group, support group) but has barriers such as transportation or childcare
- 5: Actively involved in pro-social activities

Emotional Wellbeing

- 1: Danger to self or others; recurring suicidal ideation; experiencing severe difficulty in day-to-day life due to emotional wellbeing
- 2: Recurrent emotional wellbeing concerns that may affect behavior, but not a danger to self/others; persistent problems with functioning due to low emotional wellbeing
- 3: Mild symptoms may be present; only moderate difficulty in functioning due to emotional wellbeing. Identifies need for support plan and coping skills
- 4: Minimal symptoms that are typical responses to life stressors; only slight impairment in functioning. Implementing support plan and coping skills
- 5: Symptoms are absent or rare; good or superior functioning in wide range of activities; no more than every-day problems with emotional wellbeing

Discharge Survey

Quantitative Assessment

Since working with the horses, how do you feel the following has changed?

My ability to set boundaries with others has...

My respect for other peoples' boundaries has...

My understanding of others' feelings has...

My ability to calm my own emotions has...

My ability to pause and think before acting has...

My ability to be clear about my needs and wants without aggression has...

Improved a lot, a little, stayed the same or gotten worse

My ability to work together with others has...

My feelings of sadness or being depressed...

My ability to talk about my feelings has...

I have learned better ways to cope with problems...

My ability to control the desire to do self-harm...

My relationships with other people have...

I know who to turn to when I need to talk to someone...

Discharge Questionnaire

What worked?

What didn't work?

What was the best part?

How has being part of the program impacted your life outside of Hold Your Horses

What skills that you learned in the program do you use outside of HYH?

When did you pay the least attention?

When did you pay the most attention?



Whisper

Discharge Questionnaire

What did you like about the co-therapy sessions?

- Working with an OT and a Mental Health Person
- "OT" things (crash pad, bosu ball, crunchy snacks, play)
- Learning horse skills with 2 people helping me
- I didn't really like the co-therapy sessions

Did having an OT in session (Katie or Sheryl) help you?



Metrics of Successful Completion

- Attended 10 of 14 sessions (71%)
- Self-Sufficiency Matrix Improvement
 - 75% Well Being
 - 63% Pro-Social
- Living in a family setting upon completion of program (80%)
- Discharge survey - improvement in 9 of 13 questions (70%)
- Projective Assessment - positive improvement (75%)
- Expected outcomes may differ between probation and social work referrals



Yoder

Role of the Equine Partner in Trauma

- Equines require you to “Be in the Moment”
- Attunement
 - body language
 - micromovements
 - human intention
- Facilitate Mind-Body Connection
 - Sensory Experience
 - Movement
- Positive Regard
- Immediate Feedback for Actions



Leo

photo credit Sheryl Butler

Role of the Equine Partner in Trauma

Connect past to present

Uncover and challenge internalized beliefs

Horses help us move into emotion.....they move us into now.



Leo and Kay Neznik, LICSW

photo credit Sheryl Butler

Care of the Equine Partner

- Not every equine is suited for this work
- Considerations for HPOT
- Equines get treatment of Acupuncture, T-touch, Masterson Vet and dental care
- Animal communication
- Energy healing work
- Time outside to be a horse
- Ground work
- Proper exercise
- Long lining
- Riding
- Breaks



Photo credit Sheryl Butler

Attitude of Gratitude

We would like to thank Hold Your Horses for their support and partnership in our work.

We would like to thank Hennepin County for their support and care for the youth they serve.

We would like to thank the equine partners who make this work dynamic heartfelt and amazing.



Miss Lily

Photo credit Sheryl Butler

*They will hold space as you
work through your shame, as
you move through the story of
who you think you are, and
move into the heart space of
who you really are, a whole
connected soulful human.*

Molly DePrekel



Contact Information

If you are interested in training or our curriculum contact us at:

Molly DePrekel

Molly@caimsh Healing.com

Dr. Sheryl Butler

sheryl@holdyourhorses.org

www.holdyourhorses.org

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