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## **Equine Assistance as a Psychotherapy Tool for Adolescents with Trauma Experiences**

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Equine Assistance as a Psychotherapy Tool for Adolescents with Trauma Experiences

A Project Presented to  
The Graduate Faculty of  
Minnesota State University, Moorhead

By  
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### **Abstract**

Therapies incorporating horses for physical, mental, and emotional purposes have recently risen in popularity. Equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP)\* is a therapeutic tool that utilizes horses and a mental health provider to achieve specific treatment goals for their clients. Although very little literature has been developed on utilizing EAP with individuals with trauma, the results present to be promising. The benefits of using horses in sessions includes practicing interpersonal and communication skills, gaining somatic awareness, and learning to regulate emotions. A synopsis of the current literature has been combined into a review and group manual was created for those who are wanting to learn and implement equine assisted psychotherapy into their practice.

*Keywords:* equine assisted psychotherapy, mental health, group manual

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## Definition of Terms

The following terms will have an \* next to the first-time word is written in the literature review.

**Arena**: A safe enclosed area, either outside or indoor. This is where equine assisted psychotherapy sessions are held. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

**Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)**: mental health therapy tool that utilizes horses to meet treatment goals. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International, 2021)

**Equine Assisted Therapy**: a general term of any use of horses for therapeutic purposes. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International, 2021)

**Free-Roam**: the ability for horses to move around without any constraints of a halter and lead rope, or anyone trying to purposefully guide them. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

**Grooming**: brushing the horse's coat and body to clean them. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

**Horsemanship skills**: proper horse-riding technique skills. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International, 2021)

**Hippotherapy**: a therapeutic riding therapy that is utilized by physical, occupational, and/or speech-language therapists to meet physical treatment goals. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International, 2021)

**Paddock**: a fenced-in area that is typically smaller than an arena and pasture to hold horses. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

**Pasture**: a very large outdoor enclosure where horses typically live in. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

**Therapeutic Riding**: also called adapted riding; equine assisted therapy that utilizes horsemanship goals to meet goals that improve physical, mental, social and emotional goals and implemented by a certified instructor – not a therapist (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International, 2021).

## **Introduction**

In Early Greece, individuals would use horseback riding techniques to treat patients with incurable and untreatable illnesses (Notgrass & Pettinelli, 2015). Today, versions of equine therapy continue utilizing horsemanship skills\* to develop strength and skills to aid in physical ailments and a variety of disabilities. Further development in the efficacy of the horse has led to therapeutic modalities in physical and occupational therapy, as well as mental health therapy.

In mental health, individuals that have experienced severe trauma or are diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder suffer from executive functioning and/or struggle with interpersonal relationships. Children and adolescents often suffer the debilitating repercussions of these effects throughout their lifetime, if not properly treated. Horses have been noted to provide a powerful sense of therapeutic value due to horses' power and size, and their vulnerability as emotional beings, thus emphasizing this therapeutic tool as a promising assistant to trauma treatment (Kendall & Maujean, 2015). The development of a literature review and a group manual is being presented for future pursuits in equine assisted psychotherapy research in adolescents with trauma.

## **Defining Trauma**

Trauma is one of the most complex and longest effecting disorders that mental health providers treat. Trauma is defined as any experience or incident that compromises the safety of an individual and alters the brain pattern to reflect that (Sudekum Trotter & Baggerly, Equine Assisted Mental Health for Healing Trauma, 2019). When accurately assessed, individuals with severe trauma may receive a mental health diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD has certain criteria that the individual must experience to obtain this diagnosis. The fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) criteria for PTSD

is summarized as directly or indirectly experiencing a traumatic event, having symptoms of intrusive thoughts of the trauma, avoidance of stimuli relating to the trauma, negative cognitions and moods, and heightened arousal and hypervigilance, with the duration of these symptoms lasting more than a month (or appear six months afterwards due to delayed expression), (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Leading scientist in trauma research, Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk describes the process of brain development and brain functioning – which are often compromised during trauma. Dr. Van Der Kolk reports that the brain develops and processes from the bottom of the brain (the brainstem), up to the top of the brain (prefrontal cortex) (Van Der Kolk, 2014). The bottom of the brain controls body systems and maintains homeostasis; the next level includes the limbic system which controls emotions, assesses danger, and stores memory; lastly at the top we have the frontal lobes and the prefrontal cortex, which is the last of the brain to develop, this area is the processing center that controls communication and abstract thinking (Van Der Kolk, 2014).

As we receive external stimuli from our surroundings (feeling sunshine, conversating with a neighbor, typing an email, etc.) the way the brain processes the stimuli is the same as the development – starting in the brainstem and working up to the prefrontal cortex where we cognitively process the experience. During a traumatic experience, the brain protects the body by entrapping the stimulus in the primitive parts of the brain and turning the processing level of the brain off -- exercising the instinctual fight, flight, or freeze phenomenon (Walker Buck, Bean, & de Marco, 2017). As earlier stated, the brain can change after a traumatic experience and it does so by existing in this state of survival and not returning to the ‘normal’ functioning of processing stimuli in the frontal lobes (Sudekum Trotter & Baggerly, Equine Assited Mental Health for Healing Trauma, 2019).

Recorded effects of trauma are similar in adolescents to what they are in adults and statistically, one out of four adolescents endure at least one type of severe traumatic experience (Black, Woodworth, & Tremblay, 2012). The difference is that when this occurs in adolescents it can be detrimental since the brain has not finished developing. Trauma can cause difficulties in this age group relating to self, like problems with self-identity, negative cognitions, dissociation, substance abuse and behaviors resulting in self-injury that often follow them into adulthood (Briere & Scott, 2015). Although it is impossible to prevent trauma happening to youth, it is important to be able to discover treatments that are effective for them to initiate healing.

### **Equine Assisted Psychotherapy**

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy\* (EAP) is the process of a mental health therapist utilizing a horse(s) as a tool for a client to help achieve treatment goals. There are different forms of equine assisted mental health that are facilitated by life coaches or mental health practitioners, but for the purpose of this group manual, the focus will be on what is implemented by a mental health therapist (EAGALA, n.d; PATH, n.d; Ekholm Fry, 2020). Although, incorporating horses into a therapeutic practice as a therapist may seem like a simple concept, there is a collection of criteria and steps to take before one can incorporate this tool – especially when it comes to working with a trauma population.

In EAP sessions, a therapist must be competent in their treatment techniques and planning in traditional talk therapy before adding a horse (Ekholm Fry, Conceptualization of Psychotherapy Incorporating Equine Interactions in the United States, 2021). The evidence-based treatment modality that the therapist uses, like CBT, person-centered, or psychoanalytic, etc., is what will drive the treatment goals and the horses are just the tool that is utilized, like toys would be in play therapy. It is also impossible to rely on horses to process and preform

therapeutic responses to distressed humans as they do not have the cognitive ability to do so (Ekholm Fry, *Conceptualization of Psychotherapy Incorporating Equine Interactions in the United States*, 2021). Conclusively, equine assisted psychotherapy is not and should not be considered a modality but rather psychotherapy assisted by horses. The American Counseling Association's (ACA) competency segment and the American Psychological Association's Human-Animal Interaction section backs this up by stating that including a horse into psychotherapy should be an enhancer to treatment – not a standalone method (American Counseling Association, 2014; American Psychological Association, 2017).

Another important criterion is that the therapist must be competent in horse behavior and can recognize cues that would show the horse is in distress or could implement danger and injury to themselves or the clients (Ekholm Fry, *Equine-Assisted Therapy for Trauma - Accidents*, 2019). Although the therapist can have assistants, if agreed to by the clients, there is not adequate time and could ruin the therapeutic benefit if the therapist is needing to consult risk with another person. A therapist will need to have the ability to read behaviors and temperaments on their own due to each horse having different thresholds of stress tolerance, emotional availability and patience to work with individuals who struggle with boundaries and emotional regulation.

The ACA reflects in the competency document stated above that a therapist should know and be comfortable with each horse in their herd, as well as give the horses the capabilities to have a break from sessions and acknowledge the challenges and risk with having horses with humans in a mental health setting (American Counseling Association, 2014). As of right now, University of Denver's *'Equine-Assisted Mental Health Practitioner certificate program'* directed by Nina Ekholm Fry is one of the most tailored programs made for mental health

providers seeking education, supervision, and training in equine assisted psychotherapy (University of Denver's Institute for Human-Animal Interaction, 2022).

### **Why Horses?**

Animal-assisted psychotherapy was first conducted, accidentally, in 1962 when a dog entered a session with a psychologist and a child who had autism and very low socialization skills but began to verbally interact with the dog as it approached him (Kakaceck & Ottens, 2008). Since then, researchers have continued to study the effects of animals in mental health sessions. Throughout the use of therapeutic riding\* and hippotherapy\*, both riding therapeutic methods initially created for physical needs, there was a noticeable positive impact on rider's mental health as well (Kakaceck & Ottens, 2008).

Literature regarding the effectiveness of horses in therapy sessions mentions the size and power of a horse demands physical and emotional presence of clients. These animals have a strong sensitivity to nonverbal cues which allows them to be more reactive to the internal state of humans when their external behaviors do not match. Elizabeth Craig (2020), who has researched and written literature regarding the effectiveness of horses in forms of equine therapy, proposes that horses have a natural drive of curiosity towards emotionally regulated individuals and a tendency to shy away from individuals that are emotionally dysregulated in their environment.

Adolescent and horse interactions are most researched at this time and due to the immediate feedback that the horse provides to an adolescent's behavior – it has shown quick emotional improvements (Kendall & Maujean, 2015). Some researchers state that this is due to a horse's internal instinct as a prey animal, and others have stated that while humans spend a lot of time in their frontal lobes, horses rely more on their gut feelings and seek a sense of security. It is not to be confused as a prey instinct as it would not make sense for domesticated horses to

always consider humans a predator (Ekholm Fry, 2019; Kendall & Maujean, 2015; Williams, 2019).

Typically, the clients are assigned a task or complete an activity with a horse and through the engagement, the clients practice their communication, social and emotional skills and gain positive relationships with the horse that transfer over to their relationships with other humans (Kendall & Maujean, 2015). The idea is that through experiential learning and the somatic sensations that connect the mind and body, adolescents with traumatic experiences will learn regulation skills in a safe environment before having to regulate themselves in the community.

### **Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Sessions**

The framework of an EAP session is dependent on the theory or modality the therapist is using for that session/client to combat the trauma symptoms. Despite the differences in modality, there is a common foundation among all sessions that include horses for safety and risk purposes. A therapist should be adequately prepared for sessions to eliminate any confusion or frustration that may arise in the client or horse. This is especially important if you are doing group sessions instead of individual sessions. As in every therapy session, not just EAP, the activities based in each session should be reflective of the treatment plan that was created (Ekholm Fry, Equine-Assisted Therapy for Trauma - Accidents, 2019). It is also important for the therapist to remain flexible as equine assisted psychotherapy must remain psychotherapy even if the client is not interested in working with horses that day (Ekholm Fry, Conceptualization of Psychotherapy Incorporating Equine Interactions in the United States, 2021).

A research article comparing 3 different case studies looks at the effect of EAP using the attachment, regulation, and competency (ARC) evidence-based practice for complex trauma in children and adolescents. The main pillars behind ARC are safety, attachment and regulation,

which are crucial areas in order to recover from trauma (Naste, et al., 2018). The three different case studies were done on females in adopted homes with a prior history of traumatic experiences -- who lacked impulsivity control, emotional regulation and behavioral skills. Naste, et al. (2018) explained for one specific client who presented as very easily dysregulated and a lack of healthy relationships, was able to diminish her CBCL (Child Behavior Checklist assessment) and CDI (Child Depression Inventory) below the clinical range at the final assessment after 2 years of sessions.

The 2 years of sessions started out with the client grooming\* the horse, as the client was able to create a sense of security and rhythm in her body to regulate herself, she began to process more deeply with the therapist. The goal was to continue to process on the same level while including more activity from the client and the horse, which went from grooming, to leading, to eventually riding (Naste, et al., 2018). Although it wasn't a quick fix, the client was able to alleviate her symptoms, which removed her from clinical range in the completed assessments.

Another comprehensive study compares multiple psychodynamic equine assisted psychotherapy study results for individuals with trauma. The major theme in psychodynamic therapy is through the therapeutic process create positive and more adaptive feelings to otherwise painful experiences (Kovac, van Dijke, & Enders-Slegers, 2020). This study compared randomized control groups compared to non-randomized groups and then compared the overall results of the 12 studies. Kovac, van Dijke, and Enders-Slegers (2020) found that there was a mention of decreased PTSD and depression symptoms in every study, further concluding horses are an effective tool.

### **Current Trends Backed by Research**

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy is currently being used to aid in behaviors, substance abuse, anxiety, depression and mood disorders in adolescents and adults. At the current stage of research, qualitative data is being completed until better methods of numerical measurements are created (Cantin & Marshall-Lucette, 2011). Although, there isn't much numerical data that reflects the effectiveness, the qualitative data consistently reports the benefits of this tool. An open clinical trial was completed to assess the effectiveness in adults with psychological distress (Klontz, Bivens, Leinart, & Klontz, 2007). Klontz et al (2007) administered the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) (Derogatis, 1993) and the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) (Shostrom, 1974) to 31 adult individuals before, after, and 6 months after their 4-month EAP program. Both assessments showed an increase in psychological well-being and a decrease in distress.

EAP also has been shown to improve well-being in children affected by substance abuse. A 9 week EAP group therapy was conducted for these children to relieve current distress and gain skills to combat future emotional struggles (Dunlop & Tsantfski, 2017). Dunlop and Tsantfski (2017) employed a researcher on this project to utilize a thematic analysis procedure where they recorded common themes in the post interview from the children to evaluate the effectiveness of the group. Themes commonly brought up in the post interview from the children represented security in relationships, elevated mood, improvement in interpersonal relationships, and positive social development.

When compared to traditional talk therapy, EAT shows an increase in psychosocial functioning. Schultz (2009) comparatively examined the effects of at-risk adolescents completing an EAT group verses a traditional talk therapy group. To assess the effectiveness of each group, the youth and their parents completed the Youth Outcome Questionnaire (Y-OQ &

Y-OQ SR) (Burlingame, 2001), which measures the symptomatic and psychosocial functioning of the adolescents. The results of the assessments from before and after the group showed that the adolescents had a greater increase in psychosocial functioning in the EAP group and demonstrated a reported decrease in anxiety, depression and self-harm symptoms by both the youth and their parents.

### **Conclusion**

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy is an emerging therapy intervention that utilizes horses and their sensitivity to human emotions and nonjudgmental outlook to work with clients at a level that traditional talk therapists cannot achieve. The EAP model supports the clients' needs and can specifically target goals and objectives (Notgrass & Pettinelli, 2015). Many clients struggle to understand their behaviors and lack the motivation to change until they have it reflected to them through a horse (Schultz, Remick-Barlow, & Robbins, 2007). Horses and clients have a therapeutic relationship that builds confidence and relationship skills that can help clients with significant trauma.

EAP can reach many different populations but is not accommodating to every population. Individuals with uncontrolled medical conditions or medical conditions that may put themselves, the horses or others in the arena at a safety concern should not be considered for EAP sessions (Chandler, Portrie-Bethke, Barrio Minton, Fernando, & O'Callaghan, 2010). Other populations that should not be considered are individuals that are having active psychotic or manic episodes, as well as individuals with an extensive history of animal abuse and dangerous impulsive behaviors (Chandler, Portrie-Bethke, Barrio Minton, Fernando, & O'Callaghan, 2010).

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy is in the primary stages of research and should continue to have further depth of research completed on it to understand the long-term results. Many of

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy research has also had qualitative research completed and utilizes surveys or interviews to gather data on the client's emotional improvements. There has not been many quantitative and experimental research that has shown statistical data for improvements (Lee, Dakin, & McLure, 2014).

Through the information and literature presented above, a group manual has been created specifically for adolescents that have endured traumatic experiences. Moving beyond the traditional literature review, this group manual is a guide for providers that are wanting to expand their practice. The following curriculum was created for any evidence-based treatment modality and thus does not actively promote a certain one for this project. With 8 weeks, and 16 sessions, it was created by this author with specific themes each week that will help build skills from the assistance of horses to incorporate into their personal lives.

### **Group Overview**

**Type of group:** This is a group created for adolescents, ages 16-18 years old, that are currently experiencing traumatic symptoms or distress in their life. A screening process for participants is explained below to decrease safety and risk occurrences and increase therapeutic benefit. For providers -- This group can be used with any evidence-based therapy modality and does not restrict providers to one certain theory. For guidance purposes, the manual does tend to focus on the mind-body connection as the horse's power and size helps with remaining present and regulation of emotions so a provider may want to find a theory to emphasize this (Kendall & Maujean, 2015).

**Purpose:** The group is made for adolescents that are experiencing trauma or distress in their life and looking to combat these symptoms in a nontraditional therapeutic setting. There is a weekly

plan that builds on interpersonal and self-regulation skills to achieve in a supportive and positive environment. Horses provides immediate feedback of either complying with the participant requests or either refusing or running from the client depending on their behaviors. It provides the chance for the participants to be experimental to try to achieve the request and reflect how the activity ties into their personal lives. The goal is for the participants to be able to successfully transfer these skills back to their personal lives and diminish their symptoms of distress.

**Group Format:** There are two sessions a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Tuesdays are when group members are with the horses and learning specific skills each week, focusing on a theme meant to facilitate learning and growth. The sessions are up to 90 mins long, but depending on the engagement of the participant, they may end early. Each session is projected to take at least 45 minutes. Thursdays are when person-centered group sessions are held to process, reflect, and share what they have experienced related to being with the horses.

**Facilitator Qualifications:** A facilitator for this group will need to meet the following criteria: a mental health therapist with at least their master's degree from an accredited program (American Counseling Association , 2014); at least an intermediate level of experience in equine behavior, herd behavior, and risk management with human-horse interactions; Proper education, training and supervision in utilizing horses in therapeutic setting--University of Denver is a main provider for education in this intervention (University of Denver's Institute for Human-Animal Interaction, 2022).

**Group Membership:** Participants will be considered for this group by referrals from mental health providers and doctors. Referrals are accepted at any time, but a screening process will deem whether the participant is a fit for this program or not. The sessions will start about every 9

weeks and the facilitator will email the participants guardians to inform them of their youth's acceptance and start date. The facilitator will call the guardians of participants that do not qualify. The qualifications of the screening process are below.

**Length and Duration of Group:** The length of the group will be eight weeks, every Tuesdays and Thursdays. The sessions will last up to at least 45 minutes, but depending on the participant and the activity, it may take up to 90 minutes max. For youth that are not able to transport themselves, there will be accommodations and a space to wait until their ride arrives.

**Size of Group:** There will be no more than 5 adolescents per group for safety reasons. A smaller group of adolescents and horses provides less risk and an adequate amount for the facilitator to supervise. There may be assistants that the facilitator utilizes to help, but they will not be liable in the case of an accident or injury. The group will remain closed, which means that the youth will start and end the group with each other. If some members choose not to participate the whole session, there will not be others to fill their space.

**Screening Process:** This session is available to adolescents, 16-18 years old that are referred by a doctor or mental health provider. A diagnostic assessment or professional document from a mental health therapist or doctor stating a diagnosis relating to trauma is preferred and prioritized for this group. Other diagnoses will be considered and accepted into the group, if deemed appropriate and therapeutic to the client. Mental health providers or doctors can send a release of information and either a diagnostic assessment or professional letter/document with the referred client's diagnosis to the email: [equinepsychotherapy@sessions.com](mailto:equinepsychotherapy@sessions.com).

A screening process will take place for every candidate for this program. The screening process is made to ensure that the client is a match for this program to aid in decreasing risk of harm. The client's guardian will be contacted via email when approved. Any active behaviors that are considered unsafe (such as violent, disruptive, destructive, or active manic states, etc.), by the facilitator will cause the child to be ineligible and/or removed from participating. This facilitator will do her best to create a group that will be cohesive and like-minded. During this screening process, the facilitator will assign treatment goals to accepted clients and assign groups based off similar goals. Suggestions of placement will be heard, but not always honored as this facilitator will not discriminate against gender, orientation, identity, race, abilities, etc. Alternate groups may be created if requested to provide mental health services using horses to groups of different abilities and needs.

**Group Goals, Guidelines, and Culture:** The facilitator will attempt to create each group that have similar strengths, like-mindedness and treatment goals to create a sense of cohesiveness. During the first week, clients will establish their group rules, goals, and expectations from the group and each other. The facilitators will write or type down these statements and hold the group accountable. The first session will also consist of establishing the procedure if someone is not complying with the stated rule, goals and expectations.

**Evaluation Measures:** To determine the effectiveness of this group, a pre-session and a post-session assessment will be handed out. During the first process group, the pre-session assessment will be handed out and the provider will pick up each assessment from the participants to ensure confidentiality. During the last process group, a post-session assessment will be handed out to

the clients with the same assurance of confidentiality. The results will be compared to determine if the group was effective and what to change moving forward.

## Week One: Introduction to Group

### Tuesday:

#### Objectives:

- Introduce all group members, therapists, and group assistants to create comfort and cohesiveness within the group
- Establish group rules, goals and expectations of the group and each other and create procedures if there is a lack of follow-through
- Create understanding of EAP and what sessions will look like
- Complete pre-session assessment
- Complete icebreaker activity

#### Discussion:

- Introduction to the group
  - Welcome participants to the equine assisted psychotherapy group
  - Therapist, group assistants and each member will introduce themselves
  - Explain the process of how each member was chosen to complement each other's strengths and build cohesiveness
  - Explain weekly sessions – Tuesday will be for process group and Thursdays will be at the barn for group with the horses
- Introduction to barn expectations
  - Explain what EAP is and what a typical session will consist of
  - Describe 'unsafe' zones around a horse and set expectations of any purposeful harm done to horses will not be tolerated
  - Explain for safety purpose, no participant should enter a stall, paddock, pasture, or arena with horses without being supervised or told to do so

#### Activities and materials:

- Pre-session Assessment (Appendix C)
  - Handout assessment
  - When participants finish, the therapist will pick up assessments from each participant to assure confidentiality.
- 'Where Do I Feel It' Mindfulness activity (Gruzewski, 2020).
  - Materials: paper, colored markers, whiteboard
  - Handout a blank piece of paper and instruct participants to draw an outline of a body
  - The therapist will explain bodily reactions to stress – like fast heart rate when nervous
  - Have the group brainstorm emotions to write on whiteboard

- After a list of emotions have been completed – have clients pick a color for the emotion and color in where they feel the specific emotion in their body
- The group members will share and process their drawings together

### **Thursday:**

#### Objective:

- Give a tour of the barn, including horse stalls, tack room\*, bathrooms, horse pasture, paddocks\* and arena
- Complete activity
- Provide reminders
  - safety expectations to not enter or near a horse without supervision or permission
  - unsafe areas of horses
  - No tolerance for purposeful or reckless harm done to the horses

#### Discussion:

- Welcome participants into the barn and give tour of the facility
- Process what the members notice about horse behaviors, how they interact with each other, and how it does or does not resemble their experiences interacting with others (Sudekum Trotter, Chandler, Goodwin-Bond, & Casey, 2008).
- Allow conversation topics to generate as they come
- Finish by providing safety reminders in the barn and around horses

#### Activities and Materials:

- Materials
  - Arena (either indoor or outdoor)
  - About 4 horses – specifically chosen horses that will exhibit different herd behaviors
- Activity
  - Participants will watch the horses free roam\* and observe their behaviors as they interact with the other horses or by themselves (Sudekum Trotter, Chandler, Goodwin-Bond, & Casey, 2008).
  - Participants will share what they observe
  - Non-prompted conversation will be encouraged

## **Week One: Introduction to Group**

Tuesday:

The first group session will take place in the office's group room and will spend most of the time introducing the participants, the facilitator, and the group assistants. It will be emphasized that the group was created to enhance their skills outside of the group and alleviate stress and symptoms from their life. The facilitator will highlight that the specific group has been assessed and created for the members to easily connect with each other and become cohesive. The informed consent and session schedule will be reviewed, and contact information will be given. The members will be encouraged to reach out with any questions, comments and concerns via telephone or email if they are not comfortable with saying it.

The next following discussion is to quickly go over barn expectations and what equine assisted psychotherapy looks like. Safety and risk expectations will be stated and a space for questions will be offered. The participants will be told that their experience is experiential leaving their interactions with the horses up to their judgement, but sessions will halt if safety is at risk. The facilitator will explain that standing directly in front or behind the horse is the 'unsafe zones' as that is the only place a horse cannot see you. Another mention of proper spacing when handling horses, which is to leave enough space for another horse to fit between any other surrounding horse. Any harm done to the horse that is considered purposeful and/or reckless will not be tolerated and the facilitator will decide how to move forward depending on the action.

The activities for the day will be the pre-session assessment and a mindfulness activity. The pre-session assessment will be collected with the upmost confidentiality and stored in a

locked file cabinet until ready to be compared with the post-session assessments. A mindfulness activity will be completed to gain emotional awareness in the participants body (Gruzewski, 2020).

Thursday:

Participants will be welcomed by the facilitator and the group assistants and introduced to the barn. The group will receive a tour of the barn facilities and the importance of each part when it comes to caring for the horses. The activity will start shortly into this session. The group assistants will lead about 4 horses into the arena. The goal is to create an environment where horse and herd behavior is demonstrated so picking 4 horses that will effectively show that is important. The facilitator and the group members will watch from a safe distance and observe what happens in the arena.

The group members are allowed to freely process and share their observations. The main goal is to have them compare how the horses behave by themselves and with each other and compare their observations to what they experience in their personal lives. (Sudekum Trotter, Chandler, Goodwin-Bond, & Casey, 2008). Conversations will remain unrestricted, if they are appropriate and causing no harm to others. Group members will be allowed to stay the full 90 minutes or leave early.

## Week Two: Creating Healthy Relationships

### Tuesday:

#### Objectives:

- Introduce theme of *creating healthy relationships* (Walsh, Blaustein, Grant Knight, Spinazzola, & Van der Kolk, 2007)
- Complete equine activity

#### Discussion

- Provide group members with the theme and their activity prompt
- After the activity, process the activity and see if any members make a connection between the theme, *creating healthy relationships*, and the activity prompt provided below
  - Facilitator will provide some insight, but the group members will guide the conversation

#### Activities and materials:

- Materials
  - 5 horses – or 1 horse for each participant in the group
  - A halter and lead rope for each horse
  - Grooming tools for each horse/participant
  - 5 group assistants for each horse/participant pair
- Activity
  - Participants will enter the arena with the horses.
  - They will receive a halter and a lead rope and walk up to their horse of choice and without instruction, try to halter the horse the way they believe it is supposed to go on.
  - When every horse has a halter on, each participant will explain why they haltered the horse is the right way to do it.
  - After this activity, participants will spend time brushing their horses and leading them around the arena

### Thursday:

#### Objective:

- Recap Tuesday's session
- Further process creating healthy relationships and it's impact in their life

#### Discussion:

- Discuss the following questions:
  - Describe the method they used to halter their horse; did it work?

- How can they compare how they haltered their horse to creating healthy relationships?
- Did you notice anything about how the horse needed to be worked with?
- Do you think we get these cues from other humans?
  - Do you have a hard time recognizing these cues?
  - How can we work on these skills?
- Do you feel it represents any certain relationship in your life, either past or present?
- How can we transfer these skills into our personal lives?
- How can we make sure our relationships are healthy and establish boundaries?
- Provide space for any other take-aways

## **Week Two: Creating Healthy Relationships**

Tuesday:

This week's session is about creating healthy relationships. The activity to reflect this theme is attempting to put a halter on a horse without instructions. The clients will pick the horses they will try to halter as they enter the arena. There is a specific way a halter should be placed on a horse for comfort and easy control for the handler (Appendix F). The goal is for the participants to gauge the horse's reactions, if they show signs of discomfort or refusal to put the halter on. If the specific horse allows them to put it on wrong, it allows for space to process boundaries. Walsh, Blaustein, Grant Knight, Spinazzola, van der Kolk (2007) report in cases of childhood and adult trauma gaining healthy social supports and building positive relationships decreases the risk of revictimization and increases their resiliency in times of distress.

The author came up with this activity as it utilizes nonverbal communication skills, flexible thinking, frustration tolerance, and the need to be present during the activity, which are common characteristics in having and creating healthy conversations and relationships. The participants will exercise emotional regulation and the self-confidence when explaining why the haltered the horse correctly. Depending on the group members experience with horses, this exercise may fluctuate with correct or incorrect haltering.

Thursday:

For the processing group, the main point is to reflect on the exercise from Tuesday and incorporate healthy ways as a group to transfer the experience to their personal lives. This author created a list of discussion questions that could be used for processing during this time that creates deeper reflection. The insight and engagement of the participants during the activity will

fuel the conversation. The facilitator can assist in keeping the conversation going but should leave the direction and the flow up to the participants.

## Week Three: Reflection and Rhythm

### Tuesday:

#### Objectives:

- Introduce theme of *reflection and rhythm* (Naste, et al., 2018)
- Complete equine activity

#### Discussion

- Provide group members with the theme and their activity prompt
  - This session is about creating a relationship with the horse and finding an internal rhythm with the horse as rhythm is an important coping skill for trauma (Van Der Kolk, 2014).

#### Activities and materials:

- Materials
  - 5 horses – or 1 horse for each participant in the group
  - A halter and lead rope for each horse
  - Grooming tools for each horse/participant
  - 2-3 group assistants for each horse/participant pair
- Activity
  - Participants will halter their horses and then bring them to the outside arena and have a loose hold on their horse so that they are almost free roaming.
  - Participants have the free quiet time to work on leading skills but are encouraged to spend quiet time with their horse.
  - This activity is to help build relationships and confidence with their horses, and to gain a natural rhythm for emotional regulation (Naste, et al., 2018)

### Thursday:

#### Objective:

- Recap Tuesday's session
- Further process the *reflection and rhythm* time with their horses.
- Explore meditation

#### Discussion:

- Discuss the following questions:
  - Describe how they spent the time with their horse
  - Were you nervous to spend time alone with your horse?
  - Did you feel you were able to connect with your horse?
    - If so, how?
    - If not, why?

- How did it feel to be forced to slow down and relax?
- Do you feel like you ever have time to do this in your life?
- Do you think you learned a specific skill in this session?
- How can we transfer this skill or impact into our personal lives?
- How can we make sure we take time to find a rhythm when we are feeling nervous or out of our element?
- Provide space for any other take-aways
- Mindful meditation: guided imagery – walk through the forest (Mindfully, 2020)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6am3OS-Ejzk>

### **Week Three: Reflection and Rhythm**

Tuesday:

This session was inspired by Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk's (2014) theory about individuals with trauma needing to find an internal rhythm to be able to regulate themselves. This author wanted to continue the experimental learning activities and created this activity for participants to find that rhythm with their horse without any specific prompts. The vision for this activity was for client to have free rein on their personal time with the horse – such as sitting in a paddock with the horse, reading to the horse in a stall, or walking the horse around. This week is for the participants to discover their calm. The session will go for 90 minutes, but participants are allowed to leave when they feel they are finished.

Thursday:

The process group will be utilized to assess hypervigilance and the ability to relax in participants. Although, it will be recognized during the actual activity by the therapist, this will allow the facilitator to assess the participants awareness to the behavior if it's present. Another set of discussion questions for deeper reflection are being offered again for this group. To end the session, the facilitator will introduce guided meditation. The YouTube mediation that was picked is a guided imagery mediation to aid in keeping the adolescent's attention and in hopes that they enjoy it as well.

## Week Four: Exercising Resilience

### Tuesday:

#### Objectives:

- Introduce theme of *exercising resilience* (Freud, 1962)
- Complete equine activity

#### Discussion

- Provide group members with the theme and their activity prompt
- After the activity, process the activity and see if any members make a connection between the theme, *exercising resilience*, and the activity prompt provided below
  - Facilitator will provide some insight, but the group members will guide the conversation

#### Activities and materials:

- Materials
  - About 3 horses
  - Random items to build obstacle
    - Cones, pool noodles, plastic barrels, ground poles, buckets, beach balls, stuffed animals..etc.
- Activity
  - This will be a team activity
    - Can either be all 5 members doing this at the same time or 2-3 clients at a time
  - Participants are asked to build an obstacle with items around the arena, such as cones, poles, barrels, etc., while the horses are free roaming around the arena.
  - The prompt is to get the horses to over the obstacles with little to no directions or help from the facilitators.
    - The goal is not for the participants to get the horses over the obstacles (because some may not be built to achieve this, but the facilitators will not mention this) but to experience the idea of utilizing different skills and ideas to help cross this.

#### Objective:

- Recap Tuesday's session
- Further process of *exercising resilience* activity with the horses.

#### Discussion:

- Discuss the following questions:
  - Describe the obstacle that your team created
  - What was your teams first attempt to get the horse near it?

- Did it work?
  - If it didn't work, what was the process like trying to attempt to get your horse near it?
  - What did is that "obstacle" for you in your life?
  - How did your emotions changes during the process?
  - Did your emotions have any effect on the horses' behavior?
  - What did you learn about controlling your emotions?
    - Did having a positive mindset help?
  - What did you learn about resilience in this process?
  - How are you or others in your life resilient?
  - How can we be more resilient in our lives?
- Provide space for any other take-aways

### **Week Four: Exercising Resilience**

Tuesday:

This session was created for some team-building experience with the horses and their group members. This author suggests having fewer participants and fewer horses in the arena due to this having more movement throughout this activity. The goal is for the group members to use each other to work towards getting the horse over an obstacle they constructed with utilizing the metaphor of assigning the obstacle to be something they are wanting to overcome in their life. Freud (1896/1962) explains that for people to restore their functioning, they will need to define their obstacle and their need to achieve it while offering options and conclusions without resorting back to maladaptive attempts that were implemented before to dissipate feelings. This activity is hard for more experience horse people to get right on the first time so this will require more patience and trial and error for the clients. The hope is for the clients to regulate their emotions while trying to overcome something that has many pieces they can't control. As the therapist, it will be important to gauge the threshold of each participants regulation while they complete the activity so that the activity does not cause more distress. It is okay if this activity is not finished, the learning experience is centered in the process.

Thursday:

For the processing group, the main point is to reflect on the exercise from Tuesday and incorporate healthy ways as a group to transfer the experience to their personal lives. This author created a list of discussion questions that could be used for processing during this time that creates deeper reflection. The insight and engagement of the participants during the activity will

fuel the conversation. The facilitator can assist in keeping the conversation going but should leave the direction and the flow up to the participants.

## Week Five: Body Language

### Tuesday:

#### Objectives:

- Introduce theme of *body language* (Kalsched, 2020)
- Complete equine activity

#### Discussion

- Provide group members with the theme and their activity prompt
- After the activity, process the activity and see if any members make a connection between the theme, *body language*, and the activity prompt provided below
  - Facilitator will provide some insight, but the group members will guide the conversation

#### Activities and materials:

- Materials
  - About 3 horses
  - Random items to build a circle
    - Cones, ground poles, jump ropes, balls. Etc.
- Activity
  - Similar to last week, participants will build about a 10-meter circle in a certain area of the arena (Lessons in TR, 2017).
  - The participants can only use their body to guide the horses towards the circle around the obstacle.
    - The participants will be allowed to take 3 steps at a time towards the horses while using their body to guide the horse towards the circle in the arena.
      - They can use props like pool noodles, balls, cones, jump ropes, etc, to get guide the horses
    - Only one horse needs to enter the circle for it to be completed

### Thursday:

#### Objective:

- Recap Tuesday's activity
- Further process the *body language* activity with the horses.

Discussion:

- Discuss the following questions:
  - Was this activity harder or easier compared to last week?
  - What did you learn about your body language?
  - What do you think the horse thought about your body language?
  - Did you have to change your approach at all?
  - How did your emotions change during the process?
  - How do people interpret your body language in your life?
    - Does it change?
  - Are there times where others have confused you with their body language?
  - Have people misinterpreted your body language?
  - How can we work on focusing on our body language when communicating with others?
- Provide space for any other take-aways

## **Week Five: Body Language**

Tuesday:

This week's activity is like last weeks and is made to build off those skills. This activity specifically exercises body language and each participant to need to have bodily awareness of that. Kalsched (2020) wrote a report of the affect and body of trauma victims and explained the lack of connection between feelings and body awareness. He states that trauma victims often feel like strangers in the bodies and are especially numb to how the body processes and feels feelings. This activity was created for participants to focus on their emotions and how it is emulated through their body and the communication it can give off. Similar to last week, the clients will build their circles with whatever they choose to use. All participants can do this activity at once or in smaller groups (Lessons in TR, 2017). At least one horse, doesn't have to be the same one, needs to enter everyone's individual circle. The participants can chat with each other to brainstorm, but verbal cues to the horses will not be allowed. Each participant can take 3 steps towards the horse, utilizing any tool they would like, before another participant has to move. This will continue until all circles have been entered or time has ended.

Thursday:

For the processing group, the main point is to reflect on the exercise from Tuesday and incorporate healthy ways as a group to transfer the experience to their personal lives. This author created a list of discussion questions that could be used for processing during this time that creates deeper reflection. The insight and engagement of the participants during the activity will fuel the conversation. The facilitator can assist in keeping the conversation going but should leave the direction and the flow up to the participants

## Week Six: Trust

### Tuesday:

#### Objectives:

- Introduce theme of *trust* (Van der Kolk, 2002)
- Complete equine activity

#### Discussion

- Provide group members with the theme and their activity prompt
- After the activity, process the activity and see if any members make a connection between the theme, *trust*, and the activity prompt provided below
  - Facilitator will provide some insight, but the group members will guide the conversation

#### Activities and materials:

- Materials
  - 5 horses – 1 per participant
  - Halter and lead rope for each horse
  - 5 group assistants
- Activity
  - Participants will start the session grooming their horses and then hand their horses over to group assistants
  - Participants will blindfold themselves and place their hands on their horses (Lessons in TR, 2017).
  - They will try to sync their breathing with their horses.
  - Next, the client will be asked to use their skills and try to lift each of the horses' hooves while remaining blindfolded.
    - The group assistants will remain hold of the horse and offer direction, help maintain safety and encourage the participants.

### Thursday:

#### Objective:

- Recap Tuesday's activity
- Further process the *trust* activity with the horses.

#### Discussion:

- Discuss the following questions:
  - At the beginning of this activity, did you feel like you trusted your horse?
  - Did you trust the group assistant?
  - Was this harder or easier than you thought?

- How long did it take you to relax and completely trust?
- Did you ever feel completely relaxed?
- What emotions did you feel during this?
- Anything you did or told yourself to calm down and relax?
- What experiences in your life was like this activity?
- What did you learn from this activity?
- Provide space for any other take-aways

## **Week Six: Trust**

Tuesday:

The participants objective during this exercise is to regulate their emotions while trusting the horse and the group assistant. Bessel Van der Kolk (2002) reports that trauma victims struggle with increased arousal initiating in their fight, flight, or freeze instincts and the need for these victims to relearn the difference between real and irrational fear and mistrust. The goal is to achieve a state of relaxation and calm in a positive environment. The session will start with the clients grooming the horses of their choice and after everyone has been completed and feel ready to start the activity, the group assistants will take the horses. The participants will be given blindfolds to use for the activity, but if it triggers any distress or trauma, they will not need to use them. The participants will spend time exploring the shape and feel of the horse without their sight (Lessons in TR, 2017). When they feel ready, the participants will start to reach down and pick up each foot of the horse. The activity will end when the participants feel like they are calm and comfortable.

Thursday:

For the processing group, the main point is to reflect on the exercise from Tuesday and incorporate healthy ways as a group to transfer the experience to their personal lives. This author created a list of discussion questions that could be used for processing during this time that creates deeper reflection. The insight and engagement of the participants during the activity will fuel the conversation. The facilitator can assist in keeping the conversation going but should leave the direction and the flow up to the participants.

## Week Seven: Closure

### Tuesday:

#### Objectives:

- Process closure and ending the therapeutic relationship (Gabert-Quilien, et al., 2012)
- Complete equine activity

#### Discussion

- Allow participants to spend time with the horses
- Assist participants in closure and therapeutic termination

#### Activities and materials:

- Materials
  - 5 horses – 1 per participant
  - Halter and leadrope for each horse
  - Grooming bins
  - 5 group assistants
- Activity
  - Participants will complete activity very similar to the reflection theme.
  - They will halter their horses and bring them out to the outdoor arena for quiet alone time with their horses (Lessons in TR, 2017).
  - They can practice exercises already completed, meditate, or have quiet conversations with the horses, as they end their therapeutic relationship

#### Objective:

- Recap the closure activity
- Further process *closure* with the horses.

#### Discussion:

- Discuss the following questions:
  - How was the last session with the horses?
  - What emotions did you feel?
  - How has working with the horses changed your insight?
  - Do you feel there has been times in your life that you haven't reached closure?
  - How can we combat those ill feelings of not having closure?
  - Did you feel you were able to end the group with closure?
  - What did you learn from this group?

## **Week Seven: Closure**

Tuesday:

This week is the last week with the horses. The main goal is to gain closure and give the participants time to end their relationship with the horses. Gabert-Quilien, et al (2012) describes the importance of having healthy and positive social support systems to cope and inspired the activity for participants to take time to close their relationship with their horses and transfer skills to the community. Just like the reflection and rest activity, the participants will have free time with their horses. There is no specific prompt, but they could spend time practicing past skills, meditating, or just having quiet time with the horses. The clients will be able to end the session whenever they would like, but 90 minutes will remain the longest they can spend.

Thursday:

For the processing group, the main point is to reflect on their experience as a whole and end their relationships with the horses. This author created a list of discussion questions that could be used for processing during this time that creates deeper reflection. The insight and engagement of the participants during the activity will fuel the conversation. The facilitator can assist in keeping the conversation going but should leave the direction and the flow up to the participants.

## Week Eight: Group Termination

### Tuesday:

#### Objectives:

- Complete art project or take pictures with horses (Lessons in TR, 2017)
- Complete post-session assessment (Appendix D)

#### Discussion

- Evaluate participants thoughts on the group
- Create final memories with the participants and the horses
- Receive post assessment

#### Activities and materials:

- Materials
  - Horse hair (little pieces cut from tail or mane)
  - Art supplies
  - Jewelry making supplies
  - Polaroid camera
- Activity
  - Participants will have the opportunity to braid and create bracelets or decals made out of their favorite horses tail hairs
  - Participants can take pictures with the horses to take home
  - The facilitator will hand out post-session assessment and obtain them with the upmost confidentiality. They will compare results to the pre-session assessment to determine effectiveness and make necessary changes.

### **Week Eight: Group Termination**

Tuesday:

The final session will be at the barn and will be started like a process group. They will have the ability to create memorabilia's out of horsehair and take pictures with the horses that they can take home. The post-session assessment will be handed out and evaluated for effectiveness when compared to the pre-session assessment.

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**Appendix A: Group Handout**

# Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Sessions

A trauma-based group for adolescents that are interested in combining their mental health needs with horses!



An 8-week, 16 session therapy group that uses experimental learning and somatic (mind-body) connections to aid in emotional regulation and a decrease in trauma symptoms.

Sessions will be twice a week, every Tuesday and Thursday! Call for pricing and availability! A screening process will take place to determine qualifications and suitability.

If you have a child or a client that equine assisted psychotherapy sessions would be suitable for – please call 218-111-2345 or email [equinepsychotherapy@sessions.com](mailto:equinepsychotherapy@sessions.com)

**Appendix B: Intake and Informed Consent for Equine Assisted Psychotherapy**

Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s)/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Billing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent 1 Email \_\_\_\_\_ Parent 2 Email \_\_\_\_\_

Parent 1 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Parent 2 Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for seeking service \_\_\_\_\_

Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent:** I do hereby seek and consent for my minor child to take part in treatment. I understand:

- Sessions will be provided by a team which includes of 1 mental health professional, equine assistants, and horses
- Sessions will be held in a covered or outdoor arena regardless of weather.
- Closed toed/heeled shoes are required.
- My child will have adequate dress according to the weather.

I am aware that I may stop my treatment at any time. If I choose to do this, I will inform my therapist as soon as possible. I am only responsible for services rendered. I understand a termination session is highly recommended.

**Screening:** I understand that there is a screening process to determine an appropriate group for my child to be placed in. Suggestions can be made, but not guaranteed. I understand that any active behaviors that are considered unsafe – violent, disruptive, destructive, or active manic states, etc., by the facilitator will cause my child to be ineligible for participation.

**Confidentiality:** I understand that all information pertaining to my child's treatment is confidential including records and all information conveyed during sessions. I understand that information discussed in treatment will remain confidential except where state law requires disclosure. I understand the potential limitations of confidentiality as my sessions will take place outdoors and may therefore be visible to individuals driving by, postal workers or other service professionals, or to employees who may be engaging in activities on the premises. Employees are educated regarding the confidential nature of services and are committed to maintain confidentiality regarding therapeutic activities taking place.

**Medical Emergency:** I give my consent in the event of a medical emergency, for employees to provide such medical assistance as deemed to be necessary. I authorize any licensed physician and/or medical facility to provide medical, surgical care, and/or hospitalization including anesthetic, which they determine to be necessary or advisable, pending receipt of a specific consent from the undersigned.

**Payment and Cancellation Policy:** Payment is expected at the time of service, unless other plans have been directly arranged with my team. I understand it is my responsibility to cancel an appointment at least 24 hours before the time of the appointment. No shows will be charged for appointment time. Treatment will not continue without resolution.

**Risks:** Participation in equine related activities involves certain inherent risks and, regardless of the care that is taken, it is impossible to ensure the safety of the participant. *Under Minnesota Statute 604A.12 LIVESTOCK ACTIVITIES, an equine professional is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant in an equine activity resulting from an inherent risk of the equine activity, unless of faulty practice. Subdivision 3 has more details.*

It is mutually understood and agreed that this informed consent constitutes a waiver of liability beyond the provisions of the *Statute 604A.12*. By signing this release, I agree not to bring any claim or suit against the facilitator on the basis of any exception in that law.

Should I breach this Release (or any part of it) I agree to pay the attorney's fees and court costs related to such breach incurred by employees, assistants, volunteers, landowners, and owners of horses. It is also mutually agreed that any disputes arising under this release, or any activities that are undertaken pursuant to this document, shall be litigated in a court of proper jurisdiction.

**Waiver and Liability Release:** As consideration for engaging in equine related activities at any time and at any location, I agree to assume full responsibility for any and all bodily injuries, losses, or damages that I may sustain. I, for my heirs, administrators, personal representatives, or assigns, release and discharge employees, assistants, volunteers, land owners, and owners of horses from any and all claims, demands, damages, actions, omissions, suits, or causes of action (present or future).

**Indemnification:** I also agree to indemnify and hold harmless persons or entities all damages which are sustained or suffered by any third persons. The indemnification shall include reimbursement of attorney fees.

**By my signature below I am indicating that I have read, understood, and agree with ALL of the above information and that any questions you have had about this statement have been answered to your satisfaction.**

Parent Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness/Team member: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C: Pre-Session Assessment (The Responsive Counselor, 2018)**

- 1. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being very bad and 10 being absolutely great, what would you rate your overall daily mood \_\_\_\_\_**
- 2. Have you ever attended a therapy session that uses horses before \_\_\_\_\_?**
- 3. Do you have any horse experience? If so, quickly describe your experience**  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Without going into detail, would you say you have endured trauma? \_\_\_\_\_**
- 5. In a 7-day week, how many days do you have stressful or scary flashbacks \_\_\_\_\_**
- 6. In a 7-day week, how many days do you have uncontrollable mood swings \_\_\_\_\_**
- 7. In a 7-day week, how many days do you feel like you're in control of your body**  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Do you feel satisfied with your relationships with your family and friends?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9. Why are you interested in this group session? If you are not, who suggested you to do this group? \_\_\_\_\_**
- 10. What are you hoping to get out of this group? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Appendix D: Post-Session Assessment (The Responsive  
Counselor, 2018)**

1. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being very bad and 10 being absolutely great, what would you rate your overall daily mood \_\_\_\_\_
2. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being awful and 10 being fantastic, how would you rate your experience with equine assisted psychotherapy \_\_\_\_\_
3. Would you recommend your friends to do equine assisted group therapy \_\_\_\_\_
4. Assessing your mood and trauma symptoms, in a 7-day week, how many days do you have stressful or scary flashbacks \_\_\_\_\_
5. In a 7-day week, how many days do you have uncontrollable mood swings \_\_\_\_\_
6. In a 7-day week, how many days do you feel like you're in control of your body \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you feel satisfied with your relationships with your family and friends?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this group? If so, please describe  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Did you get what you hoped for out of this group (reflects question 10 on pre-assessment)  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Lastly, what was the best and worst part of this group for you? Please leave any comments you would like to share  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix E: Where Do I Feel It Activity** (Gruzewski, 2020, p. 4)

**Items needed:** paper; colored pencils or markers; dry-erase board

### **The activity:**

1. Ask the teens to draw a simple outline of their body
2. Explain that emotions affect the body in different ways. For example, when someone is angry, they may feel their fists clench or shoulders tense.
3. Have them brainstorm different emotions. Write them on the dry-erase board.
4. Have them pick four emotions and assign a color to each (e.g red for anger)
5. Give them time to reflect on the times they felt these emotions and have them color the affected areas on their body outline.
6. Give time to share their drawings and what they observed about their emotions.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What areas of your body are most affected by emotions?
2. What emotions have the biggest effect on your body?
3. How can being mindful of your body's response to emotions help in everyday life?

### **Pro Tips**

1. Instead of reflecting on all the emotions at once, you can break up the period into smaller segments devoted to each emotion.
2. If they are having a hard time, focus on when they feel the chosen emotions.
3. Remind the teens there are no right or wrong answers – everyone experiences emotions differently.

**Appendix F: Proper Halter Placement for Week 2's Activity (NDSU  
Bison Strides, 2020)**

