



LONE OAK ANIMAL-
ASSISTED THERAPEUTIC &
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES:
USE OF THE ARCH MODEL

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Overview

DURING THIS PRESENTATION, PARTICIPANTS WILL GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF:

1. THE ARCH MODEL
2. CONNECTION BETWEEN ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPEUTIC AND EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES, EMPATHY, AND LINK VIOLENCE
3. APPLICATION TO JUVENILE JUSTICE POPULATION IN COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES





BUT FIRST, WHAT DO
HORSES HAVE TO DO
WITH IT?

The Human-Animal Bond



Improvements to human health (mental and physical)



Reduces stress, anxiety, and depression



Social support and interactions



Interpersonal connection, companionship, encouragement of exercise

(Oosthuizen, et al., 2023)

WHY HORSES



Why Horses

The Movement of the Horse: Since 1980s, the most well-documented of all possible theories answering the question “why horses?” is that **their gait mimics the human gait.**

- “...horse riding at walking gait provides the stimulation of a walking exercise more easily and effectively than does human walking. Thus, the horse is even more efficient in providing motor and sensory inputs in the treatment of individuals with physical disabilities, as well as in achieving cardiorespiratory fitness and weight control” (2011, p. 276).
- Horseback riding provides sensory input and stimulates both hemispheres of the human cerebrum as well as the vestibular system (Granados & Agis, 2011; Hession, et al., 2014).
- Bilateral stimulation can improve emotional regulation, increase neural transmitters, reduce emotional overactivation, decrease worry, increase attentional flexibility (feel less stuck)





Why Horses Cont.

Authenticity, Horses, & the Patient-Therapist Relationship

- Authenticity or “realness” is considered an important therapeutic component (Yalom, 2003; Gullo, et al., 2012).
- Clients experience the therapist differently ~ interaction with others, working, interacting with the horse.

Oxytocin Boost & Area of Effect (Steward, 2017)

- Humans get an oxytocin boost through safe and calm interactions with animals.
- This change in neurochemistry affects not only the human’s response to the animal, but also the way in which the human interacts with other people in the immediate vicinity

Why Horses Cont.



Ethological Characteristics of Equines;

- Size of the horse; its strength; use of “congruent” non-verbal communication; instinctual prey animal nature; herd dynamics; and sensitivity (e.g., Poeter-Wenzlaff, 2007; Trotter, et al., 2008; Backi, et al., 2011; Ford, 2013).
- Ability of horse to “mirror” human emotion; evoke archetypal imagery; and ability to bond with humans is part of therapeutic value (Vidrine, et a., 2002; Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Rothe et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2014).

Motivation & Equine-Assisted Therapy: Lack of motivation due to pain avoidance is a considerable barrier to treatment.

- Researchers suggest that equine-assisted therapy may offer a unique, exciting, and fun intervention that can motivate clients

Why Horses Cont.

The Farm Milieux

- “Treatment environment” is dynamic and unpredictable, lacking the sterility of many treatment settings (Bachi et al., 2011).
- Myriad sensory stimulation through interaction with the natural world (Elkholm Fry, 2013).
- Benefits of being “outside” (Selhub & Logan, 2012).

Human-Animal Bond

- Ancient bond with functional and associational benefits
- Companion animals
- Therapy animals
- Care farms

The Role of Nature

- Research consistently shows that human beings need nature to remain healthy, and our separation from nature has led to human suffering and environmental degradation (Van Haften & Van De Vijver, 1996).
- Attention restoration theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989)
- Stress reduction (Friedmann et al., 1980).



LINK VIOLENCE



What is the link?

Researchers have found that mistreating animals is no longer an isolated incident, nor can it be ignored: it is often an indicator or predictor crime and a “red flag” (National Link Coalition, 2024)

This species spanning interconnectedness of different forms of violence is The Link

Human-Animal Bond

Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984)

- Process by which students retain knowledge and skill
- Recognizes need for self-discovery and self-awareness

- Do  Reflect  Apply



Adding AWE to Learning

- Keltner (2023) describes awe as “the feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your understanding of the world.”
- Awe can be understood as “perceived vastness,” something that challenges us to rethink our previously held ideas.
- Growing evidence that awe can inspire growth and facilitate learning.

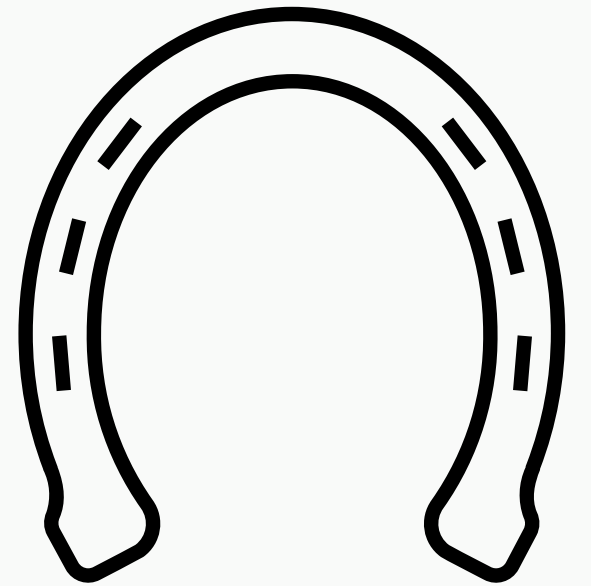


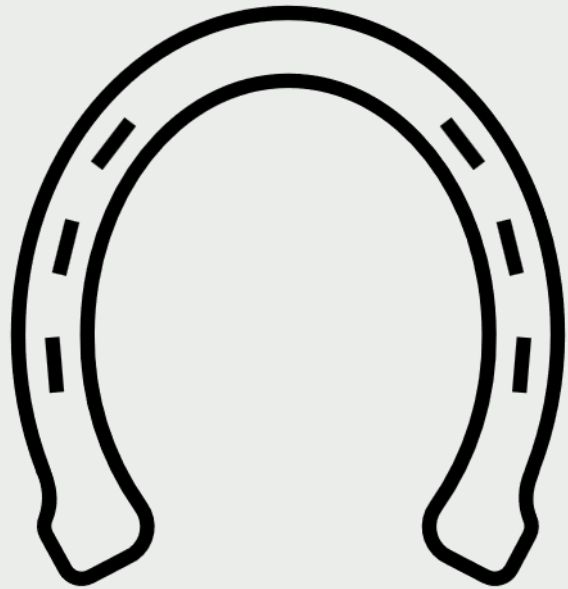
Keltner, Dacher. (2023). "Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How it Can Transform Your Life."



Awe = an opening to facilitate learning AND foster an enhanced sense of well-being for all participants: provider & client. At the crux of this model is our understanding that all involved parties are benefitting from a common, awesome experience that transcends social roles and unique experiences.

THE ARCH MODEL





Attunement
Restoration
Connection
Hope & Purpose





Attunement

Moves beyond empathy, toward two-person experience of reciprocal connectedness

“Asks” that both therapist and client work to understand each other and create ongoing relatedness that increases authenticity and collaboration

Don’t have to “meet” needs, just show up & validate Presence

(Kristel, et. al., 2013)

Restoration

All humans have strengths and talents

Challenges and hard times may render us helpless and we lose sight of those strengths

This compromises our capacity to change, adapt, and grow

We aim to restore clients inherent and earned strengths

We augment them through education, training, mental health support, community, and resources



Connection

Loss of connection has caused us to feel isolated and alone

Relationships are an integral part of trauma-informed care
(Perry, 2017)

Protective and ameliorative effects of social support and
connection are well documented (Perry, 2017)

Both equine and human connections support our growth and
motivate us to share the best of ourselves

Intentional community building





Hope & Purpose

Consensus that humans can change when there is both enough discomfort with the status quo to motivate and enough hope for a different future to inspire

Sense of hopelessness

False hope is damaging, and “positive attitudes” may convey we don’t actually understand

Model positive mindset, provide encouragement, sense of purpose, facilitate connections, and provide meaningful resources



APPLICATION TO COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

LO Services

Group Work

Community Service

Individual Sessions

Mentoring

Training/Education





ALTERNATIVES SUCH AS LO, ESPECIALLY WHEN GROUNDED IN COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION, ARE FAR MORE ETHICAL IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH ON TRAUMA. SEE THE WORK OF PERRY, FOR INSTANCE: HEALING CANNOT HAPPEN IN ONE-HOUR BLOCKS OF TIME FOR A LIMITED NUMBER OF WEEKS...WHAT IS NEEDED IS RELATIONSHIP, REPETITION IN THE CONTEXT OF CONNECTION

"Social support is not the same as merely being in the presence of others. The critical issue is reciprocity: being truly heard and seen by the people around us, feeling held in someone else's mind and heart. For our physiology to calm down, heal, and grow, we need a visceral feeling of safety."

- Bessel van der Kolk



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