

ARTICLE FOUR

The HEAL Model of Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy and Learning

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ABSTRACT

The HEAL Model of Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy and Learning (EFP/L) focuses on bonding with the horse as treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other clinical disorders. The author draws on literature from the fields of neuroscience, attachment and trauma psychology, and animal science to explain the human-horse bond, and how the bond itself helps clients resolve troubled emotional history. Methods are explained including the clinical framework of treatment planning, the facilitator's focus and responsibilities, and the typical progression of clients through beginning, middle and final stages of therapy. A case vignette and excerpts from qualitative data gathered from clients treated with this model are presented. These support the author's hypothesis that the bond with the horse enables the client to form new neural pathways in the limbic (i.e. emotional-social) part of the brain.

KEYWORDS

Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy and Learning – EFP/L; Affective Neuroscience; Emotional Regulation; Limbic System; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; PTSD.