

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy: The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association's Model Overview of Equine-Based Modalities

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Abstract

This article describes the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association's (EAGALA) experiential model called *Equine Assisted Psychotherapy* (EAP). EAGALA's model is based on the Association for Experiential Education's (AEE) tenets and is focused on the learner's experience with horses. Drawing on the historical use of equines in the healing arts, we argue that EAP is distinct from other modalities that incorporate horses because it does not promote horseback riding or horsemanship skills. We outline the EAP model, drawing connections to the AEE's principles of practice. Current research does not consistently include a common language when describing the program being investigated (sometimes not even referring to EAP or EAGALA). Therefore, this outline is needed to distinguish EAP from other models. Recommendations for future areas of inquiry include determining the degree to which EAP is effective and considering the specific variables central to its efficacy—including the characteristics of horses.

Keywords

EAGALA, EAP, Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association, Equine Assisted Psychotherapy, equine therapy

The qualities of horses have been quietly utilized for centuries in an effort to heal humans. The early Greeks made use of horseback riding, or horsemanship, in an effort to soothe individuals who were suffering from untreatable or incurable maladies

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(Bizub, Joy, & Davidson, 2003; Cawley, Cawley, & Retter, 1994; Mayberry, 1978; McCulloch, 2001). As medical science has developed, horses and horse movements have continued to be utilized in treating various mental and physical conditions. Riede (1987) states that the first full documentation of the healing effects of horseback riding was created by Merkurialis in 1569. However, while horseback riding is mentioned in various forms of medical literature from 1600 to 1940, it appeared to be used only sporadically in Europe (DePauw, 1986; McCulloch, 2001; Riede, 1987). It was not until equestrian Liz Hartel won a silver medal in the 1952 Olympics (despite being partially paralyzed from Polio) that the therapeutic significance of horseback riding became more recognized and began spreading to other countries (Burgon, 2003; Cawley et al., 1994; DePauw, 1986; Gatty, 2001; Kaiser, Spence, Lavergne, & Vanden Bosch, 2004; Riede, 1987). Riding centers created specifically for the purpose of treating people with physical disabilities began appearing in Europe in the late 1950s (Brock, 1989). The first such riding center in North America opened in Canada in 1965, and the first centers in the United States opened in either the 1960s (Beiber, 1985) or 1970s (Brock, 1989).

There are many therapies and organizations that partner with horses for the purpose of promoting physical or emotional growth and healing (Brock, 1989; DePauw, 1986). The physical therapies focus on the therapeutic qualities of a horse's gait and include hippotherapy, vaulting, and horsemanship. Emotional growth in these contexts tends to focus on problem-solving skills learned while engaging in horsemanship, as well as the relationship formed with the horse and horse trainer/therapist.

One of the main organizations using these characteristics in their approach is PATH International (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International, formerly known as NARHA, the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association). The NARHA was founded in 1969 (NARHA, 1999; Tucker, 1997) and changed its name to PATH International in 2011. PATH International teaches that horseback riding and other purposeful, safe, and supervised activities with horses can benefit individuals suffering almost any cognitive, physical, or emotional disability (NARHA, 1999). PATH International calls its mental health and personal development model *Equine-Facilitated Mental Health*.

In addition to horseback riding, another way of conducting experiential equine activities is by creating interactions between people and horses that are orchestrated entirely from the ground (Christian, 2005; Cumella, 2003; Kersten & Thomas, 1997; Kohanov, 2001; Mann, 2002; Schultz, Remick-Barlow, & Robbins, 2007; Strozzi, 2004; Thomas, 2001; Tramutt, 2003;). This is the basis from which the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA; 2012) built its model (Mandrell, 2006). EAGALA's model is called *Equine Assisted Psychotherapy* (EAP).

The term "Equine Assisted Psychotherapy" has been used both in the literature and in pop culture to describe various modalities that incorporate horses (Notgrass, 2011). Therefore, EAGALA's use of this term can be somewhat confusing (especially when one considers that "EAP" is also the well-known abbreviation for *employee assistance program*). However, EAP actually refers to a specific modality that was initially conceived by Kersten (n.d.). EAP was further developed during a partnership between

Kersten and Thomas (1997). The two eventually went separate ways and Thomas created the EAGALA in 1999, which continues to develop EAP (EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, 2006). As will be elaborated upon below, EAP is founded on the principles of the Association for Experiential Education (AEE), but adds horses to make its experiential education modality unique (EAGALA, 2012; Kersten & Thomas, 1997; Mandrell, 2006). This article describes the development of the field, and focuses specifically on EAP and its incorporation of the AEE's principles.

EAP as an Experiential Modality

According to EAGALA (2012), EAP is an experiential education model that draws many of its tenets from the AEE. As an experiential modality, EAP contains several key principles incorporated from the AEE, as described on their website:

- Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis and synthesis.
- Experiences are structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for results.
- Throughout the experiential learning process, the learner is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning.
- Learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully and/or physically. This involvement produces a perception that the learning task is authentic.
- The results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning.
- Relationships are developed and nurtured: learner to self, learner to others and learner to the world at large.
- The educator and learner may experience success, failure, adventure, risk-taking and uncertainty, because the outcomes of experience cannot totally be predicted.
- Opportunities are nurtured for learners and educators to explore and examine their own values.
- The educator's primary roles include setting suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting learners, insuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process.
- The educator recognizes and encourages spontaneous opportunities for learning.
- Educators strive to be aware of their biases, judgments and pre-conceptions, and how these influence the learner.
- The design of the learning experience includes the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes and successes. (AEE, n.d., The Principles section)

These tenets proposed by the AEE form the basis for many experiential education models. In spite of the name, experiential (or adventure) education is more than just an educational format; it can also be integrated into the mental health treatment of individuals, groups, couples, and families (Burg, 2000; Carlson & Cook, 2007; Gillis & Gass, 1993; Gillis & Ringer, 1999). According to Carlson and Cook (2007), "Adventure programming is the cornerstone of adventure-based counseling or therapeutic adventure, a more specific and intentional form of adventure programming that targets change at the level of behaviors, cognitions, and unconscious processes" (p. 909). Gillis and Ringer (1999) write, "Just as psychotherapy differs from casual conversation, adventure therapy differs from recreational, educational, or developmental adventure in the way in which activities are used to bring about change" (p. 29).

Gillis and Ringer (1999) outline adventure therapy in their book chapter titled *Adventure As Therapy*. Although similar to adventure or experiential education, these authors suggest that adventure therapy is designed with the client's specific needs in mind (Gillis & Ringer, 1999). The facilitators are not simply trained in adventure education, but are also trained in a psychotherapy field (Gillis & Ringer, 1999). Before beginning adventure therapy, practitioners design a treatment plan based on the client's needs and goals (Gillis & Ringer, 1999). The therapist then strategically designs an adventure program that fits the treatment plan (Gillis & Ringer, 1999). Adventure therapy is the foundational medium, but the treatment plan created in collaboration with the client is the guiding factor (Gillis & Ringer, 1999). Sometimes the activities chosen are designed to meet the needs of a treatment group, such as a family, a couple, or a group (Gillis & Ringer, 1999). Activities may also be chosen to address the specific needs of an individual within the group (Gillis & Ringer, 1999). According to Gillis and Ringer (1999), "The adventure therapist needs to be a strategist who is constantly asking, 'How will this next activity and its associated physical conditions create opportunities to create therapeutic movement in this group of clients?'" (p. 31). These ideas are foundational to EAP (EAGALA, 2012).

EAP also incorporates another key aspect of adventure education: the use of metaphor (Burg, 2000; Carlson & Cook, 2007; EAGALA, 2012; Gillis & Gass, 1993; Gillis & Ringer, 1999; Mandrell, 2006). Metaphors are frequently generated to draw parallels between the EAP session and real-life situations to help participants achieve goals and overcome challenges in their day-to-day experience.

EAP as a Standardized Model

In addition to adhering to experiential education principles, EAGALA strives to promote EAP as a standardized model of incorporating horses into the growth and learning milieu of people who are engaged in psychotherapy (EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, 2006). The organization accomplishes this through trainings, certifications, and by establishing a code of ethics. EAGALA enlists people who are already professionals in their field (psychotherapists, teachers, nurses, organizational consultants, barn owners, horsemanship educators, etc.) and integrates their professional training into EAP (EAGALA, 2012). A practitioner who has been certified through EAGALA and agrees

to abide by its code of ethics has the freedom to practice as an individual entity within EAGALA's structure, but must also maintain a level of professionalism that indicates dedication to the model. He or she does this by continued education in EAP and his or her professional field, by adhering to EAGALA's code of ethics, and by maintaining professional standards of practice.

To address the need outlined above that experiential practitioners must be multifaceted, a defining feature of EAP is that facilitators work in teams of at least two people (EAGALA, 2012). These teams are comprised, at a minimum, of one Mental Health professional (MH) and one Equine Specialist professional (ES). According to EAGALA, a MH is a clinician who carries a recognized license to practice psychotherapy in the United States. An ES is a person with significant experience and training in horse psychology and behavior. The MH and ES work together to facilitate, observe, and process the interactions between horse and participant. They also work together to ensure the safety of the horses and people involved in the session. The MH will work with participants to determine personal goals, then partner with the ES to create a treatment plan, which includes activities with a horse or set of horses (chosen by the ES) to facilitate progress toward those participant-based goals or to identify patterns that keep the participant from that progress (Christian, 2005; EAGALA, 2012; Kersten & Thomas, 1997; Mandrell, 2006; Mann, 2002; Thomas, 2001). This format is similar to what the AEE advocates, in terms of creating an authentic experience for the learners/clients that is based on their specific needs, requires them to actively take initiative in the process, and is facilitated by professionals who support the participants in a safe environment that is designed around the experience itself rather than accomplishing a task (AEE, n.d.). How EAP specifically integrates these general AEE tenets will be described further below.

EAGALA's Answer to the Question "Why Horses?"

Even though it is founded upon tenets of the AEE, EAP specifically incorporates horses into the experiential process. The addition of a horse or horses creates a unique context. As previously noted, horses and humans have a long history of interacting for mutual benefit. Having said this, it becomes necessary to describe how horses are integrated into EAP. Unlike other equine assisted experiential education models that focus on riding and horsemanship skills, EAP allows for a horse to act naturally in relation to other horses and humans in the session. While experiential modalities often use props to help the participant engage in a learning activity, the horse is not used as a prop in EAP. They are sentient beings, and are seen and talked about as partners in the work (EAGALA, 2012). As partners, horses bring unique characteristics to an EAP session, and the *Fundamentals of EAGALA Model Practice* (2012) offers a brief explanation of how horses can be potent partners in experiential work.

Horses are large and powerful animals (EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, 2006). These physical attributes conjure up many pictures in the imaginations of people, regardless of their level of interaction with horses. Sometimes the images and interactions inspire fear and trepidation, other times they inspire awe and excitement, and still other

responses may include apathy or disinterest. Taking cues from the AEE, EAGALA suggests that asking a person, group, or family to engage in an experiential task or activity with a horse while experiencing these emotions, and then processing each person's experience, can create vast openings to new insights and behavioral change within the participant(s) (AEE, n.d.; EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, 2006).

Horses share several similarities to humans, and these similarities create many opportunities for growth and learning (EAGALA, 2012):

Horses are very much like humans in that they are social animals. They have defined roles within their herds. They would rather be with their peers. They have distinct personalities, attitudes, and moods. An approach that seems to work with one horse does not necessarily work with another. At times, they seem stubborn and defiant. They like to have fun. In other words, horses provide vast opportunities for metaphorical learning. Using metaphors, in discussion or activity, is an effective technique when working with even the most challenging individuals or groups. (p. 15)

Like any experiential activity, a relationship with a horse requires humans to be active, whether mentally or physically or spiritually, to engage in the learning or therapeutic process (AEE, n.d.; EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, 2006). This is true whether one is talking about caring for horses, riding horses, or working with horses in an EAP session. How a person chooses to be active (or inactive, as the case may be) with horses can also be used to generate metaphors that practitioners can use to facilitate growth and learning.

Horses are prey animals, as opposed to predator species like dogs or humans, and therefore have developed a keen awareness to non-verbal communication as a means to survive in the wild (Brooks, 2006; Clay, 2004; Irwin, 2001; Karol, 2007; Ladewig, 2007; Mann, 2002; Roberts, 1997, 2001; Vidrine, Owen-Smith, & Faulkner, 2002). This coincides with the fact that horses are very oriented to the here-and-now and therefore respond to humans and other horses in the moment (Irwin, 2001; Karol, 2007; Keiser-Hassler, 1996; Kohanov, 2001; Tramutt, 2003; Vidrine et al., 2002). Given these characteristics, horses are highly attuned to their environment. They respond instinctually and instantaneously to the non-verbal messages they receive in the moment in their interactions with one another and with humans. Within an EAP session, the horse's automatic responses give the participant and the facilitating team valuable information, like an instant bio-feedback machine. The EAP team observes these automatic responses and uses them to bring insight to the participant about his or her current behavioral patterns. The EAP team can also use them to encourage a participant to foster new patterns to maintain a working relationship with the horse.

Based on the characteristics and natural responses of the horses, participants can learn how their behaviors affect the horses and these results are immediate—Participants can see the cause and effect patterns in action that generate helpful and unhelpful interactions (EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, 2006). The EAP team facilitates the process by helping participants draw upon personal strengths to shape the interactions with the horses into ones that are more in line with the participants' specific goals

(EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, 2006). The focus of EAP is on enhancing the person's experiences of self rather than improving his or her horsemanship skills (EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, 2006). As with any model based on the AEE's tenets, the participant's struggle through the learning or therapeutic process (and any subsequent gains he or she makes via that struggle) can then be translated into facing real-life challenges that the participant experiences in his or her everyday world (AEE, n.d.; EAGALA, 2012).

Given the underlying philosophy that EAP is different from horsemanship and that the process is more important than achieving a specific goal, the EAP team is typically non-directive and offers minimal instructions in regard to horses or equipment related to horses (AEE, n.d.; Christian, 2005; Kersten & Thomas, 1997; Thomas, 2001). The EAP team is also non-interpretive, and lets participants make their own meaning about the horse behaviors (Christian, 2005; Kersten & Thomas, 1997; Thomas, 2001). Like the horses, participants are also encouraged to be themselves and interact naturally in the session, instead of being taught a specific or "right" way of working with the horses. As noted above, the team approach used in EAP is designed to ensure the physical and emotional safety of those horses and humans who are participating in these process-oriented sessions (AEE, n.d.; EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, 2006).

Even so, EAP does have a structure. Like other AEE experiential adventure-based education models, EAP is structured around the participants' needs and therefore specific objectives, goals, and interventions are identified and documented, and progress toward those goals is monitored (AEE, n.d.; EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, 2006). As has been noted previously, this is done partly through the use of metaphor—specifically by observing a person's interaction with a horse and using that as a metaphor for how the person is interacting with other people. This builds awareness of limitations and strengths of those interactional patterns and provides opportunities for change and for developing new patterns of interaction, both in session and in the real world (AEE, n.d.; EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, 2006).

Because of these factors, the horse is much more than simply a prop in an experiential activity (EAGALA, 2012). Rather, the horse is an integral part of the professional team.

If an activity is conducted that could be equally effective without the horse, then it isn't truly EAP. Likewise, if the facilitators are working harder than the horses, or having more interaction with the horses than the clients, then it isn't EAP. EAP is about the horses doing the work of effecting change in people's lives—it is about the relationship between the horses and clients, not the relationship between the facilitators and clients. The facilitators are there to provide the opportunities and bring consciousness to the lessons being learned. (EAGALA, 2012, p. 15)

EAGALA's Model: EAP

As noted, EAGALA's model is experiential, utilizes a team approach, does not involve horseback riding, is non-directive, and is based upon the AEE's tenets. Once the participants' specific goals have been established, each EAP session is designed to help

them obtain those goals. An EAP session proceeds similarly to other experiential education models in that the participants are given a task (specifically a task with a horse or horses) and the facilitators (specifically the MH and ES) observe that task while providing minimal instruction. Like other experiential education models, the goal of an EAP session is not necessarily for participants to complete the assigned task; therefore, facilitators are not directive in helping participants complete the task. Rather, the goal is for the participants to engage in the process and the facilitators are there to observe that process (AEE, n.d.; EAGALA, 2012). Facilitators then give feedback to the participant(s) based on what EAGALA calls “SPUD’S”: *S*hifts, *P*atterns, *U*nique moments, *D*iscrepancies, and “*S*” (facilitators’ *S*elf-awareness; EAGALA, 2012).

A *Shift* in an EAP session could be anything that changes in the session with either the people or the horses (EAGALA, 2012). Perhaps the horses were all standing at one end of the ring and now they have all come toward one person. Perhaps the participants were all being quiet and suddenly they are all laughing or talking. These shifts indicate some change in the process. It is important for the MH and ES to work together to notice those shifts, but not to judge them—Shifts may be good or bad, depending on how or if they work to help the participant reach his or her goal. Any discussion or processing about shifts should allow the participant to make his or her own interpretations about observations made by the MH and ES, which is consistent with AEE principles of facilitation (AEE, n.d.; EAGALA, 2012).

A *Pattern* is a behavior that occurs 3 or more times (EAGALA, 2012). These recurring behaviors, whether they manifest with the participants, or the horses, or both, generally imply that the behavior is significant. A pattern might be that a person is usually chasing a horse while the horse runs around the ring, or that a father is typically instructing his children on the proper way to approach a group of horses, or that a particular horse tends to roll in the dirt when working with one participant. As with shifts, the MH and ES should point out these patterns to the participant, but let the participant make his or her own interpretations when processing these observed patterns. Again, this style of processing is another example of where EAP is consistent with the tenets of AEE (AEE, n.d.; EAGALA, 2012).

When something *Unique* occurs, either with the horses or the humans, the MH and ES should work together to take note of everything else going on in the arena at that moment (EAGALA, 2012). As an example of a unique occurrence, the first author observed a horse in an EAP session proceed to lower down onto her front legs while keeping her back legs standing. The horse then proceeded to stretch in an unusual manner with her back legs below her and one front hoof extended out on the ground in front of her head and the other front hoof curled under her body. She then bowed her head to one side, as if she were making a curtsy. The author and his ES partner looked at each other in amazement, having never seen a horse do that before, much less this particular horse. It was truly a unique moment. These moments can signify a dramatic shift, or they may have great meaning for the participants when they occur. If nothing else, they are usually “attention-getters” that can be used to generate memorable growth experiences.

A *Discrepancy* occurs when non-verbal and verbal communications are incongruent (EAGALA, 2012). For instance, a participant might say that he or she is very experienced around horses and has no fear, yet looks skittish or is tentative when reaching out to a horse. Or perhaps a teenager complains that his parents never let him do anything on his own, yet whines when they ask him to halter a horse without their help. As noted, horses are attuned and focused on the here-and-now. As a result, they would respond to the person's actual emotional state or behavior rather than the person's stated self-perception. Therefore, these moments become teachable moments for the participants to become more aware of their authentic experience of self. As in *shifts* and *patterns*, these observable discrepancies are processed in a non-judgmental way, consistent with AEE principles, so that the motivation for change comes from within the participants.

The 'S (i.e., *apostrophe S*) draws facilitators' attention to themselves and their own personal reactions (EAGALA, 2012). These personal self-experiences are represented by the 'S to mean "self" or "one's own stuff." These reactions can reduce observations to judgments, actions to reactions, and focus to tunnel vision rather than helpful parts of the facilitation process. No facilitator is immune to 'S, which is one reason EAGALA members work in teams. The MH and ES can always be checking in with each other, and in with themselves, to minimize the influence of the 'S material within each of them, as they design treatment plans, develop activities, and facilitate sessions. This is a key component of the AEE, which advocates that facilitators should be aware of their own biases, as well as how these parts of the self may influence the experiential activity (AEE, n.d.)

SPUD'S can be used at the conclusion of a session to process what happened, or they may be sprinkled into an ongoing session as long as they do not interrupt the process. It should be remembered that EAP is not talk therapy, therefore processing should be kept to a minimum. Even so, both MH and ES should participate equally when processing, because each person has a specialized skill set and has a specialized role. The partners can check in with one another to make sure this is occurring. SPUD'S may also be used to help develop future sessions to continue building on the themes and metaphors from prior sessions.

Essentially, SPUD'S are EAGALA's way of facilitating the experiential process of an EAP session. They are consistent with the tenets, ideas, and concepts laid out by the AEE and other proponents of adventure education or adventure therapy. These processing techniques are focused on the here-and-now. They are designed to promote growth, learning, risk-taking (within the semi-structured environment), and creativity. Both participants and facilitators are encouraged to explore and challenge their own values and assumptions. Ultimately, the focus is on the experience rather than successfully completing the task. Regardless of the specific terminology used (whether it be SPUD'S, or something else), these elements of focusing on the process are common to adventure programming and are grounded in the tenets of the AEE.

Need for Research

As EAP continues to grow as a field and gain more attention, several areas of future research become apparent. Very little systematic research currently exists to confirm

the efficacy of EAP, and the existing research tends to lend more confusion to the field than clarification. A review of that literature goes beyond the scope of this article, but elsewhere Notgrass (2011) includes an extensive review of the literature on equine assisted modalities, which includes EAP. Notgrass concludes that one reason for the inadequacy and confusing nature of existent research on EAP is because the research does not include a common language (sometimes not even referring to EAP or EAGALA). As noted above, even EAGALA's own language for describing EAP can be confusing at times. Therefore, it is imperative for future researchers of EAP to distinguish whether programs being studied are conducted by certified EAP facilitators and whether those facilitators are actually practicing EAP in their programs. It is also important for future researchers to include pertinent language, constructs, and key words when describing the models being studied. Such clarity in future research of equine assisted modalities will establish a universal standard so that programs claiming to perform EAP can be studied more systematically. This greater clarity will also allow EAP to be compared and contrasted with other types of experiential modalities that partner with equines. Such research will enhance the foundation for the theory and practice not only of EAGALA's model but also of the developing field in general.

Once a common standard for identifying and labeling equine assisted modalities and programs can be established, another key aspect for future researchers will be to explore whether or not EAP is effective, and, if so, with what populations. Thus far, all research along these lines has been anecdotal, poorly constructed, or simply has not clearly identified what model is being investigated (Notgrass, 2011). EAGALA appears to recognize the importance of building this research base and, in August 2010, EAGALA issued a protocol for its members to conduct single-subject research within their EAP programs. This appears to indicate that EAGALA is invested in research and is also invested in the continued professionalism of its members and organization. Given EAGALA's stance on creating a professional standard, EAGALA will need to continue taking these proactive measures to ensure the development of EAP, as well as the general development of the field.

Finally, further studies are needed to explore the qualities of the horse that make it a valuable partner in enhancing greater levels of self-awareness and self-development. As the AEE purports, relationships are important to the experiential process. Specifically for EAP, the relationship between the participant and horse(s) is central to the growth, learning, and therapeutic process. As noted above, horses have several characteristics that suggest they are highly attuned beings, which influence their interactions (i.e., their relationships) with people around them. Daniel Siegel (2006, 2010) proposes the notion that attunement between people within significant relationships is central to personal change and development. Because horses are so highly attuned, Notgrass (2011) introduces the concept that the horse being attuned toward the participant may also be a factor for change in people who participate in EAP. Of the many characteristics of horses that have been explored, the effects of horses' attunement in the context of EAP have not yet been examined. Therefore, more research is needed to better understand this relationship between the horse and the participants and other factors that could make interaction with horses beneficial to human growth and development.

Conclusion

This article describes EAP and identifies the relationship this approach has to the philosophy and principles espoused by the AEE. EAP continues to be a growing modality in the areas of experiential learning and the treatment of mental health issues. While EAP is similar to (and confused with) other experiential models that incorporate horses into the experiential milieu, it is different because it is grounded in the principles of the AEE and is focused on learners' experiences with the horse(s) rather than teaching horsemanship skills. More research is needed to clarify who is practicing EAP, to determine the degree to which EAP is effective, and to consider the specific variables central to its efficacy, which includes the characteristics of horses. Researchers and practitioners of EAP should take these factors into account as they continue to investigate and develop this growing field.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared the following conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The first author has been trained by EAGALA and was a certified Mental Health specialist and Associate Member with EAGALA for three years. The second author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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