

## **Harnessing the Power of Equine Assisted Counseling: Adding Animal Assisted Therapy to Your Practice**

By Kay Sudekum Trotter. Eds. Published 2012 by Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, LLC (308 pp. \$39.95 US)

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*Harnessing the Power of Equine Assisted Counseling: Adding Animal Assisted Therapy to Your Practice*, edited by Kay Sudekum Trotter, is an important contribution to counseling, therapy, and disability studies. The contributors review how equine therapy can assist people to grow and overcome difficulties in their lives. The book describes techniques and clinical processes that can be used in practice by counselors and therapists.

The book explains different aspects of equine assisted counseling (EAC) as well as the horse's role and its relationship with clients and therapists. The contributors to this book explain different EAC styles and how they may be used to improve a client's mental, emotional, and physical abilities. Sections in the book offer theoretical foundations and describe different EAC styles and their applicability to certain types of clients. This is reinforced by the inclusion of case studies. Overall, this book allows readers to understand how EAC may afford people opportunities to gain positive results.

The book is divided into seven chapters. The first two chapters explain equine therapy, its connection to theoretical views, and the horse's role. Chapter 1 gives definitions and overall views of equine assisted interventions for mental health, as well as information on certification and professional organizations. The history of animal assisted therapy and major theories in EAC are also covered. Chapter 2 focuses on information of horse inclusion into counseling. It discusses the safety and comfort of the horses, selection of horses to be used, and difficulties that can arise in using a horse. The chapter also describes how to facilitate therapeutic interactions between humans and horses.

In chapters 3 through 7, authors describe techniques for certain types of disability. Each author reviews the theoretical background and offers practical applications of equine therapy. Chapter 3 describes how EAC may facilitate healing from trauma. It illustrates how EAC can help women and young people overcome trauma from domestic violence or sexual abuse. A section titled "The Magic Room" explains how children and adolescents in residential treatments with EAC can develop confidence and discover solutions. The chapter also explains how EAC can facilitate physical and emotional healing from post-traumatic stress.

Chapter 4 describes how EAC may be used for people with anxiety or depression. The chapter also reviews how equine therapy may decrease isolation and improve the ability to handle anxiety in individuals with Post-Traumatic Stress. Additionally, this chapter covers how therapeutic trail riding for children or adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and anxiety disorders may improve attention and impose relaxation. Furthermore, the chapter covers how EAC may

support body awareness, contribute to solving life problems, assist life transitions, and build helping relationships.

Techniques for atypical behaviors are covered in Chapter 5. The authors explain how mental health professionals may use EAC in helping children to restructure their relationships with their parents. EAC for addictions and major life changes is also covered. In addition, the author describes how interpersonal equine therapy treatment on children with autism may decrease anxiety and improve interactions with others.

Chapter 6 discusses how EAC may be used in improving social skills and communication techniques. General guidelines and approaches in conducting equine-assisted group activities are presented. The chapter describes the use of EAC with families in overcoming communication barriers imposed by hearing impairment. In addition, the chapter covers the applications of group and family EAC. The chapter also discusses the group and family EAC ability to possibly deal with labeling stigmas that individuals may have in their life. Furthermore, the authors describe skills to elicit socially appropriate behavior in people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Chapter 7 covers improvement of self-esteem and self-worth. Case studies explain how EAC can develop relationships and facilitate a person's growth with positive feedback. The authors show how EAC may be used in group psychotherapy as a way to elicit positive growth in behaviors and emotions. Additionally, the authors explain how Equine Assisted Social Emotional Learning may improve fundamental skills in handling personal relationships and in working effectively. EAC is presented as a way to improve self-efficacy in people with mood disorders, thus allowing them to gain insight into their maladaptive behaviors. The authors also explain how opening the self during EAC may empower clients to reevaluate their possible stress and anxiety.

As with most texts, this one may have some limitations. One may be that several of the presented techniques focus more on children and adolescents than on adults; this may lead to difficulty in applying EAC to adults. The text also does not cover how different cultural and ethnic views may affect the use or effectiveness of different techniques. In my opinion, however, the book overcomes these limitations by giving an expansive view of different styles of equine therapy. As the editor states, the book provides techniques and styles from different clinical suggestions, allowing therapists to design their sessions according to their own theoretical views and the particular needs of different clients.

Professionals in adaptive physical activity, physical therapy, health promotion, and counseling will benefit from the information presented in this book. The information provided promotes an understanding of how EAC can assist people in their physical, mental, and emotional growth. This book may increase the awareness that professionals from different disciplines should work together in improving the well-being of people with disabilities. Researchers in these fields may also use the different techniques from the book to advance the knowledge related to EAC. For example, adapted physical activity researchers may examine how equine-assisted counseling may contribute to the effectiveness of physical activity promotion. Finally, professors may use this book in their classrooms to introduce EAC as a possible option to future health-care professionals.

In conclusion, *Harnessing the Power of Equine Assisted Counseling: Adding Animal Assisted Therapy to Your Practice* is an important resource for professionals whose goal is to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities.