**Equine-Assisted Therapy Information**

**What is ‘Equine Therapy’?**

‘Equine therapy’ is a term actually that doesn’t do a great job of helping people understand what it is – no wonder people become confused! ‘Equine therapy’ is when a licensed therapist incorporates horses into their therapy sessions. So at The Simpatico Center, ‘equine therapy’ means that we provide occupational therapy services that incorporate horses to support participants in achieving their goals.

**Why Horses?**

This is another great question! Horses are expensive, and large, and require you to work outdoors. On the surface, it doesn’t seem very logical, does it?

When horses are incorporated into therapy sessions, sessions move from ‘talking about things’ to ‘doing things’; sessions are experiential in nature, meaning that participants are actively moving and interacting throughout the session practicing skills in-the-moment during their sessions.

Horses also have some species-specific characteristics that make them especially helpful when engaging in therapy sessions:

-Horses are are very sensitive to changes and incongruencies in their environment (or inconsistencies between a participant’s feelings, behavior, and language)

-Because horses don’t speak, participants need to be extremely aware of the horse’s movements and gestures in order to ‘read’ their intent and respond appropriately to develop a relationship with them

-Horses allow participants to practice real-life skills without the challenges of language and encourage them to use their entire self in an integrated way (providing opportunities for embodied engagement)

**What Skills Can Be Addressed During Therapy Sessions at The Simpatico Center?**

Due to the features noted above, horses can be especially helpful during therapy sessions in addressing some of the following skill areas:

-Improving Problem Solving Abilities -Decreasing Anxiety and Improving Self-Image

-Enhancing Motivation -Improving Executive Functioning Skills

-Improving Emotional/Behavioral Regulation -Decreasing Hyperactivity and Reactivity

-Improving Confidence and Self-Esteem -Developing Empathy

-Building Trust -Improving Communication and Social Skills

**What Types of Individuals May Benefit from Services?**

A wide variety of participants can benefit from therapy services incorporating horses. Research has shown that this type of therapy is effective with individuals who have experienced trauma, as well as participants with ADD, ADHD, mental health diagnoses, and Autism.

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