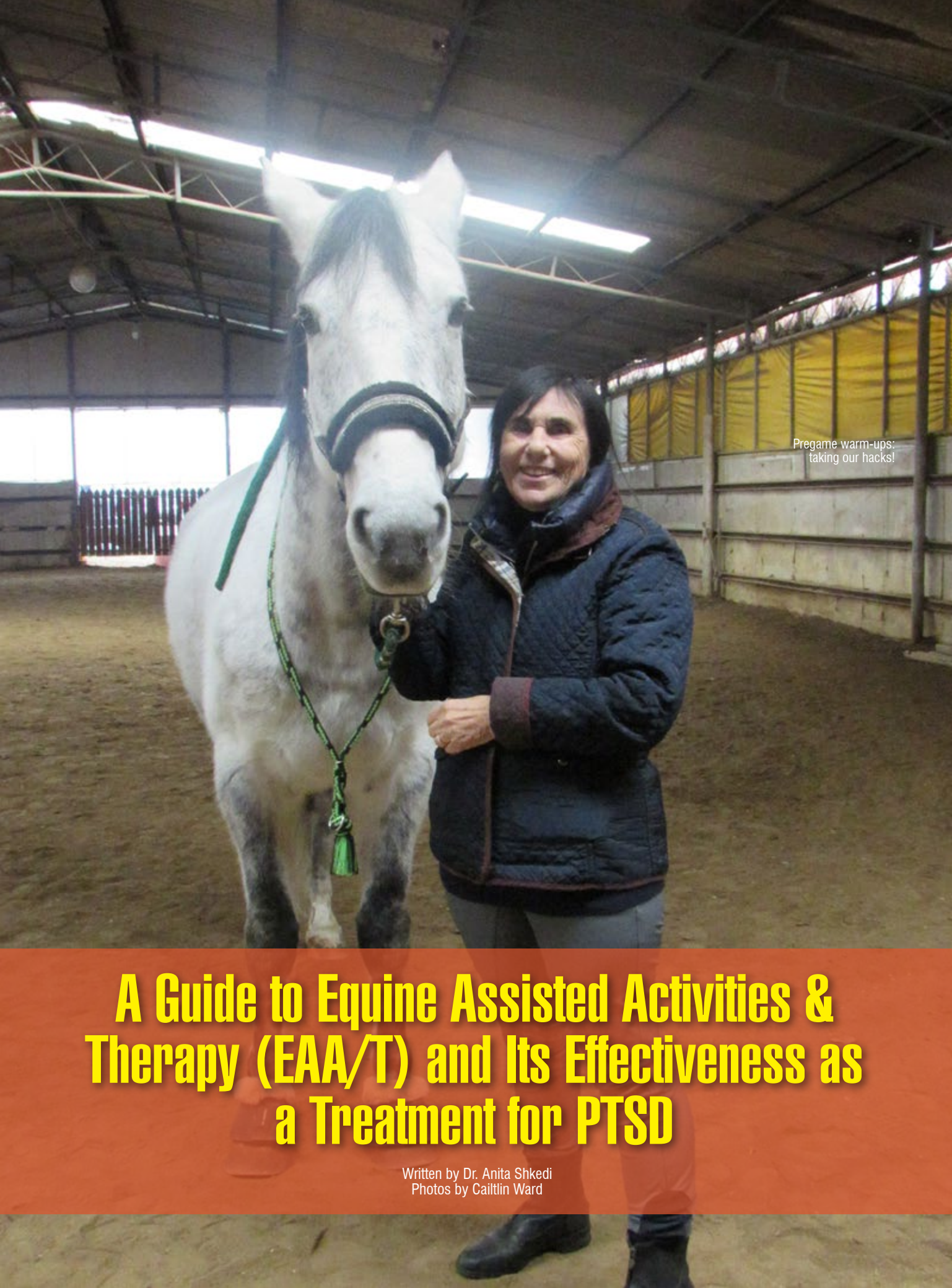




Pregame warm-ups:
taking our hacks!

A Guide to Equine Assisted Activities & Therapy (EAA/T) and Its Effectiveness as a Treatment for PTSD

Written by Dr. Anita Shkedi
Photos by Caitlin Ward

Dr. Anita Shkedi is a leading authority on Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAA/T). In December 2022, Dr. Shkedi came to the Republic of Korea to provide an Equine Therapy lecture series and workshop in collaboration with Grace Stables, American Red Cross, and Wounded Warrior. In this essay, Dr. Shkedi explains the effectiveness of EAA/T, the intentional matching of horse and person, and the design of the sessions.



For over three decades I have seen magnificent horses respond and react to human contact in a way that has changed people's lives. Whatever the chosen type of equine connection, activities on the ground or actual horseback riding, they quickly become planned interactional experiences helping individuals develop awareness of their own needs and how they should care for others. From these interactions a person becomes the master of self and their environment.

Like many small children, I had wished for a pony and filled my head with all sorts of imaginary dreams about myself and riding. I remember one of my dreams, where I jumped onto the back of a pony and took hold of the mane to gallop across an open space. My hair would be flying, my heart pounding and my face was smiling. As I grew older, I was able to become a horse owner, competitive rider and fulfill my dreams. Without words, the magnificent horse alerted emotions, and gave me motor

commands that alerted my neural mechanisms giving me a sense of self, my body, and the movement of my limbs. My dreams became my experience and eventually my life's work. It was my fortune to be able to take my dreams and pleasure to help others experience the sensations and joy I felt through connecting and bonding with horses.

My career began in Britain where I worked as a registered nurse for ten years and specialized in pediatrics and obstetrics, and then for a further ten years as a health visitor. During those manifestations of human challenges, I was able to parallel this para-medical career—which was filled with curious times—and a solid theoretical and practical understanding of pathologies, with my passion for horses and success as an equestrian. Gathering my knowledge, I realized that I could impact the lives of many people with disabilities. Integrating medical knowledge, education, and equestrian skills, I have been able to work as an Equine Assisted Activities and Therapy (EAA/T) practitioner for

people with health conditions or impairments.

In 1985, after moving from Britain to Israel, I introduced the treatment modality Therapeutic Riding (TR) for people with mental and physical impairments. TR is the conventional name for EAA/T that includes both horseback riding and some form of groundwork. As an EAA/T practitioner, I help people cope with real-life issues through the companionship of horses. During three decades of practice, I have established programs aimed at rehabilitating individuals who have experienced trauma, learners with disabilities, and children with severe disabilities in an EAA/T setting.

I came to the Republic of Korea to pass on my knowledge to as many people as possible so that more veterans and people suffering trauma can benefit from EAA/T. The workshop I led at Grace Stables and on USAG Humphreys was designed to explain and demonstrate how EAA/T is excellent for treating those suffering from symptoms

of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I began with an explanation of PTSD and how horses can positively impact the lives of veterans as well as those who were traumatized through sexual assault. I followed the explanation with a live demonstration at Grace Stables, which showed the value of a human-horse connection, and how this can begin



healing the mind, body, and soul.

The workshop was for all interested participants, which included medical professionals, paramedics, EAA/T practitioners, trauma victims, veterans, military family members, other military personnel, and anyone interested in learning more about horses and how they can benefit the lives of those suffering from PTSD.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) depending on individual situation, is a term that is now universally recognized but poorly understood. *(For this article I will*

only use the term PTSD). Globally we are continually learning more about PTSD and how people can acquire symptoms.

PTSD is a stressor-related disorder caused by a debilitating trauma and is challenging to treat. Symptoms can arise from exposure to any dangerous, or life-threatening situations, natural

disasters, acts of war, terror attacks, the shock of death and/or injuries. Forced traumatic lifestyles, non-accidental physical and/or emotional injury, rape, assault, and/or abuse also cause PTSD. People who have been victims of random agonizing traumatic attacks at any time in their life, or have been bullied in school, or have experienced work-related harassment, can be left with scars in the mind, which often develop into full blown chronic PTSD. They have recurrent unwanted intrusive recollections when exposed to internal and external events, which can be visual flashbacks that can cause intense somatic pain anywhere in the body. Individuals with PTSD can feel ter-

minally alone even when surrounded by people. They often develop a deep fear of trust and are unable to manage intense ranges of emotions going from hyper-vigilance to numbness. The result is that they avoid people, places, or activities. They lose faith and feel hurt, and for some they feel their childhood needs have not been met. PTSD can leave some yearning for help and feeling hopeless. They armor themselves with tense muscles and pain, or divide the mind causing disassociation, and for some the only solution is suicide.

Today, PTSD is a growing public health problem and is a predictor of many other health problems like obesity, anorexia, physical pains, lack of movement, diabetes, alcoholism, substance abuse, and excessive gambling. It has been estimated that PTSD costs our global society billions of dollars, especially when the costs include psychiatric and nonpsychiatric medical treatments, prescription drug costs, indirect workplace costs, and mortality costs. Besides the thousands of veterans who have PTSD globally, there are many millions of people who have been victims of random agonizing traumatic attacks at any time in their life or have experienced catastrophic trauma that causes PTSD. The causes of PTSD, recent conflicts and the numbers of people who have post traumatic symptoms is causing much debate about the reasons for the rise in the number of reported cases, the severity of the symptoms, and who is more likely to become afflicted. Medical health specialists and researchers are trying to establish the reason why so many veteran soldiers develop symptoms of PTSD, and why more than twenty-five

Army veterans commit suicide daily. There is growing evidence that modern missions have added stresses and ethical complexities not noted previously.

To survive and manage PTSD, time and effort must be invested in the process. Actions in opposition to the condition itself are necessary. To support those with symptoms of PTSD, chosen therapies must help a person feel that they can move forward from their static mental and physical state. To defeat the endless loop of painful survival, therapy must provide a constructive process that can guide a person out of their negative state. EAA/T has shown that it can move someone with PTSD forward on the path to healing.

What are Equine Assisted Activities and Therapy?

EAA/T is a global term that embraces Therapeutic Riding (TR), therapeutic carriage driving, interactive vaulting, which is like gymnastics on horseback, equine-facilitated learning, educational health activities improving intellectual ability, and hippotherapy. Therapeutic activities are carried out either on the ground or on top of the horse, in the arena, or in or around the stable.

It is a human-horse experience that provides and facilitates a treatment modality that encourages physical, cognitive, and behavioral improvement, including increased strength and flexibility, improved motor skills, promotion of speech and cognitive reasoning, as well as building relationships and social skills.

EAA/T builds on human-horse connections, and the bond requires



Sarah Shechner-McNight and Dr. Shkedi at Grace Stables



Equine Assisted Activities & Therapy

some understanding of our senses. Without our senses we would be blind and deaf to our world. Our senses give us information about our personal world. They detect changes in our body and are the physical means by which all living things see, hear, smell, taste and touch. They react and interact with the horse. Horses are large tactile moving surfaces containing countless receptors that are constantly stimulated by everything they come into contact with, including the rider. The horse becomes a sensory stimulator for the rider.

EAA/T provides specially structured instructional techniques, which facilitate learning skills by carrying out motivating tasks and activities with a horse. EAA/T offers the contact and controlled opportunities for people living with challenges to experience responsibility, independence, self-regulation and control, and task completion, which improve self-management, negotiation and team awareness, self-image, self-esteem, and self-awareness.

EAA/T can positively challenge human physical abilities through the horse's rhythmic three-dimensional movement that simulates the pattern of the human walk. When sitting astride a walking horse, its rhythmic movement positively influences one's posture, improving balance, equilibrium body, special awareness, and coordination.

What are Equine Assisted Activities for PTSD?

For people who have experienced trauma, given the appropriate amount of time, the horse can reach the core of problems by shifting energetic patterns that keep destructive emotions, physical symptoms, life-depleting habits, and negative thoughts entrenched.

PTSD is a difficult condition to treat and heal and is often misunderstood and difficult to manage. It is increasingly evident that horses, with whom we have had a relationship from ancient times, are able to provide holistic energetic healing that addresses the human mind, body, and soul as an integrated unit, which is known to be more successful than treating any of these levels separately.

Practitioners partnering with the horse leverage the human-horse connection to reduce PTSD symptoms and find that EAA/T, through

emotions and fears, and that doors are being opened for new trusting interpersonal relationships with family, friends, and spouses. Over a period of time, a person learns more about themselves and how to manage their PTSD symptoms not only at the horse farm but in all other environments.

I recommend EAA/T as a treatment because I remain convinced that PTSD requires more than traditional psychotherapy and medicine to obtain enduring positive results. It requires a treatment like EAA/T, a non-invasive intervention



groundwork and horseback riding activities, specifically empowers and motivates sufferers, improving their quality of life. EAA/T is a task-oriented treatment that takes place in a normal non-threatening environment and can provide outdoor activities where a person can engage positively with a horse. These activities diminish emotional numbness and normalize any negative arousal state, allowing for a new sense of belonging. During EAA/T sessions, individuals experience reduced tension, restlessness, and anxiety attacks. They start to feel that they are again in control of residual

to take place in a non-threatening environment. The method provides both prevention and an integrated rehabilitation experience for those individuals who suffer over an extended period.

EAA/T is a broad-scale holistic therapy that builds strong connections while reducing or eliminating most of the manifestations that are intricately interlaced in stress-related disorders. For many, the activities are new and different. Decoding how to take care, comfort and support a horse requires learning new skills and knowledge. This emboldens individuals who learn

during the process how to also manage themselves. Acquiring new knowledge and skills is a positive start to releasing mental and physical confinement, and building new and stronger lasting connections, which are all important for the healing process. New doors and pathways to realities appear for the sufferer. EAA/T is an extraordinary technique that not only establishes a commitment to caring for a horse, but also shows the individual how to heal their mind, body, and soul all at the same time.

The EAA/T Practitioner

An EAA/T practitioner is a name that encompasses all the different naming conventions for therapeutic riding instructors, and medical and para-medical specialists who partner with horses to carry out EAA/T. EAA/T practitioners must be qualified or registered to practice their occupation. EAA/T practitioners are involved in repetitive practice to continuously hone their skills.

The overarching goal of an EAA/T practitioner is to help a person with PTSD move from their static mental and physical state, to be able to consider a future. To provide new learning (blue print) skills and transferable skills that can be used in other environments especially at home and with other members of the family.

The practitioner must be able to carry out the following:

- Know about self, and why you want to teach EAA/T
- Consistently prepare EAA/T sessions designed specifically for each client
- Be a role model: behave in a manner that models appropriate practices in an equestrian center
- Wear professional riding gear
- Know who the client is and what

their concerns are

- Build a relationship with the client
- Act in a professional manner and assume responsibility for the client's riding program, the ride and safety
- Maintain ethics, and core values, be conscientious of personal conduct
- Be a resource for the client, i.e. have an understanding and knowledge about the subjects you are teaching
- Be a motivator
- Be a good listener
- Be a good observer
- Be objective
- Give immediate feedback
- Be supportive towards your clients and families in accordance with the policy of where you are working, i.e. if your center does not allow you to speak with your clients' families, you will not be able to do so

The Design of an EAA/T Program: Matching Horse and Person

Both humans and horses have different physical and psychological characteristics, patterns of thinking, feelings and behaviors. Matching a horse and a person requires knowledge of an individual's personality and personal traits as well as the horse's individual traits. Like humans, horse traits are inherited and, or, influenced by early learning and socialization. It is best to partner with a domesticated horse that has had the opportunity to receive education and bonding from the mother horse, and in a natural surrounding where the mare can teach the foal how to live and socialize in the group. If horses have had this opportunity and have grown up as mentally secure horses, then they are more capable of successfully bonding or pairing with a human in

the often-restricted environment of an EAA/T center.

To set up an effective human-horse bond, practitioners must consider personality traits and nuances that may restrict a person's or a horse's ability to make social connections. Traits that manufacture high levels of stress and irritability, or that interfere with resilience, make an individual more vulnerable to having their situation exacerbated, causing them to find it much harder to bond and establish connections.

Effectively matching a horse with a person with PTSD requires more than knowing an individual's PTSD symptomology, especially as there are five types of post-traumatic stress disorder: Normal Stress Response, Acute Stress Disorder, Uncomplicated PTSD, Complex PTSD, and Comorbid PTSD. It is important to understand the person's symptoms and manifestations of their specific PTSD as well as their mood on the day of the equine therapy or activity. The practitioner can then provide the best activity for the person on that day.

PTSD, like other psychopathologies, has symptoms that are causally connected through a myriad of biological, psychological, and societal mechanisms. Personality traits such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism will impact an individual's medical picture and PTSD symptoms. Those traits that restrict openness, and the desire to try or succeed, will impact the performance of any new activity and the speed and type of recovery. Frustration, guilt, and depression intensify neuroses exhibited after the trauma, which make everyday decisions difficult for an individual to assume responsibility for in any major area of their life. In this situ-

ation, human-horse bonding only succeeds when the practitioner and the horse transfer an excessive amount of reassurance.

Types of EAA/T Sessions

The EAA/T session is planned and designed to foster wellness by integrating traditional calming, relaxed breathing activities, with horse care and management, and balancing positive thoughts with calming activities and human-horse bonding, which achieves a deep level of self-healing and awareness. EAA/T helps an individual conceptualize problems taking place in their daily life, especially with family, friends, study and/or work. Each session is planned to help an individual maintain positive mental health, while preventing further illness and if possible, relapses.

As previously stated, all sessions are holistic and healing as they are taking a psycho-social-spiritual approach to treatment, blending traditional horse care and management and even horse mastership with complementary and alternative healing methodology. They focus on the person, with the main goal being removal of the “stuck” state and new positive awareness of self as well as experiencing a human-horse bond. Once achieved, the person is no longer static mentally and physically; they are able to understand how they can transfer their new awareness and positivity to their home environment and/or work experience.

Activities: Groundwork, Arena Riding, and The Trail

EAA/T utilizes various methods and activities to achieve the goal of healing. One method may be

groundwork, which is a valuable tool for helping clients understand themselves and learn to cope with their real-life issues. During groundwork sessions, individuals learn to halter, lead, groom, and wash the horse as well as general horse care. Individuals will learn to identify and talk about the characteristics of their horse and some herd behaviors. They will learn to have a leading role in round pen situations and find that they can regain power and control as well as a new sense of love and comfort.

An individual with PTSD can build trust and motivation from groundwork techniques that are known for human-horse bonding. They often are overwhelmed by the thoughts they are shuttling in their mind that shift between their internal and external world. Groundwork helps improve focus, and the ability to focus on a particular human-horse situation. It helps a person realize that the thoughts they were having often interfere with focus. When the EAA/T practitioner gives the person a visually motivating experience, it encourages positive self-talk and motivation. Groundwork is designed for positive experiences that require much concentration from a client (See *Horses Heal PTSD: Walking New Paths*, Shkedi, page 100 for examples of positive emotional connections during groundwork sessions).

Another method is horseback riding that is tailored to meet a veteran’s needs and treatment level. Riding a horse in a safe environment and breathing deeply can reduce anxiety attacks caused by flashbacks and other PTSD stressors. After being inactive for a long time, veterans find that the three-dimensional movement of

the horse’s walk dissipates mental and physical health issues, like pain, headaches, stomach aches and sexual dysfunction. Emotional numbness and hyper-arousal are normalized, giving space for motivation and the desire for more. Deeper breathing sends a message to the brain to be calm and relax. This message is returned to the person’s body, lowering the heart rate and blood pressure and reduces tension and stress.

The EAA/T method of horseback riding is positive, creative and motivating. Sitting astride a horse the session requires fast automatic thinking that is emotional and instinctive, which immediately reawakens the mind, body, and soul. Sitting on top of a huge tactile moving surface, the person’s senses react and interact with the horse. The body learns to coordinate with the movement, and the session is filled with motivation and commitment as the individual attempts to learn new tasks. Learning new horseback riding skills requires fast judgment, which is enabled through positive physical, psychological, social, and educational experiences.

All EAA/T methods activate a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, and co-operation, and rebuild concentration and focus. They are designed to improve self-image, confidence, and assertiveness. A veteran starts to feel that they can face their stressors and the mistrust and anxiety that they are feeling. They start to understand who they are and how they should manage themselves sufficiently to feel once again free and independent. The task of riding a horse introduces the rider to a more realistic existence while diverting attention from

mental and physical stressors and anxieties. It teaches relaxation and the ability to self-correct. It helps them to favor fast responses and adaptability rather than the fixed antagonistic behavior patterns like avoidance, emotional numbness, and even hyper-arousal.

The Influence of PTSD on Family Life

Trauma survivors often have trouble maintaining their close family relationships or friendships. Often their symptoms cause poor family functioning, marital prob-



lems, and parenting problems. It is not uncommon to see both the sufferer and spouse become more hostile and psychologically abusive, with less acceptance and positive moods. Issues of trust, closeness, communication, and the lack of ability to problem solve will affect the way the survivor acts with other members of the family and the community at large. It will affect how spouses in such a family get along with each other. One spouse with PTSD affects the mental health of the partner and other members of the family. A spouse of a veteran

with PTSD can feel isolated, alienated and frustrated from the inability to work through family problems and help his or her partner. They might feel hurt or helpless because their spouse has not been able to get over the trauma, which leaves them feeling angry or distant toward the suffering spouse.

Children in the family might also suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms that include neuroticism and traumatization. Some might experience negative effects of their situation, causing anger, anxiety, self-con-

sciousness, irritability, emotional instability, and depression. They might even present delinquent and aggressive behaviors, attention deficits and problems in social relations. Others have posttraumatic stress reactions, symptoms of intrusion and avoidance as well as significantly higher levels of stress compared to children in a family without PTSD. Children in a family where a parent has PTSD can demonstrate an increase in behavioral problems such as withdrawal, somatic complaints, meaning they focus and internalize excessive

thoughts, feelings and behaviors related to their physical symptoms, such as pain, weakness, or shortness of breath, to a level that results in major distress and/or problems functioning.

EAA/T for The Family

Equine Assisted Activities and Therapy (EAA/T) is an opportunity for intergenerational healing for families that are suffering from multigenerational trauma. Multi-generational trauma can be defined as trauma that gets passed down from those who directly experience an incident to subsequent generations.

An EAA/T safe environment provides horse activities that engender care and relationship building with a horse and others. Partnering with horses is a profoundly effective physical, psychological, and meta-physical therapy that has long-lasting results for all the family. Bonding with the horses becomes a life altering experience, allowing a person the possibility of, once again, setting goals, pursuing life dreams and wishes, and rebuilding relationships. Families suffering from the symptoms of PTSD can relieve anxieties, which are deeply rooted at the emotional and ethereal level, rebuilding mindfulness, and spirituality. They can free themselves of unwanted thoughts and emotions, as new energy is released, which is extremely motivating, and provides a renewed sense of control and fulfillment.

Using a specific EAA/T model of treatment, it is possible to reframe and redefine the PTSD parental role. It can help them find new positive strength to manage the sufferer’s unresolved trauma and situation so

that they are able to regain their role as nurturer and supporter of their family. EAA/T can guide those suffering from PTSD and become one of the best emotional and mental health supports for spouses and their children.

Focus of EAA/T for the Family

EAA/T for the family focuses on the entire family in order to determine, explore and address their needs. It is the opportunity for a spouse with PTSD to understand their role in family life. They will be guided by first examining the role they play in adult relationships as an individual, a spouse, a worker, a consumer, a community member, and as a parent. In a normal family setting, partners would demonstrate empathy, work as a team, acquire knowledge, and communicate effectively. They would take care of their children's basic needs, such as food, medical care, shelter, clothing, etc., as well as give love, attention, understanding, acceptance, time and support.

For the children, connecting and bonding with horses in a positive way provides an opportunity to reduce any neuroticism, traumatization, and PTSD symptoms, and perhaps for the first time replace these traits and feelings with a sense of safety, trust and self-control.

For parents with or without PTSD symptoms, interacting with horses can be awesome. In their current state of health framed by their PTSD, they have difficulty in reducing stressors, and controlling or freeing themselves of unwanted thoughts and emotions. In the presence of the horse the release of new energy is extremely motivating and healing.

Role playing in the horse envi-

ronment, taking care of a horse, and making sure they remain fit and healthy, provides skills and positive behaviors that can be practiced and used to help individuals with PTSD understand their role within the family. Nurturing and supporting the horse via horse care and management teaches a person to learn, listen and observe. Horses are always in the present, and in their company one has to be attentive and available to all their needs. To achieve this level of attention and communication, a new skill is learned that is extremely useful. When transferred into a home environment, individuals with PTSD restore their ability to listen to their families, be patient, and enjoy their company. The individual with PTSD becomes able to show an interest in their spouse and children, and their activities, and encourage them to pursue their passions. Partnering with horses can transform thoughts into actions, opening doors for communication and love within the family.

In Conclusion

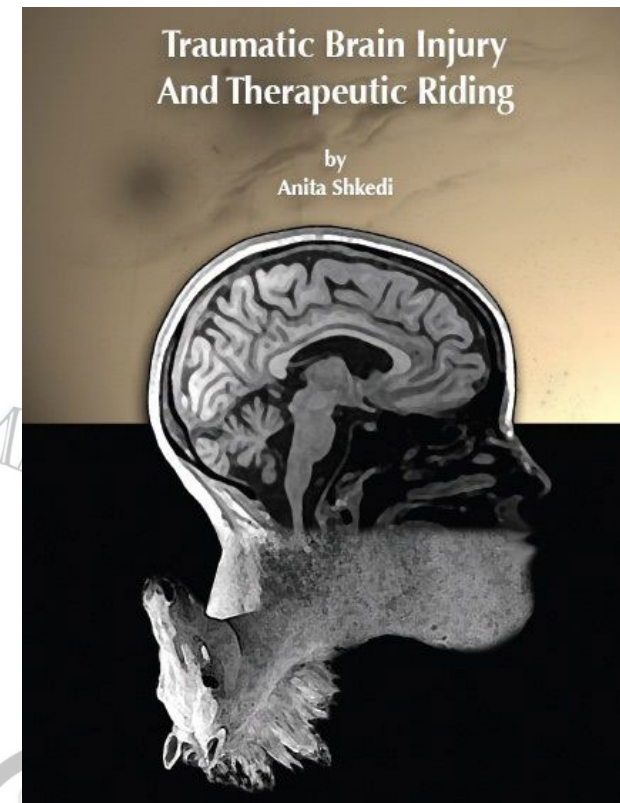
Today, the world is becoming more aware of the realization that horses, with whom we have had a relationship from ancient times, are able to provide holistic energetic healing, and can address the human mind, body and soul as an integrated unit, which is known to be more successful than treating any of these levels separately. In my work, I have seen how the horse can reach the core of problems by shifting energetic patterns that keep destructive emotions, physical symptoms, and life-depleting habits and negative thoughts in place.

For individuals with PTSD, who have difficulty in reducing stressors, and controlling and even freeing themselves of unwanted thoughts and emotions, the release of new energy is extremely motivating, providing a renewed sense of control and fulfillment. In the company of horses, individuals with PTSD can relieve anxieties, which are deeply rooted at the emotional and ethereal level, rebuilding mindfulness, spirituality, and inner peace. Bonding with the horses becomes a life altering experience, allowing a person the possibility of, once again, setting goals, pursuing life dreams and wishes, and rebuilding relationships.

Books by Dr. Anita Shkedi

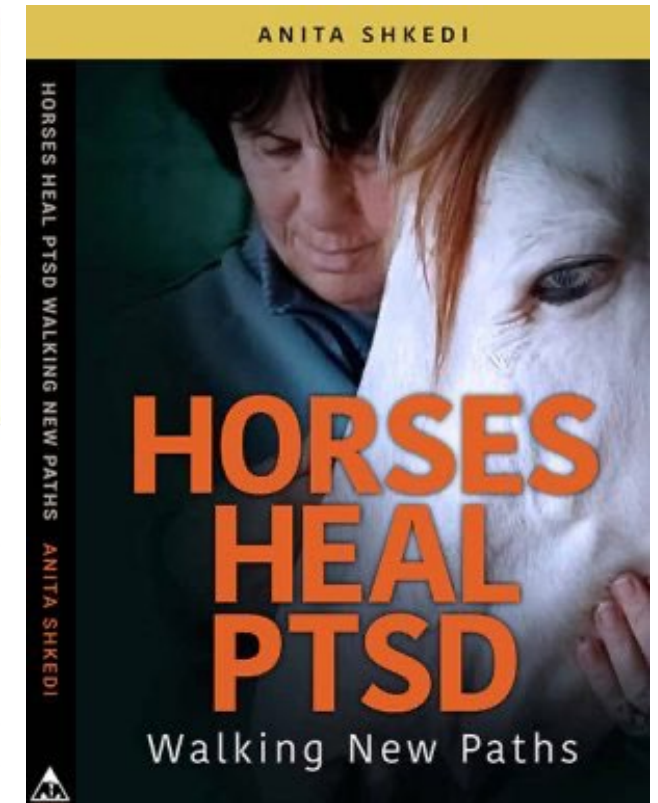
Traumatic Brain Injury and Therapeutic Riding (2012) documents an effective form of therapy for those suffering from post-traumatic brain injuries. It lays out how the unique properties of the horse are instrumental in the recovery of psychologically and physically impaired riders. It also aims to guide the reader towards a more in depth understanding of TBI, brain plasticity, and the complexities of being a person suffering from TBI. This book is an extremely useful tool for EAA/T practitioners, paramedical therapists, and all those who are interested in the topic.

Horses Heal PTSD: Walking New Paths (2022) addresses the power of the horse to heal this often misunderstood and difficult to treat condition. It will deepen the reader's knowledge of PTSD and demonstrate how partnering with horses is a profoundly effective physical, psychological, and meta-physical therapy that has long-lasting results.



Dr. Anita Shkedi founded *Therapeutic Horseback Riding in Israel* in 1985 and developed Israel's official diploma curriculum for therapeutic horseback riding at the Nat Holman School of Coaches at the Wingate Institute of Physical Education in 1988, which became the springboard for multiple other related therapeutic studies. She has a Doctorate in Education specializing in curriculum building for EAA/T. She lectures and consults worldwide in the areas of equine assisted activities and therapies, PTSD, and traumatic brain injuries, and provides clinics and workshops through her new website, anitashkedi.com. In 2015, the author received an Award of Excellence from Israel's prestigious Wingate Institute and is in the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame for her contribution to therapeutic horseback riding.

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Tribute to Jonathan, by Dr. Anita Shkedi

Much of my work with veterans is connected to the memory of my late son Jonathan.

Jonathan, who was almost twenty years old, died in July 1993. Jonathan was a kind and gentle person who was gifted with high intelligence and physical strength. Academically he was a real achiever, he designed his first computer program in the last year of high school. His physical prowess culminated in him achieving track running records and becoming Israel's cycling champion.

I loved my son Jonathan, and I find it extremely painful to say that Jonathan died during active service for the State of Israel. Jonathan joined the Israeli Army and served his country with pride and enthusiasm. He died after being mortally wounded on a rescue mission in the Bekar Valley in Lebanon. He was a fighter, sniper and was recognized for his bravery. I gave the State of Israel my most precious possession...Jonathan. Always leading from the front, he sat on the outside of his armored vehicle with his guns ready to protect his fellow soldiers inside the vehicle. In this position he was mortally wounded from a bomb that landed next to his vehicle, and three weeks later died from his traumatic brain injuries.

When your son dies, a part of you dies with him. I was left with a choice, either to stay at home, or go back to work and try to cope with the most terrible pain by dedicating the rest of my life to his memory. My child was remarkable, he proved it during his army service, he dedicated himself to fighting for Israel, always supporting his fellow soldiers to finally be mortally wounded on a rescue mission.

Off duty, on his very few weekends back at home he would visit his officer from his unit who had been severely wounded and left with quadriplegia. Jonathan asked me to help in his rehabilitation.

Knowing what Jonathan would have wanted, eight days after his death I went back to work at my therapeutic riding center. On that day, a woman came into the office with her son, a veteran who had been in an ambush. He had a severe traumatic brain injury; she said both her sons had now been injured. It was at that moment that I decided to dedicate my life to helping soldiers returning damaged from the horrors of war. Jonathan remains with me forever.