

How does EAP differ from Recreational Horsemanship and Riding?

We are frequently asked, how does EAP differ from recreational horsemanship or riding? How will EAP services benefit my client, child, or family member more than lessons at our local riding facility?

Although spending any time with horses, whether it be riding, leisure, or sport, is certainly beneficial mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually, EAP offers the following benefits to individuals, groups, and families that specifically address mental, emotional, and behavioural issues:

- Specific treatment goals, objectives, and interventions are identified and documented.
- A treatment team consisting of a horse professional and a mental health professional.
- This treatment team approach improves both the physical and emotional safety of sessions.
- The **focus** is on human skills, not horse skills.
- EAP sessions are focused and designed to address mental health and human development issues quickly, directly, and effectively.
- Everything done with the horse is related to what is happening at home, in school, at work, and in relationships (metaphorical learning).
- EAP activities are designed to best create metaphors to “real life.”
- True-selves surface more quickly because it is hard to focus on an EAP task and on performing for people at the same time.
- The focus is on identifying and modifying patterns of behaviour, thoughts, and beliefs.
- The focus is on non-verbal communication.
- The focus is on skills to improve communication with people vs. becoming a “horse whisperer.”
- 90% of EAP is experienced on the ground. This allows for more attention on the human skills needing to be addressed vs. the time spent on correct and safe riding procedures (which focuses on horse skills).
- Whereas riding / horsemanship lessons tend to be more directive in educating the “how to’s” of horses, EAP sessions are non-directive. This non-directive approach benefits clients by:
 - Allowing for opportunities to problem-solve and be creative
 - Increasing self-discovery, self-confidence, and leadership
 - Creating an environment where clients discover what is right and wrong for them. This provides the opportunity to choose a more successful, happier life vs. the therapist or riding instructor directing what is “wrong or right” or telling the client “this is how you do it.” (EAP is a solution-oriented approach and acknowledges the power of choice).
 - Clients experience the reality of choices, attitudes, and consequences.