

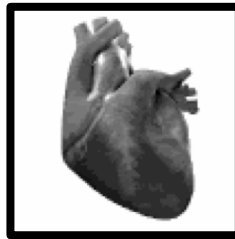
Clipity Clop:
The Rhythms and
Relationships of Mounted
Trauma Processing

Susanne Haseman, LCMHC, CEIP-MH
First Light Farm Counseling Services
300 Paget Rd., Cornish, NH 03745
603-675-2678
www.FirstLightFarm.com
Susanne.Haseman@FirstLightFarm.com

We are creatures of rhythm...



We are creatures of rhythm...



We are creatures of rhythm...
We are creatures of relationship...



We are creatures of rhythm...
We are creatures of relationship...



We are creatures of rhythm...
We are creatures of relationship...



We are creatures of rhythm...
We are creatures of relationship...
Sometimes our rhythms and
relationships coincide...



Trauma

The
perception
that survival
is in danger,
either our
own, or
someone
else's.

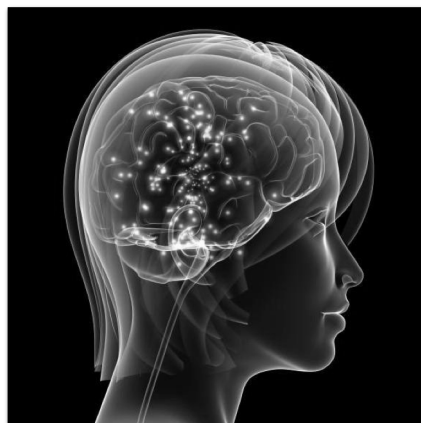


constriction

**“Because our bodies do not register that we are now safe, we remain stuck in the past, rather than being in present time.”
–Peter Levine**



“The brain is an action organ...”



(Bessel van der Kolk)

Healing from Trauma Responses Move From Reliving to Remembering

Goal: help clients integrate their experience into their coherent narrative of themselves.

- Where the trauma experience becomes one of many experiences.
- They can describe it without reliving it.
- They can learn from their experiences and move on.

(D. Siegel)



Healing from Trauma Responses

Helpful elements for safely processing memories:

- Phase based
- Movement
- Stay within the Window of Emotional Tolerance
- Surrounded by supporters
- Safety
- Grounding in the present
- Short visits into the past, with return to the present.



So how can riding help?

Mounted work and Trauma

Mounted work provides many of the elements needed to process traumatic experiences for people who are comfortable on the back of a horse.



- Side to side movement provides bilateral rhythmic motion-
-helps clients stay within the window of tolerance.
- Encourages present focus.
- strong relationship between the horse and the client enhances the sense of safety.

Mounted work and Trauma, cont.

- Helps the client trust the therapy team (MHP & Horse Professional) more readily.
- Much more fun than an office chair!
- Horses can be actual partners by giving input-- Horse Speak (Wilsie).
- Riding skills are not required, but comfort on the back of the horse is essential.



Trauma Treatment Modalities that could be Supported by Horseback Riding.

- Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT)--Bruce Perry –Developmental.
- Sensorimotor Therapy—Pat Ogden
 - Uses body motions, focus and awareness.
- Somatic Experiencing Therapy—Peter Levine
 - Uses innate healing capacities of the body to recover from traumatic experiences.
- Brain Spotting (David Grand)
 - Eye's connection to a spot in the mid brain
- Mindfulness-- focus on the present moment without judgement.



Bilateral Rhythmic Stimulation

- Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing (EDMR) (Francine Shapiro)
 - Bilateral eye movement or other BLRS.
- Emotional Freedom Therapy (EFT)
 - Tapping on meridian points.
- Brain Gym
 - Education oriented to promote effective brain function.



Preparation

Prior to doing trauma work in the saddle, some prep work is required:

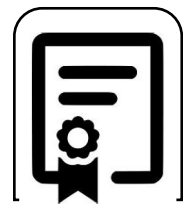
- Training in the therapy mode used.
- Therapy team to “wrap” the client.
- Develop strong relationships with the horse.
- Get to know the client’s particulars.
- Be grounded in the present.
- Listen to and communicate with the horse during all phases of the mounted work.



Know what you're doing

The therapist must be very familiar with the treatment modality.

- In depth training.
- Know the protocols.
- Try it in the office with the client.
- Teach horse professional enough to support you.



Build the Therapy Team

- Credentialed mental health professional, horse professional with mental health training and a riding horse.
- The horse professional is NOT providing therapy, but needs to know enough about the goals and methods.
- Build your collaboration
- The Equine needs to be prepared to do the work and have a voice throughout.



Build the Therapy Team, cont.

- "Wrap" the client.
- All must have a strong relationship with the horse.
- Client must be comfortable riding.
- Therapist and/or horse professional needs to be comfortable leading a rider on the assisting horse.



Prepare the Riding Horse

- Select horses who are mentors, teachers or caretakers.
- Horses with strong side to side strong movement.
- Horse can give input—Horse Speak, (Sharon Wilsie)
 - Where to go next,
 - What to do,
 - When it's time to stop,
 - Things to do after the ride.



Get to know your horse prior to your client sessions

- Be sure the horse is comfortable with the space.
- Ride and see what his or her preferences are around tack, activities etc.
 - Most work will be done at a walk.
- Practice leading the horse while other people are riding before you put a client in the saddle
- Figure out how the horse communicates with you.
- Figure out Give Back activities that the horse appreciates.



Help the client get to know your horse

- Be sure that the client wants to do this kind of work.
- Be sure there are enough inner resources.
- Get to know the client, especially triggered responses.
- Encourage the client to horse relationship.
- Client needs to be comfortable in the saddle.
 - Minimal riding skill required
 - Must feel safe in the saddle
- Client can do "Give backs".



Grounding through Mindfulness

- Attitude of curiosity and compassion.
- Focus on present experience.
- Nonjudgmental acceptance.
- Strong research supports using it for a variety of populations.
- Promising intervention for treating anxiety and mood problems in clinical populations.
- Increases psychological flexibility. Helpful when added to other therapies.



(R. Siegel)

I put EMDR and Brain Spotting on horseback.



Ground in the present movement

Focus on the present of the horse's movement.

- The hind end movement provides the bilateral rhythmic stimulation that helps clients with their processing work.
- Help the client focus on the horse's hind end movement, and the input their body gets from it
- Pay attention to the client's emotional state.



EMDR



Concentrate on the most difficult parts of a memory during bilateral rhythmic stimulation

- Uses phase based processing.
- Bilateral rhythmic stimulation.
- Dual focus on present while thinking about the memory.
- Safety—therapist supports & monitors so that the client stays within the window of safety.
- Short visits to past with return to present before window of tolerance is breached. (Greenwald)

There are a number of EMDR protocols that can be adapted to riding.

EMDR & Horseback Riding

- Horse's rhythmic movement used as the bilateral rhythmic stimulation.
- Works on all levels of the simultaneously.
- Walking horse's movement is around 80 bpm.
- Feedback is that riding rhythms work better than eye movements.
- Can vary tempo and types of movement.



EMDR Preparation

- Set up the required protocol elements before you go in with the horse.
- Familiarize the horse with the arena of the moment.
- Help the rider mount up.
- Help the rider focus on the horse's hind end movement.



EMDR Processing

Begin with the client's mental Safe Place.

- Client focuses on worst part of the memory.
- Count about 20 strides and stop.
- "What comes up?"
- Intervene if needed.
- "Go with that" and walk on.
- Notice horse responses.
- Continue until SUD is 0, or contain the memory.
- Once completed, allow for client give backs to horse.



EMDR

Trauma processing method using relevant, still eye position to access parts of the midbrain and subcortex.

“Where you look impacts how you feel”. (David Grand, 2013)

- Find visual gaze spot where feelings are strongest. The brain will organize itself around that spot.
- Uses randomized alternating auditory input.
- Relies on the brain’s own healing mechanisms.
- Processing occurs during the session and continues up to 3 days past session.
- Client doesn’t need to talk about the traumatic event, but may feel able to do so afterwards.

BSP on Horseback Preparations

- Set up auditory input—headphones & device.
- Lead the horse around the arena for a safety check.
- Have the client mount the horse. Check headphones & sound device.
- Lead client and horse around the arena in both directions.
- Help client find the horse’s hind end movement.



BSP on Horseback

- Find the visual "spot" using pointer.
- Hold the pointer on the spot for a few moments.
Remove the pointer for later use if needed.
- Have the horse walk on. Provide the safe holding space.
- Pay attention to horse's nudges or suggestions.
- Client's emotional responses will come in waves.



BSP on Horseback

- Stop periodically and check in.
- If client emotions get towards the edge of the window of tolerance, stop and regroup.
- Go until client has finished and doesn't want to "squeeze the lemon" for more.
- Processing may continue up to 3 days.
- Allow time for give backs.



My experience has been...

I have had clients who did both office and horseback work in both EMDR and BSP.

- Their unanimous agreement was that working on the horse was much better.
- BSP allowed them to go “deeper”.
- Whatever method you use, consider riding as a possible support and see where it goes!



Summary

- Riding impacts many areas of brain function simultaneously.
- Can be used w/ variety of therapeutic interventions.
- Incorporates attachment and attunement, relationships
- Very flexible & adaptable.
- Provides bilateral stimulation through the movement of riding.
- Potential to incorporate mindfulness.
- Can be used with therapeutic modalities to enhance trauma recovery.
- Can actually be fun!
- Clients rode a horse on the road to their healing.



References

- Grand, David . *Brain Spotting: The Revolutionary New Therapy for Rapid and Effective Change*. Boulder: Sounds True, 2013.
- Greenwald, R *EMDR within a phase model of trauma-informed treatment*. NY: Haworth. 2007
- Levine, Peter A, and Ann Frederick. *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*. Berkley: North Atlantic, 2012.
- Ogden, Pat and Kekuni Minton. *Trauma and the Body: A Sensory Motor Approach to Psychotherapy*. New York: Norton, 2008.
- Perry, Bruce and Maia Szalavitz. *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog: and Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook*. New York: Basic Books, 2006.
- Siegel, Daniel J. *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*. New York: Norton, 2010.
- Siegel, Ronald,. New York, Guilford Press, 2010. *The Mindfulness Solution*
- van der Kolk, Bessel, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York: Viking 2014.
- Wilsie, Sharon & Gretchen Vogel, *Horse Speak: The Equine-Human Translation Guide*. North Pomfret, Trafalgar Square Books, 2016.
- Wilsie, S. *Horses in Translation*. North Pomfret, Trafalgar Square Books, 2018.



Resources

- EAI Repository (Elise Rothman d'Hauthuille):
 - <http://equineassistedinterventions.org/>
- Child Trauma Academy (Bruce Perry):
 - <http://www.childtrauma.org/>
- Trauma Center at JRI (Bessel van der Kolk):
 - <http://www.traumacenter.org/>
- EMDR International Association:
 - www.emdria.org/
- PATH International:
 - <http://www.pathintl.org/>
- Certifying Board for Equine Interaction Professionals (CBEIP):
 - <http://CBEIP.org>
- Horse Speak
 - <https://sharonwilsie.com>



Resources, cont.

- Susanne Haseman, MEd, LCMHC, CEIP-MH
- First Light Farm:
 - <http://www.firstlightfarm.com>
 - Susanne.Haseman@FirstLightFarm.com
- Healing Nature of Horses
 - <http://hnoh.org>



The End



Many thanks to Great Strides
for the use of this picture.