

Why horses?

Those who are familiar with horses recognize and understand the power of horses to influence people in incredibly powerful ways. Developing relationships, training, horsemanship instruction, and caring for the horses naturally affects the people involved in a positive manner.

The benefits of work ethic, responsibility, assertiveness, communication, and healthy relationships have long been recognized. Horses naturally provide these benefits. The use of horses is growing and gaining popularity with the rise of new approaches in working with the horses, including the field of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy.

We are often asked, “Why horses? Why not other animals?”

Horses are large and powerful, which creates a natural opportunity for some to overcome fear and develop confidence. The size and power of the horse are naturally intimidating to many people. Accomplishing a task involving the horse, in spite of those fears, creates confidence and provides for wonderful metaphors when dealing with other intimidating and challenging situations in life.

Horses are very much like humans in that they are social animals. They have defined roles within their herds. They would rather be with their peers. They have distinct personalities, attitudes, and moods. An approach that seems to work with one horse, does not necessarily work with another. At times, they seem stubborn and defiant. They like to have fun. In other words, horses provide vast opportunities for metaphorical insight and learning. Using metaphors, in discussion or activity, is an effective technique when working with even the most challenging individuals or groups.

Horses require work, whether in caring for them or working with them. In an era when immediate gratification and the “easy way” are the norm, horses require people to be engaged in physical and mental work to be successful, a valuable characteristic in all aspects of life.

Horses are very sensitive to emotional states and have a unique ability to pick up on what people are feeling. And most importantly, horses have the ability to mirror exactly what human body language is telling them. Many people will complain, “The horse is stubborn. The horse doesn’t like me,” etc. But the lesson to be learned is that if they change themselves, the horses respond differently. Horses are honest, which makes them especially powerful messengers.