



High Horses

Therapeutic Riding Program

Volunteer Training Manual

www.HighHorses.org



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Statement of Value

**You are truly valued as a volunteer and
your human compassion is deeply appreciated.**

Because of our VOLUNTEERS...

- Our riders experience powerful, life-changing opportunities.
- Our horses receive careful consideration in all their handling.
- Instructors and therapists are able to successfully run lessons.
- Children and adults with disabilities have access to remarkable, effective alternative therapeutic activities.
- High Horses is providing services in the Upper Valley region.

Our volunteers bring diversity, experience, knowledge, compassion, humor, responsibility, and commitment.

Very much appreciated

Open-minded

Leaders

Useful

Nurturing

Team players

Eager to jump in and help in any way

Energetic

Responsible

Sidewalkers

Table of Contents

<i>Welcome To High Horses!</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Our Guiding Statements</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>About High Horses</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>About PATH Intl'</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>About Equine Assisted Activity and Therapy</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Volunteer Training and Orientation</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Volunteer Opportunities</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Volunteer Policies and Guidelines</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Program Volunteer General Information</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>What Makes a Successful Program Volunteer:</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Program Volunteer Responsibilities</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Lesson Team Job Descriptions</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Instructor</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Therapist (Hippotherapy)</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Horse Leader</i>	<i>7</i>
How to Lead	7
<i>Sidewalkers</i>	<i>8</i>
How to Sidewalk	8
<i>Emergency Procedures</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Understanding Horse Behavior</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>1. Equine Senses</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>2. The Horse's Lifestyle</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Parts of the Horse</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Glossary of Equine and Riding Terminology</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Glossary of Physical and Cognitive Disabilities</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>High Horses' Reference List</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Board of Directors</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Staff</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Comment Form</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>

Welcome To High Horses!

Thank you for becoming a part of our volunteer team at High Horses Therapeutic Riding Program. Your dedication, attention and warmth add an important dimension to our rider's lives, and to the success of our program. We recognize that your time is valuable and we appreciate your willingness to support High Horses.

Please take time to read this manual. It is designed to be an important part of your volunteer training and contains valuable information about our program. If you have questions, please let us know. We want you to be comfortable in your role as a volunteer.

If at any time you would like to comment on the program, share ways you feel we could improve, or voice a concern, please feel free to talk with a staff member or use the form provided on the last page of this manual. Your observations are very important; your input will help us succeed in our mission.

Again, welcome to High Horses! We thank you for joining us!

Our Guiding Statements

Mission: To improve the wellbeing of people with special needs through a therapeutic equine experience.

Vision: We aspire to offer state of the art equine assisted therapies, providing a full range of services to our community. As a nationally accredited program, we will help shape the future of our industry.

Values: High Horses adheres to the values of teamwork, integrity, respect, empathy and joyfulness in all that we do.

Motto: Capitalizing on strengths, not focusing on disabilities.

About High Horses

Founded in 1993, High Horses is non-profit 501(c) (3) charitable corporation that operates at Brookside Farm in Wilder, Vermont. We are a growing organization that serves riders throughout the Upper Valley region. Over the course of the year, over 100 volunteers work with us.

Our riders come to us with a variety of disabilities including autism, brain injury and stroke, spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, down syndrome, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy and spina bifida. Our program can also help individuals with mental health, learning, developmental, and social special needs.

Therapeutic riding works by involving the rider's body and mind to promote increased self-esteem and confidence, as well as to improve posture, balance, hand-eye coordination and muscle tone.

Our horses come to us with a variety of experiences including the show ring and farm work. They are carefully selected for their calm, gentle and willing temperaments by our herd coordinator.

We are proud to have met the demanding criteria to attain "Premier Accreditation" by the national credentialing organization, PATH Intl'. Accreditation by PATH Intl' assures a safe and professional program. We are one of four centers in Vermont to achieve this level of certification.

We coordinate efforts with over twenty-five social service agencies and school districts. These organizations often provide full or partial funding of rider fees. Our instructors and therapists work collaboratively to develop individual lesson plans and document each rider's progress.

We are pleased to be one of the few centers in Vermont and New Hampshire to offer Hippotherapy. Specially trained Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and Speech Language Pathologists use the horse's three-dimensional movement as a medical tool to provide specific challenges to the rider. The variability of the horse's gait enables the therapist to grade the degree of sensory input to the patient, and then to use this movement in combination with other treatment strategies to achieve desired results. We are also pleased to offer Equine Facilitated Mental Health sessions with our on-staff Clinical Social Worker. These sessions focus on mental health goals for the rider and combine horse activities with expressive arts.

In addition to our instructors and therapists, our paid staff includes our Horse Herd Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, Site Coordinator, and Executive Director.

About PATH Intl' (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International)

PATH Intl' is a non-profit organization, formed in 1969 and headquartered in Denver, Colorado.

PATH Intl's mission is to "change and enrich lives by promoting excellence in equine assisted activities." To accomplish this mission, PATH Intl' fosters safe, professional, ethical and therapeutic equine activities through education, communication, research, and standards. The association ensures its standards are met through an accreditation process for centers and a certification process for instructors.

PATH Intl's Accreditation Program assures that PATH Intl' centers are running safe and professional programs through adherence to strict standards of operation. The accreditation process involves on-site inspections of facilities, horses, equipment, safety procedures, and record keeping. High Horses is very proud to have attained "Premier Accreditation" - the highest possible level of accreditation.

PATH Intl's Instructor Certification program provides criteria for competency and a process to recognize levels of capability. All of the instructors at High Horses are either certified by PATH Intl' or interning under the supervision of a certified instructor according to PATH Intl' guidelines.

PATH Intl' also offers liability insurance to its member centers. High Horses is fully insured through this comprehensive policy.

We encourage you to learn more about PATH Intl'. Please visit their web site at www.pathintl.org. You'll find details about membership and lots of other interesting information. Copies of their publication, *Strides*, are available in the office.

About Equine Assisted Activity and Therapy

Therapeutic Riding, Hippotherapy, and Connections (our Equine Facilitated Mental Health and Learning program) use equine-oriented activities for the purpose of contributing positively to the well-being of people with disabilities. The benefits of equine assisted activities are often far-reaching and evident in many areas:

Physically, the horse's movement has a dynamic effect on the rider's body. The horse stimulates the rider's pelvis and trunk in a manner that closely resembles the normal walking gait of a human. This movement can be used to produce specific physical changes in the rider. The benefits to our riders include normalization of tone, improvements in both posture and balance, and increased strength.

Sensorially, the movement of the horse can help with a variety of sensory integration issues. A horse with a smooth gait and consistent pace can provide needed input to help a rider establish both rhythm and balance. A horse with more movement in its gait may be able to provide rider stimulation to help organize and integrate sensory input. Movement exploration while on the horse can help to improve a rider's overall body awareness.

Emotionally, the success of overcoming fear and anxiety can help a rider to realize greater self-worth and increase self-esteem. The ability to achieve riding skills will also have a positive effect on a rider's self-perception. For some riders the farm and barn environment, the bonding that takes place with the horse, and the development of new skills are critical components of success of experience. The relationships which develop between riders, volunteers, horses, and staff are integral to the positive experience at High Horses.

Cognitively, the horse provides many of our riders with the motivation to learn many new things. Educational goals such as letter recognition and sequencing can be incorporated into riding activities.

Socially, equine assisted activities and therapy enable individuals to interact with their peers and other adults in a group setting, while riding and related activities are both fun and challenging.

Therapeutic Riding, Hippotherapy, and Connections at High Horses provide individuals with special needs an environment in which to excel, gain independence, and build self-esteem.

Volunteer Training and Orientation

High Horses is committed to running a safe and effective therapeutic riding program. Because of this we require all new volunteers to attend a new volunteer orientation session before they begin working with us. The purpose of this session is to assure that volunteers are knowledgeable and safe in their roles and responsibilities. The new volunteer orientation covers safety and emergency procedures, a tour of the facilities, rules and regulations, and instruction and practice with the basic skills necessary to work with our riders. We also offer continued training sessions, designed to provide more in-depth training. While continued education is not required, we encourage our volunteers to attend additional training sessions each year.

Volunteer Opportunities

Much of the work at High Horses is completed by volunteers. The following list provides examples of some of the volunteer opportunities available. If you, or someone you know, might be able to assist in other ways, please let us know.

- Program Volunteers work in the ring and prepare horses for lessons.
- Stable and Facility Maintenance Volunteers maintain our paddocks and building.
- Special Events and Fundraiser Volunteers are needed throughout the year to help with our annual events.
- Transportation Volunteers get our horses from one place to another.
- Winter Home Volunteers provide our horses with shelter and care from the end of Oct. until April.
- Special Skills Volunteers are needed throughout the year for various projects such as: graphic design, photography, carpentry, writing press releases, preparing mailings, art work, or editing.

Volunteer Policies and Guidelines

Performance Problems:

If a volunteer's performance jeopardizes the safety of themselves or others, or the effectiveness of the programs, the volunteer will receive a warning. If this is not effective, the volunteer may be relieved of duties and asked to leave the premises.

The following behaviors will not be tolerated:

- Abusive behavior (including verbal, emotional and physical) to humans or horses
- Inappropriate behaviors/comments based upon race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation and/or disability status
- Possession, sale or use of illegal drugs or alcohol, or the misuse of prescribed drugs
- Performing duties under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs

Confidentiality:

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of information relating to all staff, volunteers, program participants, or program business. You are asked to sign a statement in the Volunteer Application to that effect. You may talk about High Horses and your volunteer job, but **do not** use names or other identifying information. If you have a question or concern about a rider you may speak with the

instructor privately after the lesson, though it is High Horses policy that we do not discuss diagnoses with volunteers.

Child Care:

High Horses does not provide child care. Please do not bring young children with you while volunteering.

Disabilities:

We welcome volunteers with disabilities and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please let us know if you need special requirements.

Pets:

Pets are not allowed at the farm. Please make arrangements to leave them elsewhere when you volunteer.

Smoking:

Smoking is not allowed on the premises.

Helmets:

All individuals must wear an ASTM-SEI approved helmet when riding.

Program Volunteer General Information

1. Wear sensible and comfortable clothing. Sturdy shoes or boots provide protection as well as assist with stability on the uneven footing of the ring, the trail, or the pastures. Secure long hair back and avoid loose, dangling jewelry.
2. Leading and sidewalking in the arena, as well as horse handling behind the scenes, can be physically demanding at times. It is important that you inform High Horses if you have any condition that may limit or prevent your safe participation in any of the more strenuous activities.
3. Be realistic about your knowledge of horses. Let the staff know of any experience with horses you have had. In addition, let the staff know if you are being asked to perform a task with the horses that you do not feel trained to do, or despite training, feel unable to do that particular day.
4. Be punctual. We ask volunteers to arrive at least 15 minutes before the class is scheduled to begin. You may be asked to assist with tacking or preparing the ring, or to supervise riders outside the ring before the lesson begins. We encourage you to take time after the lesson to check in with the instructor or therapist – ask questions or share any information you may have about the lesson.
5. Be attentive and alert. You are there to assist the rider and to maintain high standards of safety within the program. Always anticipate the unexpected while remaining calm and confident.
6. Be patient and sensitive to the rider's needs and the needs of the rider's family. Often endless patience is needed to adjust to the slow movements and rates of progress of some disabled riders. It is also important to adjust to the rider's pace of communicating and responding.
7. Key suggestions:
 - Introduce yourself to your rider and volunteer team. Get to know them.
 - Learn with your rider; get to know the tack and parts of the horse.
 - Enjoy yourself. An anxious volunteer can make a horse tense and a rider nervous.
 - Limit conversation during the lesson. Direct the rider's attention to the instructor or therapist.

What Makes a Successful Program Volunteer:

1. Must be at least 14 years of age.
2. Able to volunteer at least 1 hour a week on a consistent basis for 8 weeks.
3. Able to spend 30-60 minutes walking and jogging in the ring
4. Reliable
5. Patient
6. Willing and able to follow directions effectively
7. Willing and able to follow all farm and program rules
8. Willing and able to complete given tasks independently.
9. Treats all riders, volunteers, staff, and animals with dignity and respect.

Program Volunteer Responsibilities

Upon arrival, volunteers must sign in, put on their nametag, check the schedule board for their assignments, and check in with the site coordinator. Volunteers should also read the goals sheets for the lessons they will be in that day; even if you've read them before, it's always a good idea to refresh your memory.

After completing the assignment, please return your nametag and sign out, noting the number of hours worked. If you have additional time after your assignment and would like to help, check in with the Site Coordinator to see what other jobs need to be done or other ways your help could be used that day.

If you are unable to attend your scheduled lessons, and know ahead of time, please let the volunteer coordinator know as soon as possible. If you suddenly become ill or must miss your volunteer time that day, please call the site phone at 802-356-3387.

Please treat your volunteer commitment as if it were your profession. You are a vital member of our team. If you are unsure of yourself, please ask! If you would like to share concerns or suggestions, please talk to the Site Coordinator, a staff member or fill out the Volunteer Comment form at the end of this manual.

Please remember: High Horses could not exist without the time, energy, dedication and commitment of its volunteers. Thank you!

Lesson Team Job Descriptions

Instructor

The instructor is in charge of the class environment, and for teaching the lesson. They do not usually lead or side-walk. It is their job to watch over the riders, leaders, sidewalkers and horses at all times. Instructors will set the lesson plans and direct the volunteer team in activities.

Therapist (Hippotherapy)

The therapist in Hippotherapy lessons have all of the same responsibilities as an instructor, but are usually hands on with their riders in a sidewalker type position. Therapists do not usually teach riding skills.

Horse Leader

The leader is in charge of the horse. During the lesson, the leader's sole responsibility is to maintain control of and provide support for his/her assigned horse. The leader must be constantly aware of the horse, note any problems, and inform the instructor or therapist.

Qualifications

- Good knowledge of horse behavior
- Physically able to control the horse
- Vigilant – paying constant attention to the horse's attention, behavior, and movement
- Complete leader level 1 training

Responsibilities

- Have the horse groomed, tacked, and ready for the start time of the lesson
- Notice behavior, mood, and needs of the horse
- Warm up the horse in the ring (in hand); show him any equipment or obstacles. Once the horse is warmed up, line up in the center of the arena facing the mounting ramp.
- Control the horse at all times
- Be alert and aware of the entire lesson environment.
- If the horse is not needed again, remove the tack, groom the horse, return the horse to the assigned area

How to Lead

- Hold the lead rope with a 'smile in the rope', relaxed but close enough to control the horse as needed.
- Hold the extra rope folded in your free hand. NEVER wrap it around your hand.
- Position yourself on the horse's left beside the horse's head, staying behind the nose and in front of the shoulder unless otherwise directed. Look ahead and be aware of the horse's focus.
- Be aware of what your rider is asking the horse. When appropriate, wait for your rider to ask the horse to "Walk on," "Trot," or "Whoa" allowing the rider as much independence as possible. You direct the horse after the rider has attempted to.
- Keep 2-3 horse lengths distance between your horse and another horse.
- Avoid accidental downward tugs, pulls, or pressure on the lead line.
- Keep attention on the lesson and your team. Glance back occasionally at the rider and sidewalkers to make sure they are safe.
- Allow enough room for the sidewalkers on both sides of the horse, paying particular attention to the sidewalker along the rail and when negotiating obstacles.
- Avoid the temptation to interact and assist the rider while leading the horse. Remember that your primary responsibility is the horse.
- In the event of an emergency, the leader is responsible for the horse. Stay with the horse and follow the instructor's or therapist's directions.
- Always be respectful of your horse. He is a hard working member of your team. Encourage and guide your horse kindly. Never use more force than needed.
- No hand feeding. No grazing horses while bridled.

Responsibilities During Mounting

There are several different techniques used for mounting riders. The following is a basic method which may be used by the instructor or therapist at the mounting ramp or block.

- Position the horse close to the side of the ramp or block from which the rider will be mounting. (Normally this is the left side of the horse.)
- Help the horse stand squarely to provide the best balance for the horse during mounting.

- Hold the lead rope just below the clip but without pressure. Hold the excess lead with your free hand.
- Stand facing the horse's head, in front and slightly to the horse's left side.
- When the cue is given by the instructor or therapist and rider (if appropriate), lead the horse away slowly and quietly.
- If the stirrups are in need of adjustment, lead your horse to the center of the ring and halt. Position yourself in the front of the horse, slightly to the horse's left so you can discourage forward motion when the stirrups are being adjusted. DO NOT help adjust the equipment while the rider is on.

Sidewalkers

Sidewalkers are focused on the rider and what he/she is doing. They must stay within reach of the rider and be aware of everything that's going on with the rider while assisting the rider in completing the tasks as directed by the instructor.

Qualifications

- Comfortable around horses and people
- Able to reinforce instructor's or therapist's directions when requested
- Vigilant – constantly alert to the possible need for instantaneous help.
- Have completed a volunteer orientation and training session.

Responsibilities

- Greet the rider when he/she arrives and assists in finding the helmet.
- Check in with the staff and the Volunteer Team to see what needs to be done.
- Assist with mounting and dismounting.
- Walk or jog beside the rider providing support as instructed, possibly assisting with position changes and/or supporting a rider.
- Reinforce the instructor's or therapist's directions only when asked. Remember our riders may need extra time to respond and excessive talking can easily distract them.

How to Sidewalk

1) Hands on Assistance

Different methods are used with individual riders depending on their needs. Common examples of sidewalker assistance follow:

- Walk beside the rider's leg assisting only when needed. Be sure to stay in position.
- Provide support at the rider's ankle by using the "heel hold."
- Provide support at the rider's thigh by using an "Arm over the thigh hold."
- Provide support at both the ankle and thigh.

Note: When there are two sidewalkers, be sure both use the same hold.

2) Interacting with the Team

- If a problem arises tell the horse leader and the instructor or therapist immediately.
- If the rider slips in one direction or another, have the rider regain position in the center of the horse. If necessary, ask the leader to halt and allow the rider to reposition and then continue. Encourage INDEPENDENCE. Only assist your rider when necessary.
- If you need to change sides with the other sidewalkers, ask the leader to bring the horse into the center of the ring and stop. Sidewalkers change sides one at a time, by walking in front of the horse. Never leave the rider alone or unassisted.
- Limit conversation when the instructor or therapist is trying to teach.
- If your rider is wearing a safety belt, do not hold onto the belt unless instructed to do so.

Emergency Procedures

- **The emergency number for Police, Fire, or Ambulance is: 911**
- **DESIGNATED EMERGENCY AREA AT BROOKSIDE FARM: outside the tack room next to the porta-potty.**

NOTES:

- The inside of the ring is the area away from the fence no matter which way you are walking. It is the middle area.
- If the instructor is unable to provide instructions the site coordinator becomes the person to give instructions.

In the event of an accident or an emergency:

- Remain with your team
- Leaders – halt and stand on the inside of the ring facing the horse's head
- Sidewalkers – remain with the rider
- Stay calm and follow the instructor's directions

If the rider/s must be dismounted:

1. Remain where you are or move to where the instructor indicates
 - a. Sidewalkers - assist the rider's feet out of the stirrups and put the inside stirrup over the horse's withers
 - b. The instructor dismounts the rider
2. ***IF THE INSTRUCTOR CANNOT BE THERE TO DISMOUNT:*** The Inside sidewalker assists rider to dismount to the inside of the ring. (You will have observed emergency dismounts during volunteer trainings, as well as during practice drills in lessons, if there are any extra precautions for your rider they will be noted in the lesson plans available in the shed – please remember to read these)
 - a. Sidewalkers –
 - i. After helping the rider dismount, while keeping the rider with you if they are on your side, take one step backwards, away from the horse, if the area behind you is safe. If the area behind you is not safe, your rider is injured, or you are unable to move your rider, stand still while the leader moves the horse forward away from the rider.
 - ii. Once the horse is a safe distance away (at least 2 horse lengths) join with the 2nd side walker (if applicable) and escort/carry your rider through the people gate or door and to the designated area. If your rider is injured, or you are unable to safely move your rider, stay with them keeping them in one place and as safe as possible and await further directions from the instructor.
 - b. Leader –
 - i. Stay on the inside of the horse in as relaxed a manner as possible while the side walkers and instructor dismount the rider and step back.
 - ii. As soon as the side walkers and rider have stepped back, or are safely on the ground and waiting, walk the horse straight forward until you are clear of the rider and sidewalkers.
 - iii. Go to the middle of the ring, or a space as far away as possible from people, and the people gate or door, while keeping your distance from other horses and leaders.
 - iv. Run up the stirrups, remove reins and await instructions from the instructor.

If emergency personnel must be called:

- The instructor will ask the site coordinator or a volunteer to call emergency personnel
- If you are asked to make the emergency call, follow the emergency procedures for calling posted on the left just inside the shed door
- Sidewalkers, riders, visitors wait in the designated area for further instructions
- Leaders - When all people have left the ring, or when directed by the instructor, and the run-in/paddock area is safe: bring the horses to the run-ins and as quickly and calmly as possible un-tack the horses, put them in paddocks with their halters on, and join everyone in the designated area.

Remember:

- The safety of our riders and ourselves is our first priority
- The safety of our horses is our next priority
- First Aid kits for both humans and horses are located in the tack room area

Understanding Horse Behavior

1. Equine Senses

When developing relationships and working with horses; communication is key. It is critical to provide a safe environment in a therapeutic riding setting. Beginning a process of understanding the horse senses, instincts and the implications is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks and increasing positive relationships.

SMELL: The horse's sense of smell is thought to be very acute and it allows him to recognize other horses and people. Smell can enable the horse to evaluate situations and **they can smell emotions**.

Implications:

- Allow horses the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling.
- Strive to be calm and centered around the horses.
- Do not carry treats or other food in your pockets.

HEARING: The horse's sense of hearing is also thought to be very acute. The horse may also combine their sense of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds. "Hearing and not seeing" is often the cause of the fight/flight response. Note the position of the horse's ears. **Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Ears that are laid back often communicate fear or aggression toward another horse or person.**

Implications:

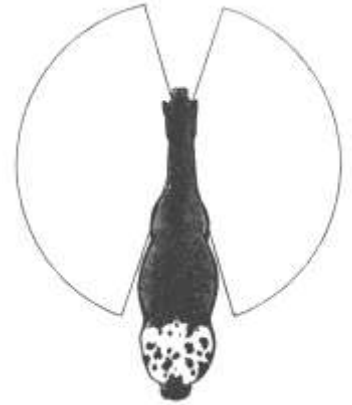
- Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet and calm voice. Redirect his attention to what you are asking of him at the time.
- Avoid shouting or using a loud voice.
- Watch your horse's ears for increased communication. **Stiffly pricked ears indicate interest. Drooping ears indicate relaxation, inattentiveness (easily startled), exhaustion or illness. Flattened ears indicate anger, threat or fear. Ears flicking back and forth indicate attentiveness or interest.**

SIGHT: The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head; there is good peripheral (lateral) vision, but poor frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering its head. The horse's visual memory is very acute. Horses are thought to see quite well in the dark due to the large size of their eyes.

Implications:

- The horse may notice if something in the arena or out on the trail is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects. Introduce new props that the horse may be unfamiliar with.
- Although the horse has good peripheral vision, consider **two blind spots: directly in front and directly behind.** The **best way to approach a horse is**

from his shoulder; approaching him from the front or back may startle him. It is also **important to talk to the horse as you approach,** and make sure he knows you are coming.



A horse can see this much when facing straight ahead.

TOUCH: Touch is used as a communication between horses and between horses and people. Horses are sensitive to soft or rough touch from a person's hands or legs.

Implications:

- Handlers should treat the horses gently but firmly.
- Become familiar with a horse's individual sensitive areas.
- Watch the rider's leg position. Riders may be inadvertently causing the horse discomfort. Ask the instructor/therapist for assistance.

TASTE: Taste is closely linked with the sense of smell and helps the horse distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

Implications:

- Taste is closely linked with smell and touch. Therefore, a horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects and people. Be careful, as this could lead to possible biting.

SIXTH SENSE: Horses do have a "sixth sense" when evaluating the disposition of those around them. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for their sensitive response to the rider. **At times there may exist a personality conflict between handlers and their horses. It is important to let a staff member know if you are having difficulty with a particular horse.**

2. *The Horse's Lifestyle*

It is important that we appreciate and increase our awareness of the horse's lifestyle. This will assist us in responding appropriately to the horse's reactions to situations.

FLIGHT AS A NATURAL INSTINCT: Horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

Implications:

- At a sudden movement or noise, the horse may try to flee.
- A frightened horse that is tied up or being held tightly may try to escape by pulling back. Relax your hold or untie him quickly in these situations.
- Be aware that if flight is not possible, the horse could either turn and kick out or face the problem and strike or rear.

- If a horse appears to be frightened or fearful, it may be helpful to allow a more experienced horse person to lead. Let the instructor or therapist know immediately.
- Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. The horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteers remain calm and talk to the horse.
- It is generally accepted that horses have an excellent memory. Be aware that if a horse was frightened in a certain location, it may be difficult for the horse to be in that location again. The horse may need extra help from the horse herd coordinator to feel safe again in that location.

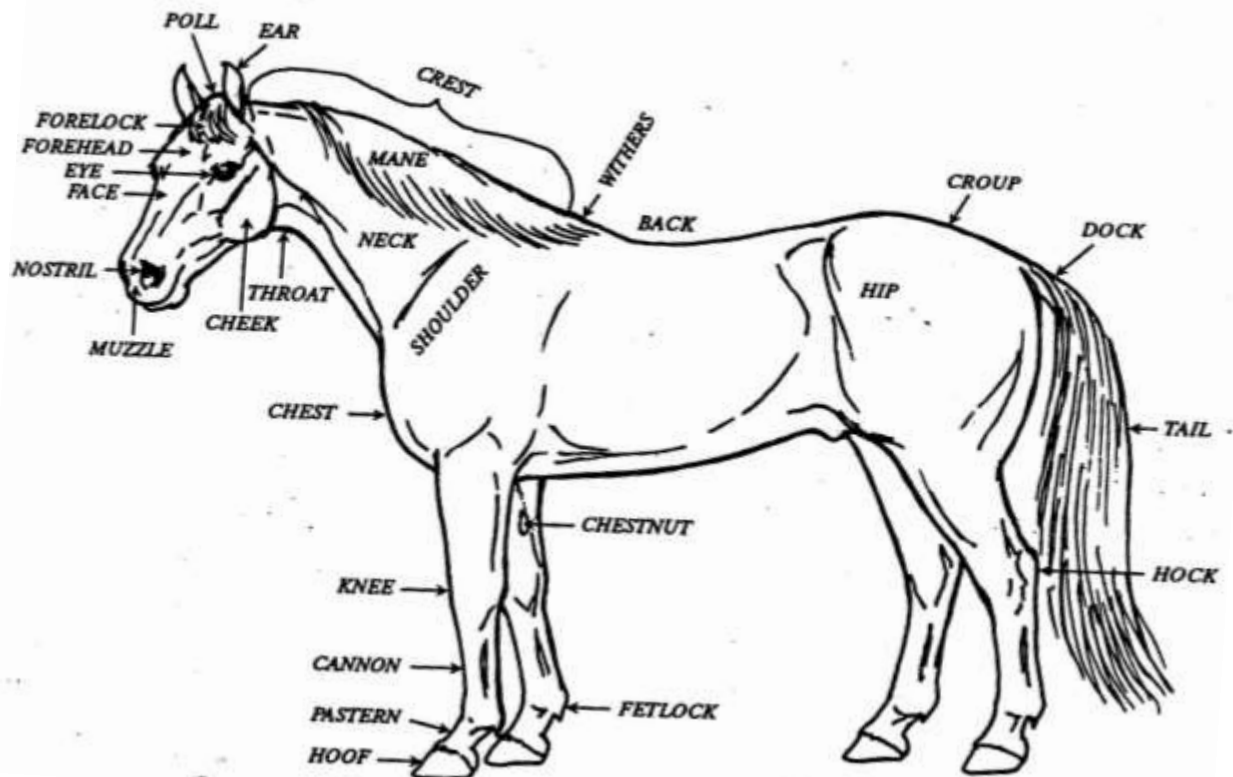
HERD ANIMAL: Horses are likely to stay together as a herd or group with one or two horses dominant and a pecking order among the rest.

Implications:

- Be aware the horse may not like being alone. This is a consideration when the horses are leaving the arena or a horse loses sight of others while on a trail ride.
- If one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may also be affected.
- For safety, **it is recommended to keep at least 2-3 horse lengths between horses when riding as a group in the ring or on the trail.**

Parts of the Horse

When working around horses, there are some special words and terms that you will need to know. Some parts of the horse are shown below.



Glossary of Equine and Riding Terminology

This glossary is intended to familiarize volunteers with equine terms commonly used in a therapeutic riding lesson when referring to equitation, gaits, and behavior. This document is not a complete representation of the many other terms used in the equine industry.

Aids	Signals the rider gives to the horse to control speed and direction including legs, seat, weight, hands, and voice
Bend	Arc of the horse from head to tail –sometimes the rider uses leg pressure to bend the horse left or right
Center Line	The invisible line running down the center of the ring (long way)
Change of Direction	To reverse direction: Can be done by a half circle or across the diagonal
Diagonal	The line from opposite far corners of the ring
Figure Eight	Riding a full circle in one direction, changing directions at the starting point, and riding a full circle in the other direction, ending at the starting point ∞
Forehand	The front section of the horse: forelegs, shoulder, head and neck
Gait	The various footfall patterns when the horse is moving. The most common gaits are: walk, trot, canter, and gallop
Half Seat	Decreasing the weight of the rider's seat in the saddle by transferring more weight into the stirrups through a semi-standing position. The rider can also place hands on the horse's neck slightly above the withers for balance
Haunches	The hindquarters of a horse including rump, hind legs and tail
Horse Distance	The length from horse nose to rump. The suggested distance between horses working in the ring or on a trail is 2 or more horse lengths
Inside of the ring	The side of the rider/horse toward the center of the ring
Lengthening of Stride	Increasing the length of the stride within a set frame
Long Side	The distance of the longest side of the arena
Outside leg	The leg on the outside of the arena
Outside of the ring	The side of the ring toward the wall or ring fence
Posting	“Rising Trot” – the rising and descending of the rider with the rhythm of the trot
Serpentine	Series of half circles and straight lines crossing from one side of the arena to the other
Shortening of Stride	Decreasing the length of the stride within a set frame
Track left	Riding with the left rein to the inside of the circle
Track right	Riding with the right rein to the inside of the circle
Transition	To change from one gait to another
10-Meter Circle	A circle which has the diameter of approximately 10 meters, this is approximately ½ of the ring measured the short way in the average arena.
20-Meter Circle	A circle which is the diameter of approximately 20 meters which is usually approximately 1/3 the ring measured the long way depending on the size of the arena.

Glossary of Physical and Cognitive Disabilities

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter in a therapeutic riding setting. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability. Rather, it is a general overview with an explanation of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

Arthritis

Inflammatory disease of the joints.

Types: Osteo, rheumatoid, and juvenile rheumatoid

Characteristics: Pain, lack of mobility, deformity, loss of strength

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding: Gentle rhythmic movement to promote joint mobility and relieve pain.

Autism

A central nervous system dysfunction which challenges learning style, sensory integration, social interaction, communication, and motor planning.

Possible Characteristics (any combination of the following can be present): Unresponsive to the presence of others, withdrawal from physical contact, severely delayed and disordered language, self-stimulating behaviors, unusual or specific fears, insensitivity to pain, unawareness of real dangers, hyperactive, passive, unusual behavior such as smelling or licking objects, ritualistic behaviors, developmentally delayed, unusual response to sounds, clumsiness, social withdrawal, resistance to change.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding: Provides the input which aids sensory integration, motor planning, communication, and social skills.

Cerebral Palsy

Brain damage occurring before, at, or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

Types and Characteristics:

Spastic: Hyper tonicity with hyperactive stretch reflexes, muscle imbalances and impaired equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

Athetoid: Extensor muscle tension, worm-like movements, abnormal posturing and slow and deliberate speech.

Ataxic: Poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements and are often described as having a “rag doll” appearance.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding: Normalization of tone, stimulation of postural and balance mechanism, muscle strengthening and perceptual motor coordination.

Associated Problems: Seizures; hearing difficulties; visual difficulties; general sensory impairment; perceptual problems; communications problems; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; learning disabilities.

Cerebral Vascular Accident – Stroke (CVA)

Hemorrhage in the brain which causes varying degrees of functional impairment.

Characteristics: Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on the same side of the body. May impair speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding: Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization.

Developmental Disabilities

A general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade level.

Characteristics: Varied, but can include slow physical, motor, and social development.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding: Provides arena for success, opportunity for sport and recreation, stimulates body awareness.

Down Syndrome

Condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome, resulting in mental retardation and developmental delay.

Characteristics: Broad flat face, slanted eyes, neck and hands are often broad and short. Usually hypotonic, have hyper mobile joints and tend to be short and overweight. Prone to respiratory infections.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding: Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, posture, muscle tone and coordination.

Emotional Disability

A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies.

Characteristics: Trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia or schizophrenia may be exhibited.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding: Increases feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness, and provides appropriate social outlet.

Epilepsy

Abnormal electrical activity of the brain marked by seizures with altered consciousness.

Types and Characteristics:

Petit Mal: Brief loss of consciousness with loss of postural tone. May have jerky movements, blank expression.

Grand Mal: Loss of consciousness and postural tone. (Note: An active seizure disorder is a contraindication for horseback riding.)

Hearing Impairment

Congenital or acquired hearing loss, varying from mild to profound.

Characteristics: Communication difficulties – may use lip reading, finger spelling (manual alphabet) or sign language. Often phase out and have attention deficits.

Benefits: Stimulated self-confidence, balance, posture and coordination. It also provides appropriate social outlets and interactions.

Learning Disabilities (LD)

Catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving, but who appear to have otherwise normal intelligence skills.

Characteristics: Short attention span, easily frustrated, immature.

Benefits: Effects depend upon the particular disorder. Stimulates attention span, group skills, cooperation, language skills, posture and coordination.

Mental Retardation (MR)

Lack of ability to learn and perform at normal levels. Degree of retardation is referred to as educable, trainable, severe or profoundly retarded.

Characteristics: Developmentally delayed in all areas. Short attention span.

Benefits: Stimulated group activity skills, coordination, balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Provides a structured learning environment.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.

Characteristics: Most commonly occurs in the 20-40 year old range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remission. Fatigues easily. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity.

Benefits: Maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy.

Associated Problems: Visual impairment, emotional instability, and impaired bowel and bladder function.

Muscular Dystrophy (MD)

Deficiency in muscle nutrition with degeneration of skeletal muscle. Hereditary disease that mainly affects males.

Characteristics: Progressive muscular weakness, fatigues easily, sensitive to temperature extremes.

Benefits: Provided opportunity for group activity, may slow progressive loss of strength, stimulated postural and trunk alignment, and allows movement free of assistive devices.

Polio

Infectious virus disease.

Characteristics: Flaccid paralysis, atrophy of skeletal muscle, often with deformity.

Benefits: Strengthens non-paralyzed muscles, stimulates posture.

Scoliosis

Lateral curve of the spine with a C or S curve with rotary component.

Characteristics: Postural asymmetry. May wear scoliosis jacket or have had stabilization surgery.

Benefits: Stimulates postural symmetry, strengthens trunk muscles.

(Note: Severe scoliosis is a contraindication for therapeutic riding)

Spina Bifida

Congenital failure of vertebral arch closure with resultant damage to the spinal cord.

Characteristics: Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss.

Problems: Infection, scoliosis and hip dislocations.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, improves muscle strength and self-image.

Associated problems: Hydrocephalus, incontinence, urinary tract infection, scoliosis and hip dislocations.

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function.

Characteristics: Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury – can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss and pressure sores.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, is an option for sports participation and recreation.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Accidental injury to the head resulting in intra-cranial bleeding with death of brain cells.

Characteristics: Gross and fine motor skills deficits. Often have impaired memory, speech, balance and/or vision. May have psychological effects.

Benefits: Stimulates balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, speech and perceptual skills.

Visual Impairment

Moderate to total loss of sight.

Characteristics: Insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity, fearfulness, and developmental delay.

Benefits: Stimulates spatial awareness, posture and coordination. Provides social outlet, structured risk taking, freedom of movement.

High Horses' Reference List

BOOKS:

The United States Pony Club Manual of Horsemanship, books C and D, by Susan Harris
Available at Borders and from U.S. Pony Club at (606) 254-7669

Horses, Gaits, Balance, Movement by Susan Harris
Available from Howell Book House at 800-428-5331.

Horses, Guide to Selection, Care & Enjoyment of Horses,
Second Edition, by W. Evans
Available from W.H. Freeman Publishing, 41 Madison Avenue, NY, NY 10010.

The Therapy Horse, by Jan Spink, M.A.
Available from Barbara Engel Therapy Services at 970-563-9599.

The Horse, The Handicapped, The Riding Team in a Riding Program, 1994 by Barbara Engel,
Available from Barbara Engel Therapy Services, 970-563-9599.

Riding for the Disabled,
by BT Batsford. LTd. London, England.
Available from Trafalgar Square Inc, North Pomfret, VT.
1-800-423-4525.

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Available from Riding High, Inc., 609 Thunderbird Court, Chesterfield, MO 63017.

Centered Riding, 1985. by Sally Swift.
Available at most book stores or from St. Martin's/Marek, 175 Fifth Avenue, NY, NY 10010.

VIDEOS:

Analysis of Horse and Human Movement, 1993.
Available from CanTRA, Box 1055, Guelph, Ontario,
N1H 6J6, Canada. 519-767-0700.

The Therapy Horse: Moods, Behaviors, Instinctive Responses. 1995 by Barbara Heine,
Available from the NCEFT, 5001 Woodside Road, Woodside, CA 94062. 415-851-2271

Challenged Equestrians: The Use of the Horse for Special Populations. 1986. by Barbara Glasow
Available from Winslow Therapeutic Riding Unlimited,
340 A South Rt 94, Warwick, NY 10990. 914-986-6686

Anatomy in Motion 1, The Visible Horse, and
Anatomy in Motion 2, The Visible Rider, both by Susan Harris and Peggy Brown.
Available from Trafalgar Square Publishing, Box 257, N. Pomfret, VT 05053.

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