

ARTICLE SEVEN

*THERAPEUTIC RIDING IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF 'CORE SKILLS' IN A PARAPLEGIC
PRESCHOOL CHILD*

ABSTRACT

Various forms of therapy such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and remedial therapy are available to assist children with learning and developmental delays.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

This study explored therapeutic riding in the development of 'core skills' in a physically disabled preschool child, known pseudonymously as 'Amy'. Amy became a paraplegic while still in her mother's womb. When Amy's mother was seven months pregnant, she was shot through her stomach by hijackers. An emergency caesarean was performed and Amy was born two months prematurely. As the baby began moving, it was noticed that her legs remained immobile. After further tests it was discovered that the spinal nerves close to where the bullet had entered, were damaged. Consequently, Amy was left with no mobility in her legs and she was unable to crawl and has never been able to walk. Owing to the limitations in Amy's movement ability, certain developmental areas required for school readiness were delayed. Her perceptual-motor, socio-emotional and language skills were poorly developed and these weaknesses could be enhanced through the movement modality of the horse. A programme of therapeutic riding was implemented over a year, with the specific goal of stimulating both physical and psychological core skills. The horse, with its distinctive three-dimensional movement, facilitated this unique form of intervention. The research question thus focused on how therapeutic riding enhanced Amy's 'core developmental skills.'