

What is Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)?

Animal-Assisted Therapy, or AAT, is a mental health counseling approach that involves incorporating an animal(s) as a therapy partner. The animal works with the mental health professional to guide the client and provide growth and healing. Sessions can be in an office, out in the natural world or even in a horse barn. Some of the many benefits of working with animals include non-judgmental acceptance and emotional regulation through the release of dopamine and oxytocin in a person's brain when petting and physically interacting with animals. These reactions help us to feel calm and happy and promote a sense of safety that opens new space for therapy and healing.

Canine-Assisted Therapy (CAT)

In Canine-Assisted Therapy the mental health professional utilizes a specially trained dog to assist during sessions. Canine-Assisted therapeutic activities can include visiting nursing homes, hospitals and colleges as well as grade schools. Why dogs? Dogs have been bred for centuries to respond to the emotional state of humans and be exceptionally tuned in to our needs and reactions. They have no secret agendas. They are spontaneous, friendly and like to play, easily disarming a tense human and helping us to open up.



Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP), or Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP), is an experiential therapy that takes place in an arena within an equine therapeutic facility and typically involves a team consisting of the horse(s), the Mental Health therapist and the Equine Specialist. The Mental Health therapist guides the client through the counseling session, providing emotional safety, growth and healing with the help of the horses, and the Equine Specialist is responsible for watching the horse's movement and expressions to provide for physical safety during the session as well as insight into how the horses are responding to the client. Sessions can be indoors or outdoors and engages all of the physical senses.

Benefits of Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP)

Research shows that spending time with animals and being in natural settings is beneficial to our health. Horses are particularly sensitive animals and make excellent therapy partners because they are aware of our emotions, body language and small changes in our demeanor that people often miss. The horses act like mirrors to our internal world and provide the opportunity to heal, gain insight and practice social interactions within the safety of the therapeutic relationship and the bond with the horses. Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy is effective for a wide variety of mental health issues such as; emotional regulation, attachment, anxiety, depression, trauma, ADHD and many others. One of the benefits of EFP is that there is usually much less talking during a session than in an office setting. The focus instead is on the experience and interacting with the horses.

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EFP is a holistic approach that creates rich memories that stick with clients for long periods of time.

- Working with large animals is empowering
- EFP is a full body experience
- All five senses are engaged
- Many EFP therapists have noted that clients often progress more quickly with equine sessions than with office based therapy



Types of Equine-Assisted Activities

There are many types of equine-assisted activities, however; not all of them are for mental health. Therapeutic riding allows for people of all ages and abilities to benefit from the movement of the horse, building balance, core strength and confidence, but it does not include mental health therapy. Hippotherapy is therapeutic riding that is facilitated by a trained and licensed occupational, physical or speech and language therapist. This type of therapy does not involve mental health but can be excellent for many candidates who are also involved in mental health services. When searching for Equine-Facilitated or Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy it is important to verify that the program you are considering does in fact provide mental health services and that they are provided by a trained and licensed mental health clinician.

Who can benefit from Animal-Assisted Therapy?

AAT can be used for individuals, groups, families, couples, adults, teens and children. People of all ages benefit from interacting with animals in a therapeutic setting. Animals can assist in many types of therapy and are effective for a wide range of mental health concerns including but not limited to: recovery from addictions, grief and trauma, attachment, emotion regulation, ADHD/ADD, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, eating disorders, chronic and persistent mental health disorders, panic attacks, self-harm and suicidal ideation and many others.

Is it affordable?

Most insurance companies will pay for AAT sessions with a licensed therapist, including the Oregon Health Plan. Some programs bill insurance directly and others will provide clients with a bill to submit to their insurance company for reimbursement. It is important to ask about payment and insurance options before scheduling an appointment.

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Research and Media

Why Close Encounters with Animals Soothe Us:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/18/magazine/why-close-encounters-with-animals-soothe-us.html? r=0>

How Horses Help Us Heal:

<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/patient-advice/articles/2016-09-02/equine-therapy-how-horses-help-humans-heal>



Benefits of Animal-Assisted Therapy:

https://www.uclahealth.org/pac/Workfiles/PAC/ReviewofBenefits_Morrison.pdf

Canine-Assisted Therapy:

<http://time.com/4498/the-dog-will-see-you-now/>

Autism and Animal-Assisted Therapies:

https://iancommunity.org/cs/ian_treatment_reports/animal_assisted_therapies

At-Risk Youth and Equine-Assisted Therapy:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02650533.2011.561304>

PTSD and Equine-Assisted Therapy:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272999924_Equine-Assisted_Therapy_for_Anxiety_and_Posttraumatic_Stress_Symptoms_Equine-Assisted_Therapy

Eating Disorders and Equine-Assisted Therapy:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15401383.2013.852451>

Aggressive Behavior and Persistent Mental Illness with Animal-assisted Therapy:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25269512>



A Program of Northwest Resource Associates

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Oregon AAT Resource List

Portland Metropolitan Area

B.E.A.T. Riding Center at Horsin-A-Round Stables

City, State: Banks, OR
Phone: 503-324-3071
Website: <https://beatriding.org/>
Offering: Therapeutic riding

The Center at Heron Hill

City, State: Canby, OR
Phone: 503-221-4531
Website: <http://thecenteratheronhill.com/>
Offering: Psychotherapy, Ecotherapy, outdoor activities

Dream Acres

City, State: Tualatin, OR
Phone: 503-505-0466
Website: <http://www.dreamacres1.com/>
Offering: Psychotherapy

Firefly Counseling Services

City, State: Hillsboro, OR
Phone: 503-560-5822
Website: <http://www.fcspc.org/animal-assisted-therapy/>
Offering: Canine-Assisted Psychotherapy

Forward Stride

City, State: Beaverton, OR
Phone: 503-217-2058
Website: www.forwardstride.org
Offering: Psychotherapy, Occupational, Physical, and Speech and Language therapies, riding and other activities

Health, Healing, & Growth at Corbett Farm

City, State: Corbett, OR
Phone: 503-695-2956
Website: <http://corbettfarm.com/equine-therapy-therapeutic-horseback-riding/>
Offering: Equine Psychotherapy, Equine Assisted Learning through Health, Healing & Growth

Mindful Trails Counseling

City, State: Portland, OR
Phone: 503-389-0431
Website: <https://www.mindfultrailscounseling.com>

Reclaiming Hope Ranch

City, State: Hillsboro, OR
Phone: 971-350-8048
Website: <https://www.reclaiminghoperanch.org/>
Offering: Ranch based activities - Mentor program for foster youth

Therapy Gone to the Dogs

City, State: Portland, OR
Phone: 503 764-9508
Website: <http://therapygonetothedogs.org/>
Offering: Canine-Assisted Psychotherapy

Central Oregon

Healing Reins

City, State: Bend, OR
Phone: 541-382-9410
Website: <http://www.healingreins.org/>
Offering: Psychotherapy, Occupational, Physical, and Speech and Language therapies, riding and other activities

Mindful Trails Counseling

City, State: Bend, OR
Phone: 503-389-0431
Website: <https://www.mindfultrailscounseling.com/>
Offering: Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

Coastal Area

Bright Horizons

City, State: Siletz, OR
Phone: 541-961-4156
Website: <http://www.brighthorizonsriding.org/>
Offering: Psychotherapy, Therapeutic riding, recreational riding and other activities



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Eastern Oregon

Clover Haven Therapeutic Equine Center

City, State: Union, OR
Phone: 541-562-1257
Website: <https://www.cloverhaven.org/>
Offering: Equine Assisted Psychotherapy, Therapeutic riding, recreational riding and other activities

Mid-Willamette Valley

Bit by Bit

City, State: Corvallis, OR
Phone: 541-908-3293
Website: <http://www.bitbybitadaptiveriding.org/>
Offering: Therapeutic riding

Horse Adoptive Riding & Therapy (HART)

City, State: Independence, OR
Phone: 503-991-4751
Para español: 503-999-9009
Website: <https://horsesadaptiveriding.org/>
Offering: Psychotherapy, Occupational Therapy, riding and other activities

Horses of Hope

City, State: Turner, OR
Phone: 503-743-3890
Website: <https://horsesofhopeoregon.org/>
Offering: Occupational, Physical, and Speech and Language therapies, riding and other activities

Love Reins

City, State: Salem, OR
Email: lovereinsranch@comcast.net
Website: <https://www.lovereinsranch.org/>
Offering: Therapeutic riding

Trillium's Horse Program

City, State: Corvallis, OR
Phone: 888-333-6177
Email: services@trilliumfamily.org
Website: <https://trilliumfamily.org/programs-and-services/community-services/therapeutic-equine-program/>
Offering: Therapeutic riding, Equine Skills Training

Southern Oregon

Equine Assisted Growth and Learning

City, State: Eugene, OR
Phone: 541-335-1390
Email: mo@horsetails.org
Website: <https://www.facebook.com/HorseTAILS/>
Offering: Therapeutic Riding

Hope Equestrian Center

City, State: Eagle Point, OR
Phone: 541-776-0878
Website: <http://www.hopeequestrian.com/>
Offering: Therapeutic Riding

Pegasus Center

City, State: Eagle Point, OR
Phone: 541-335-9496
Website: <https://www.pegasuscenter.org/>
Offering: Equine Assisted Learning

Solid Ground

City, State: Klamath Falls, OR
Phone: 541-539-6303
Website: <http://www.solidgroundkf.com/>
Offering: Psychotherapy and Therapeutic riding

Therapeutic Animal Interactions and Life Skills

City, State: Eugene, OR
Phone: 541-335-1390
Website: <http://www.horsetails.org/>
Offering: Psychotherapy



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SW Washington/Clark County

Grace Therapeutic Horse Program

City, State: Battle Ground, WA
Phone: 360-910-7101
Email: gracehorsetherapy@gmail.com
Website: <https://www.facebook.com/Grace-Therapeutic-Horse-Program-130335277033495/>
Offering: Therapeutic Riding, Addictions Therapy

Healing Winds

City, State: Brush Prairie, WA
Phone: 360-254-5387 or 360-903-1265
Email: Gogoomba@aol.com
Website: <http://healingwinds.org/>
Offering: Therapeutic Riding

Summit Equine Assisted Therapy (S.E.A.T.)

City, State: La Center, WA
Phone: 360-263-3135
Website: <http://summitequineassistedtherapy.com/>
Offering: Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Autism Support