

CHAPTER 4

Sharing Minds – Equine-Human Intersubjectivity in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

An Outline to a Theoretical Framework

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When two or more minds meet and share experiences something new is created – co-created – and growth becomes possible. When a subject interacts with one or several other subjects, the subject adds his own subjectivity and thereby impacts the experience of all the subjects that take part in the interaction. This is the core of intersubjectivity theory.

In this chapter I am outlining a theory of intersubjectivity that examines horse-human interactions in equine assisted psychotherapy. The theory is based on cognitive science research and theories on intersubjectivity used in psychology, as well as on practical applications of intersubjectivity. With a theoretical framework I find it easier to get closer to an answer to the question why including horses in psychotherapy is so effective. I am, in this chapter, applying the core of the theory of intersubjectivity on human-horse interaction in EAP to answer questions like “What happens between horses and humans in EAP? What is this interaction about? Why is it sometimes better for a client to interact with a horse instead of a human? What is it in the interaction between humans and horses in EAP that is so effective? Why is it so effective? How does the horse know what to do? What is it that the horse does? What are the benefits for the client (and the therapist) when a horse is added to the therapeutic setting?”

I am also discussing why it is important to have an equine specialist working side by side with the therapist in EAP and what EAP can be for the horse.

I did not invent the theory of intersubjectivity; it is widely used and maybe most known in research describing what goes on between parents, mostly mothers, and infants as well as between offspring of other primates (and other animals) and their mothers and other caretakers. It is also used to describe interactions between subjects in general, and specifically interactions involving individuals with ASD and different kinds of attachment and developmental disorders. Intersubjectivity also plays a prominent role and is used in intersubjective (and relational) psychotherapy /psychoanalysis. Intersubjective psychotherapy formulates that all interactions must be considered contextually; that all interactions between the client and therapist or between the child and parent are not to be seen as separate from each other, but always must be considered as mutually influencing each other. It is a dynamic system theory that is founded on the notion that subjectivity informs everything we do (Buirski & Haglund, 2001). What all theories of intersubjectivity have in common is that they describe basic phenomena going on in different kinds of relationships; basic, but not simple. It describes how we experience an emotional engagement with both social partners and/or objects and how the outcomes from these socio-emotional engagements impact our socio-emotional cognition, both intra- and inter-personal (Bard, 2017). What I do in this chapter is to apply the theory of intersubjectivity to the relationship between horse and client. Also, I am not the first one to do this; I build and expand on Sheldon Siporin's proposal to use intersubjectivity as a theoretical framework to explain what is going on in EAP (Siporin, 2012).

Asking the question of what is going on in EAP will not yield one simple answer. It cannot be reduced to one explanation, like the horse's ability to read body language, due to him being a flight animal, or the mirror neuron (system) theory (Hickok, 2014). These kinds of answers will give us an undifferentiated and a too simplistic answer. EAP gives room for complex interaction with meanings on many levels. To answer what is going on warrants complex answers. So even if the theory of intersubjectivity looks

deceptively simple, it builds on research and knowledge from several academic fields and from many practitioners' experiences. It will be able to incorporate the complexities. In this chapter I will draw the outlines of a theoretical framework in EAP, based on intersubjectivity theory and give examples of how it can be used to understand what goes on between clients and horses in EAP.

We need to start connecting the dots between what we already know about what is going on in EAP, and how we can start asking the questions necessary to find more in-depth answers and expand our knowledge and understanding further. For this we need a common theoretical framework, which can form a basis for further research not only to serve the fast-growing field of EAP and its clients, but also for everybody involved in the field to be able to discuss more easily and to exchange knowledge and ideas.

To be able to use the presence of a horse to its full potential in EAP, intersubjectivity needs to be explored. To explore what intersubjectivity theory can explain means we must assume that the horse is as much a subject as the humans participating (which includes client, therapist and equine specialist) (Buirski & Haglund, 2001). This means deep knowledge of both humans and horses is necessary. Hence I am always pointing out the necessity of having an equine specialist present at all times during EAP sessions.

1. Intersubjectivity, Psychotherapy, and Horse-Human Interaction

Nonverbal communication, conscious or not, is important in all therapies, even strictly talk therapies, as is the relationship between client and therapist. This relationship has been compared to the relationship between infant and parent (often mother). Between an infant and a mother (also in non-human animals), coordinated joint engagement takes place, with gestural behaviors, body orientation, visual attention and facial and body expressions. It is a reciprocal interaction with turn-taking and includes similarity and symmetry in behavior (but also sometimes asymmetry and compensatory actions (Brinck, 2017). The infant expresses his emotions by intensity, timing, and shape which are communicated with rhythmic patterns, vocal tones, and behavioral forcefulness (Siporin, 2012).

Expressing oneself with rhythmicality, vocality and behavior is also the language of the horse. So the way of communicating between mother and infant, and horse and client, is similar. This non-verbal way of communicating is present in all communication between individuals, but the older we humans get, the more unaware we usually become of it. The exception is when we interact with infants. Then we sometimes use it a bit more consciously, as we often also do with animals, knowing that neither of them use verbal language. This non-verbal way of communicating is also used, consciously and unconsciously, by the therapist in both working on understanding and showing understanding of the client, and in conveying, for example, calmness or safety to the client. This often implicit communication between client and therapist becomes more explicit between a horse and a client. "It urges expansion of client awareness and may evoke early parent-infant interaction patterns. Thus with the human therapist's careful guidance and interpretations, EAP may promote emotional healing and empathetic growth" (Siporin, 2012).

Intersubjective psychotherapy also stresses that emotional availability is the most central growth-promoting feature. It is important that a good therapist recognizes and shares affective experiences with the client – for growth and change to occur. Equally important is that the therapist shows responsiveness to the client's affective states – that it becomes a sharing of affective states – becomes interaffectivity. This makes the client feel understood (Buirski & Haglund, 2001).

A horse (as well as a good therapist!) never tries "to fix" a client, but accepts everyone as they are. A healthy horse also seems to accept his own feelings and does not try to hide what he feels. In a horse there is a basic congruency between what he feels, shows, and communicates. For a client it can be easier to feel the emotional availability the horse shows, to share affects with the horse and also to feel his responsiveness. Simply because the horse is not a human, his congruency feels trustworthy; and because the way a horse shows interest in a client is not perceived as an emotional threat of any kind. This opening up to the client-horse communication often happens without words and can

be a way of feeling what is talked about in therapy and a help in drawing new emotional conclusions about intersubjective interactions.

If the horse conveys positivity and stability in his subjective way of being, he also helps the client to affirm, regulate, and integrate the effects. The horse will help with emotional regulation, but will also get help to regulate his own emotions, since everyone affects each other in the interaction. A client more easily perceives himself able to respond to the horse's emotions in a way other than he could possibly respond to the therapist's emotions. It becomes a co-regulation, a mutual and interactive regulation between horse and client which also, of course, can include or be transferred to both therapist and equine specialist.

According to intersubjective theory in psychotherapy, emotions are the primary organizer of experiences; the way an individual organizes his experiences and the principles he develops to make sense of those experiences forms his subjective world (Buirski & Haglund, 2001). Interacting with a horse to feel emotions without fearing being judged would help the client reorganize and question the existing organization of his experiences and the conclusions he has drawn about himself from them. The interaction with the horse will give the client a better understanding of himself and open up the possibility to change and to re-organize his experiences. It will also change the expectations he has of relationships and his way of relating. Together with the horse, the client has the possibility to try out new ways of relating, feeling safe to do so.

Further, this theory states that there can be no subjectivity without intersubjectivity. All individuals in an interaction affect each other. So in EAP there are also more options for growth. There is a therapist present, an equine specialist and one or several horses, and one or several clients. All present are subjects; individuals, with their own personalities, history etc., and it matters who everyone is. Everyone brings in his uniqueness to the interaction. Who is present creates the specific context. And, for the client(s), everyone present becomes potential collaborators in the joint venture of change and understanding. Therapy is about making sense together. By adding horses to therapy you multiply everything from speed, effect, depth, possibilities, multilevel

work, and the feeling of safety. For many clients it will feel safer to interact, at least in the beginning of the therapy, with a horse, or to let the horse act as a mediator between himself and the therapist.

Equine assisted psychotherapy enlarges psychotherapy. It does not change it into something else, but it adds new tools, perspectives and possibilities. Potentially, it reaches clients that otherwise would not be reachable with psychotherapy.

2. Expanding the Intersubjectivity Theory – Mechanisms and Principles

The expanded intersubjectivity theory for EAP is based on the following assumptions:

- We humans have more in common with horses than what sets us apart from an emotional and social point of view. The similarities play the more important role, but the differences are also important. Species specific knowledge as well as knowledge of horses' and humans' common mammalian background, are vital since we share similar brains and similar neural networks that works in similar ways. We have similar emotions and similar ways of reacting. We need to be acutely aware of these similarities and differences, to be able to use them in EAP and ethically to let the horse be part of this work. In EAP we need to be extra aware of our own glasses. Through which lenses are we looking at the horse and his interaction with humans? Otherwise we will see similarities where there are none, and differences where there are none; and draw the wrong conclusions.
- A horse is a subject and not an object. To be able to facilitate therapy for a client, the horse needs to be seen as a subject. This has also ethical implications concerning on what grounds and how a horse participates in EAP. "Animals are self-aware, unified subjects of a mental life" (Rowland, 2017). What goes on between a horse and a human is intersubjective inter/exchange, a sharing of experiences. The subjectivity and the intersubjectivity is in focus; the interaction that takes place between the subjects and what is then co-created in this space.

- All subjects strive to attach, to connect. To be able to establish functioning relationships, a person needs to be able to attach securely to another human being; or, lacking a secure human, to or via, for example, a horse. Every individual is striving to connect to another individual, no matter how damaged the ability to attach is, and no matter how dangerous it is perceived by the individual to do so. The strive for connection can take very destructive ways, but is there, none the less. A person's way of attaching or bonding with a social partner is determined by his early experiences (or lack thereof) with intersubjectivity.
- Intersubjectivity forms the basis for communication, for how it is constructed, for how it develops and for how it takes place. It is the basis for how a common ground for communication is established and maintained. It describes how we communicate non-verbally, how we use mental imagery, how language develops and how metaphors shape our ways of communicating. Intersubjective sharing with a horse is immediate and external to language. It can be a corrective communicative experience that helps a client develop a deeper understanding of communication, a better way of communicating, and an emotionally richer language.
- We are all social beings, who practice and take part in social learning to become socially cognitive beings able to interact with each other, within the society, culture, and context in which we live. Social learning can be divided into sub-categories of imitation, mimicry, emulation, the chameleon affect, joint attention, gaze following, understanding intention, and so forth. Intersubjectivity starts with a coordinated joint engagement and leads through different socio-emotional experiences to social learning, and is critical for our development into intentional beings.
- Intersubjectivity feeds empathy. It is only when we truly see "the other" that we can be truly empathetic. This goes for all kinds of empathy such as between humans and between a human and a horse. When you meet another human, you see him as having a mind, you do not see him merely as a body. This is the core of intersubjectivity; you choose to see a fellow human being as having a mind, you do not ask for proof (Aaltola, 2013). You can do the same with a horse. Through intersubjectivity you learn about minds. As humans we

are predisposed to look for mindedness by our way of anthropomorphizing. Anthropomorphism is a dually edged sword. Humans look for minds similar to our own everywhere, even where there are no human minds. We humanize our world. As humans we can use our anthropomorphism to promote empathy, or we can use it to promote superiority, objectification, instrumentalization, and dehumanization (Waytz et al., 2010). If we encourage our clients to anthropomorphize in EAP it is vital that we as practitioners still hold species specific differences in our minds, to protect the horse's emotional safety. An important difference here is to recognize the difference between the anthropomorphism and the subject's true self. Empathy, in its turn, is linked to moral awareness.

- Intersubjectivity is also a place/space that comes into existence between two (or more) subjects; a creation that is the shared experience. That makes two (or more) minds at certain moments become a consciousness beyond one mind, to become one shared mind, a "we" (Aatola, 2013, Buirski et Haglund, 2001). In this space the categories between "I" and "the other" (or between human and horse) open up and change. This is where trust and mutual attunement can grow. What is important in this space is how you relate to others. Intersubjectivity marks an openness to others (horses as humans). This experience is often non-lingual and non-analytical and enhances our ability to reconfigure our understanding of ourselves and others (Aatola, 2013) This intersubjective space is applicable to all the relationships between participants in EAP; horse-client, therapist-client, therapist-equine specialist, and so on.

The theory of intersubjectivity also rests on an assumption of dualism, dialog, dynamics, and pendulations. Practiced, it uses similarities and differences, in many different ways and on many levels to facilitate someone to become an "I", see a "you", and take part in a "we", and to know the differences. The self emerges, develops, and differentiates itself in relation to "the other" (and so do a "we", and the understanding of a "you"). A healthy infant has an early ability to discriminate people as distinctly sentient and animated entities in the world. To develop early affective engagement is crucial to a child. These engagements provide the infant with interpersonal experiences encompassing an interplay between similarity and difference, connectedness and differentiation (Brinck, 2017). This is a natural process for everybody involved (parent/caretaker

and child). It occurs spontaneously when everything “works”, develops as it should in early childhood relationships. It can be used consciously, in EAP, when things have “not worked” to repair gaps in socio-emotional cognition and development.

3. The Theory of Intersubjectivity – Clients’ and Horses’ Perspectives

The basic principles in the theory of intersubjectivity in EAP are simple. This is what happens when you meet “the other”, your social partner in EAP. This is what you see in “the other”:

- You see you.
- You see the ones that you have met during your life, as a generalized idea about people or as different people who have been significant to you.
- You see the one you meet, “the other”.
- You see a we – and joined in a we, you together co-create an experience.

Many explanations of what happens in EAP between a client and a horse stop at the first principle – the horse as a mirror, a mere reflection of the client (and his problems). The mimicry, mirroring, imitation, etc., is there, as in all relationships between subjects, but it is not all that is there.

Other explanations focus on the second principle – the importance of the horse as a metaphor for (early) significant relationships in the client’s life. This is also happening, but still does not contain the whole truth of what is going on in EAP.

The third and the fourth principles are often overlooked. The client also meets the horse as a horse, as “the other” in an intersubjective exchange, which then can be transferred to a human as “the other”. As a subject, as “the other”, the horse offers his subjective perspective, all out of his individuality, formed by his experiences from different situations and former meetings, with humans as well as horses as other non-human subjects. You need “the other” to become you. It is worth repeating; there is no subjectivity without intersubjectivity.

The client and the horse also form a “we”. They share an experience, co-create it. And this experience will, in some way, change both of them. In this sharing of experience lies the potential for change, but also in the sheer meeting of “the other”. The client, seeing himself as a reflection and seeing other significant subjects in his life in the horse, is seeing his own patterns. The change occurs in seeing “the other” and creating a shared experience.

All four components are necessary to stimulate growth, re-learning and a re-organization of experiences. All four of the meetings/ways of seeing will take place in good therapy. And all four of them get easier with a horse present. For the horse will either be the primary social partner or will be a (more or less temporary or initial) mediator between the therapist and the client, and the horse will fill in all the roles the client has given to other social partners in his life, based on his life experiences. The horse will be himself, he will be the client and he will be persons from all the client’s former relationships, he will be the sum of the clients belief systems and he will join the client in a “we”. The horse will adjust to what the client needs, that is to what and to whom the client needs to see for the moment. In this the horse will be very flexible. Why is the horse doing this? Because he also gains from the interaction. He, too, develops his competencies in therapy and grows. To thrive, a horse, as any other living being, needs to feel a sense of purpose, which means he strives to interact with his environment to learn more about it, to be able to handle it better, to develop his skills, and to master and to solve the problems he encounters, to meet the future constantly more equipped. He strives not only to master the here and now and take care of momentary needs, but also to broaden his area of competencies. Every animal is a learning animal. In this learning quest, he needs challenges to overcome. It is through these challenges he learns and grows and has a chance to express purpose and to develop his functional competencies. This striving humans and horses have in common – all mammals strive to grow.

We know that a sense of purpose is crucial in humans’ lives. To have a sense of purpose is a basic prerequisite for any human or nonhuman animal’s sense of overall well-being and psychical as well as mental health.

For a horse working in therapeutic settings, being a team member with therapists and equine specialists helping clients to work with their psychological issues is a way for him to gain a sense of purpose.

Challenges in the wild that horses are exposed to include finding food, water, and shelter, evading predators, finding refuge from bad weather, dealing with illnesses and injuries, and handling social interactions. Their natural environment is both complex and ever changing, so horses need to adapt and respond to this. They develop competencies, they gather cognitive and behavioral tools and strategies to meet novel challenges. They need to constantly learn new things, which they do through associative and instrumental learning, inquisitive exploration, social learning, imitation, and so on. They acquire a behavioral flexibility which they apply in solving both environmental as well as social, emotional, or cognitive problems. Horses interact and communicate with both conspecifics as individuals from other species within their home ecosystem, and take part in complex social dynamics and practice observational learning. Problem solving, exploration, and play are important components in obtaining agency and competence. All three of them also affect moods. Exploration and problem solving are also intrinsically rewarding and horses like to meet new environments, explore novel objects and situations if they feel safe enough to do so. Horses need appropriate challenges. If the challenge is too big, he will get scared, have a stress reaction, and not learn anything new. If the challenge is too small, he will lose interest, get bored, and learn nothing new. A horse needs to encounter challenges containing a balanced, useful level of stress – eustress. This puts him into a learning and growth mode and keeps him intensely engaged through focused attention and sustained concentration, leading to a positive mood. He can experience something that can be likened to the human experience of flow. By initiating and maintaining cycles of cognitive and behavioral effort he experience a true meaningful state of being (Bekoff & Pierce, 2017, Bateson & Martin, 2013).

So having purpose makes horses happier and psychologically and physiologically healthier. Play, problem solving, and exploration improve physical endurance and

sensorimotor coordination and increase neural connections – which is the same as to say it helps the horse to develop behavioral plasticity and increase adaptability (Bekoff & Pierce, 2017).

For horses in captivity, one of the biggest challenges they meet in life is – humans.

When a horse develops more understanding of humans, this understanding will provide him with a higher quality of life. In EAP he can learn more about humans, expand on his human competence. This will be a challenge for him and thereby give him more purpose in his life. The things and situations to which we humans expose our horses, as well as the exposure to ourselves as humans, are their main challenge. And since horses are avid learners and are among the most adaptable species on earth, this is what they already are doing; learning about humans to master their everyday life. It is time to recognize that and help them in this learning process. Letting horses participate in EAP is a way to give the horses a safe space in which to grow and learn, being exposed to well-balanced challenges together with learning about humans.

Horses and humans in EAP learn about each other; not necessarily about species specific behavior, but about individuality and subjectivity. And they have intersubjective and shared experiences that enhance both clients' and horses' lives that enrich their lives, extend their competencies and add tools to their tool boxes. That adds to an understanding of themselves and each other. This help both clients and horses to gain and maintain a sense of purpose and to improve their functional competencies.

Participating in EAP provides the horse with meaningful work where both he and the client grow. For humans, as for horses, a life without meaningful work and appropriate challenges is boring and unfulfilling. It leads to suppressed sense of purpose and amounts to poor equine (and human) welfare and well-being.

In modern horse housing facilities, we have to keep our horses in fairly restricted environments. It is hard to give them room and time for play, exploration, and work at the levels they need to live good lives. Little is novel in their everyday life. Many horses sleep away their days, not out of contentment, but out of boredom and lack of challenges;

and in the worst cases, slip into stereotypes and other problematic behaviors. Boredom, depression, and powerlessness (and learned helplessness) lead to increased levels of fear, anxiety and a reduced ability to cope. We know that horses who live in an environment that does not satisfy their needs for movement, social interactions, the possibility to naturally graze and to find themselves shelter, water, and diverse plants – that is, are living in impoverished environments (as most stable options are, if we look at it from a horse's perspective) – heal more slowly and are likely to experience more prolonged periods of pain when sick or injured (Bekoff & Pierce, 2017).

Meeting a diverse range of people, working to solve social interaction problems, to take part in playful activities that contain problem solving and exploration, and to initiate and maintain cognitive and behavioral efforts, as in EAP sessions, improve equine welfare and well-being. For this, equine assisted therapies are perfect.

Since the horse and the client are not meeting each other on their own, but have both a therapist, an expert on human behavior, and an equine specialist, an expert on equine behavior, present all the time to look out for everybody's emotional and physical safety, this potential for growth is a true win-win situation for both client and horse.

Another advantage is that the client will feel and behave more freely towards a horse than a therapist. The therapist will also be freer with a horse present. The experiences in therapy will be less intense and less confrontative, and will reach more deeply than the spoken word, into the body of the client and the horse, to become an experience for both mind and body – and with the help of the therapist and the equine specialist, connect the emotional and the cognitive awareness with each other, in both client and horse.

4. Intersubjectivity in EAP – The Cognitive Framework

EAP is about a (deliberate) sharing of experience (about objects and events). With deliberate I mean that it can, in different ways, be goal directive and intentional. Intersubjectivity can either be dyadic – two subjects interact and share an experience

with each other, then the experience concerns the participants themselves and has an inbuilt reflexivity (mutual sharing); or one subject interact with an object, but are socially aware of another subject (individual sharing). Or it can be triadic – an individual interacts and shares an experience with someone about something or someone (a third element). Intersubjectivity as a sharing of experience points to the interactive aspects of a relationship (Brinck, 2008).

Intersubjectivity, with pre-verbal reciprocity, is the interaction that takes place for all newborns, humans as well as horses, between themselves and a caretaker (several caretakers), and plays a vital role in everyone's development into social beings. This interaction is then extended into other relationships. This is true for every mammal, and every mammal is, in order to survive, dependent on developing these socio-emotional skills.

The intersubjective meeting is based on both the similarities between the one you meet and yourself, and the differences. To recognize what is similar, you need to be able to establish what is different. The meeting with "the other" is based on mutual engagement and is dynamic. It presupposes a sameness and an identification but is also inherently double, because self-awareness also presupposes the awareness of another subject, who will then reflect the similarity by points of difference (Brinck, 2008). With a horse, this is made so much easier for a client both due to the similarities between a horse and human. We are both, as a species, social, emotional, cognitive, communicative, and social herd living mammals, but we also have the obvious differences between our species.

Learning intersubjectivity, a sharing of experiences, as infants (and foals) is done pre-verbally and is contextual (for example, culture dependence). It begins with coordinated joint engagement and is done by exchanges of gaze, bodily proximity, gaze following, joint attention, shared intentionality, imitation, social learning, etc., and is genuinely reciprocal, even if not both, or one of the subjects are aware of the sharing per se (knowing together). What was missed in this development as an infant can be taught and trained by interacting with a horse who knows this (even if he does not know he knows).

The sharing can be mutual, but also individual, meaning that an individual gains access to another subject's experiences via observation(s). This is a one-way, distanced, and instrumental sharing; for example, gaze alternation, seeking out social referencing by looking at another's expression of emotions. Many states of mind are made overt by behavior. By observing posture, movement, gesture, facial expression, gaze, head and body turn, non-verbal vocalizations and other behaviors, another's attention, emotion, attitude, interest and perceptual knowledge can be understood. Attention reading, the recognition of goal directed intentions in others, from observations of their behavior is a generic form of individual sharing (Brinck, 2008).

Besides being the client's socio-emotional partner in EAP, the horse offers explicit emotional behaviors for the client to observe. From observing these behaviors, the client learns to read others' attention and intentions. In this he will, by observing the behavior of another (a horse), learn that context is essential. This will help him to develop plasticity and enhance his flexibility in understanding and responding to another individual. He will see that several distinct behaviors in horses share the same function and can give the same result, but also that one distinct behavior can be interpreted in many different ways; it can mean many different things. And that a behavior does not always reveal its cause (Hickok, 2014). Spending time with horses will help the client learn to read others, but not to over interpret or draw hasty conclusions of what he sees. His understanding of his own as well as of others' behavior will increase. Observing horses is often used as an activity in EAP. Sometimes it is used as an introductory activity, because of human fears, for safety reasons, or other reasons. In fact, observing horses plays a part in all activities and clients are encouraged to observe horse behaviors and reflect upon them.

Different behaviors in a horse (horses) are also what the equine specialist is looking for and uses when sharing horse observations with the client. Often by posing direct questions about horse behavior. By making and by talking about these observations the client learns to share, to observe, to draw conclusions from horse behavior about "the other's" attention and intentions and to see patterns in his own beliefs systems. This

is individual sharing, gaining access to another subject's (the horse's) experiences via observations, a sharing both with the horse(s), and by possible other clients in a group setting, as the therapist and the equine specialist.

Interaction between the client and the horse also provides contagious attention, joint attention and joint engagement. These engagements explain how the horse knows what the client needs (from the therapist's point of view) and why he attends to exactly the things the client is working on. The horse follows the attention and understands the intention of the client. Through his curiosity, being a social being and challenged to himself learn something new, he participates together with the client in the activities. Horses understand referential communication and use it themselves in communication with humans. So it again becomes an intersubjective sharing; the client directs the attention of the horse and the horse directs the attention of the client – both understanding each other's intentions – and are thereby co-creating a joint experience (Malavasi & Huber, 2016, Ringhofer & Yamamoto, 2017).

The qualitative differences between what kind of intersubjectivity is shared between the client and the horse can be described as interaffectivity, interattentionality and interintentionality. These differences can be translated into measurable and comparable overt behaviors, and are looked for both by the equine specialist and the therapist:

- *Interaffectivity*: simultaneous matching of affects and emotions to the affect and emotions displayed by another agent. It emerges from emotional contagion and an individual participating in interaffectivity develops skills for monitoring the emotions of self and others. Interaffectivity is dyadic. The client matches his affects and emotions to the horse and the horse matches his affects and emotions to the client. They share affects and emotions, which makes both client and horse feel understood.
- *Interattentionality*: alignment of attention to the attention displayed by another agent. This behavior can both be a result of contagion or be purposive. Attentional states spring from arousal. They reflect the agents' readiness to act, directed to a target of action. Interattentionality is often dyadic and concerns individual sharing. The client direct the horse's attention towards something

or the horse directs the attention of the client towards something. They share attention and prepare to act together. This is understanding of goal-directed actions.

- *Interintentionality*: the sharing of information with another agent, about the intentions and beliefs of the self and other. It is first bodily based, later in development it becomes symbolic and verbal (for the human). Interintentionality is essentially triadic and allows for an allocentric (versus egocentric) or de-centered perspective. The client has an intention which he directly shares with the horse, or the horse has an intention which he directly shares with the client, both of them taking in the other's perspective and making their interaction mutually transparent (Brinck, 2008).

These different kinds of intersubjectivity interact with each other to create complex behaviors, but develop separately at different stages in both humans and horses. If there are irregularities in their respective developmental trajectories they give rise to disturbances and weaknesses in an individual's action repertoire and intersubjective sharing will not function properly (Brinck, 2008). Understanding referential communication in intersubjective meetings is a prerequisite to mind reading, and this a horse (as a human) can do. In other words, horses are capable of flexible and intentional use of communicative signals (Malavesi & Huber, 2016). Once again, this understanding of others' minds as well as their own mind can for a client be learned or repaired in intersubjective interaction with a horse in EAP. As well as it can be learned and repaired for the horse.

5. The Added Value of the Horse and Equine Specialist

In this chapter I have described and discussed what goes on between client and horse in EAP. I have been using psychological and cognitive explanations through applying a theory of intersubjectivity adapted to horse-human interaction. The difference in terminology between psychological and cognitive perspectives can be perceived as a hindrance – but, in my opinion, instead adds to the understanding. It helps in the dissection of the cross species interaction between humans and horses, gives a multitude

of entrances into the understanding of both the mind of the human and the mind of the horse.

What happens in EAP happens in other therapeutic settings as well. It is not new. The added value is what adding a horse brings in and the competence about horses that the equine specialist brings in. Adding one or several horses and an equine specialist will enhance therapy, not make it radically different. Therapy is still therapy. It is the same work that is being done, by the therapist, and of course, by the client. The horse is not a therapist, he is assisting in the therapeutic work. The horse is putting a magnifying glass onto the therapeutic process. He is making the learning more accessible for the client and less confrontative. But he does more. He invites the client to use both non-verbal and verbal language. The horse can be a companion in therapy for comfort, closeness, and attachment. He brings in natural ways in bodily aspects (for example, rhythm, touch, and other sensory experiences), which help with grounding, self-awareness, staying in the present, keeping a cognitive, reflective and distant perspective etc. And a horse can help a client not able to benefit from more traditional forms of therapy. The horse can add a lot to therapy, and I do not think we have even begun to understand to what extent. But we can conclude that the horse makes therapy more effective and speeds up the progress. He makes therapy richer, makes it reach deeper and gives the therapist a possibility to reach clients otherwise not so easily reachable. To be frank. EAP saves money and time for both clients and therapists. There are clients for whom EAP will not be suitable, but mostly for practical reasons.

The equine specialist has many functions, among them the more obvious ones, to secure safety for all involved, humans and horses. To look after and ensure the horse's mental and physical well-being, during therapy and off therapy. But also not so obvious ones. The equine specialist is a specialist in equine behavior and horse-human interaction. Which means that the horse behaviors and the observations that are used in EAP is the equine specialist expert field. The more the equine specialist knows about horses, as subjects, a species and a mammal, about differences and similarities between horses and humans, and horse-human interaction, the more the equine specialist can

contribute to a therapy session. Because it is not only an intersubjective set up, it is also an interspecies set-up. And extensive knowledge about horses is equally as important as knowledge about humans, to keep everyone safe, and to get the most out of the conjoint meeting between human and horse. Because there will be mirroring and anti-mirroring, there will be seeing each other in each other and individual, unrelated and related parallel behaviors, there will be common mammalian behaviors and species specific behaviors etc. It is perhaps possible for a skilled therapist to also be a skilled equine specialist and combine the skills so to be able to work on their own with clients. But keeping track of client behavior and horse behavior and the therapeutic process, apart from all other aspects of bringing in a horse into a therapy session, is an enormous task. It is not so easy to be a specialist on both humans and horses. Both species takes years of studying and practical training to learn about, and a lifetime to gain a deep understanding of. The role of the equine specialist is a topic that further and more extensively needs to be addressed and understood, for us within the field to develop and maintain a serious approach to our work in EAP.

There are a lot of things going on in a EAP session which can be described from many different points of view. In this chapter I am viewing what happens between humans and horses in EAP through the theory of intersubjectivity. I have also outlined what such a theory can incorporate and discussed some of the theoretical and practical backgrounds behind intersubjectivity theory. Since this chapter only contains an outline and a brief description of the intersubjectivity theory, much of its details are for clarity's sake omitted. There is more background to be described and more details to be added from different disciplines and about the theory of intersubjectivity itself, as well as more theory to develop. My aim in presenting the theory of intersubjectivity in this chapter is to point out the need of a theoretical framework for the future work of EAP and what such a framework can offer. The use of the theory of intersubjectivity in EAP is just at its starting point. It needs to be further worked on and developed. And I am looking forward to do that, in collaboration with a global EAP network.

About the Author

Katarina Felicia Lundgren, BA, lives in the south of Sweden, where she is establishing Equine Assisted Psychotherapy as a treatment option and offers EAP/L and mindfulness to corporations through her business, Horse & Nature. She is EAGALA certified and also a Human-Animal Consultant trained through the Learning Animals program in equine cognition and interspecies relationships, and a certified mindfulness instructor. She is currently in the process of writing her master's thesis in Cognitive Science, on equine cognition and equine-human interaction, which includes a study on Przewalski horses in Mongolia and interviews with Mongolian horse herders on their views on horses. In 2013, she and her team opened up MiMer, a research and education center that funds and supports research on horses and horse-human interactions. Her facility includes a hostel, 12 horses, a mule, and a small herd of sheep on 30 acres, situated in a nature reserve. Much of her time is spent on researching and educating on horses' abilities and horse-human interactions

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