

## **WHAT IS EQUINE ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY (EAP)?**

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) is an emerging field in which horses are used as a tool for emotional growth and learning. EAP is a collaborative effort between a licensed therapist and a horse professional. Because of its intensity and effectiveness, it is considered a short-term, or “brief” approach.

**Why Horses?** Those who are familiar with horses recognize and understand the power of horses to influence people in incredibly powerful ways. Developing relationships, training, horsemanship instruction, and caring for the horses naturally affects the people involved in a positive manner.

The benefits of work ethic, responsibility, assertiveness, communication, and healthy relationships has long been recognized. Horses naturally provide these benefits. . . .are large and powerful, which creates a natural opportunity to overcome fear and develop confidence . . .are social animals . . . with distinct personalities, attitudes, and moods . . . require work to be successful . . . have the ability to mirror exactly what human body language is telling them.

EAP is a powerful and effective therapeutic approach that has an incredible impact on individuals, youth, families, and groups. EAP addresses a variety of mental health and human development needs including behavior issues, attention deficit disorder, substance abuse, eating disorders, abuse issues, depression, anxiety, relationship problems, and communication needs.

**Therapeutic Horsemanship of West Michigan** strives to combine the philosophies of both the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association (EFMHA)—a division of North American Riding for the Handicapped Association—and the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association ((EAGALA) to address the psychotherapy needs of our consumers, through equine-experiential and equine-assisted learning programs. Our instructors are certified through NARHA, EAGALA, and Michigan 4-H’s Proud Equestrians Program, along with additional certifications and specializations in a variety of equine-related fields.

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