

Hippotherapy

Hippotherapy is a physical, occupational, and/or speech-language therapy treatment strategy that utilizes equine movement as part of an integrated intervention program to achieve functional outcomes.

PHYSICALLY, the motion and heat of the horse gently exercise the rider's spine, muscles and joints. The rhythmic gait of the horse moves the pelvis in a way very similar movements CANNOT be duplicated with traditional exercises or machines. Only a live creature can do this! The rhythmic gait of the horse moves the pelvis in a way similar to walking. Persons not able to walk are able to simulate normal positions and movements on a horse. This leads to better flexibility, balance, and posture and muscle strength.



FROM A PSYCHOLOGICAL standpoint, riding is a very normalizing activity. Even those with significant physical limitations can experience a sense of independence. For children with disabilities, self-esteem and self-confidence can grow along with muscle strength. Therapeutic riding incorporate games and other meaningful, age appropriate social activities while on horseback to enhance social interactions.

THE SENSORY benefits of hippotherapy and therapeutic riding are very powerful. The sensory input helps to stimulate the muscles in different ways. Imagine the sight, sounds, smell and texture of the horse. Imagine the never before felt feeling of freedom in motion for someone using a wheelchair! The feeling from the horse's movement helps to organize the central nervous system affecting coordination and body awareness.



PROGRAMS the best riding programs are multidisciplinary and often utilize physical and or occupational therapist and sometimes even speech therapist are used in addition programs have a knowledgeable staff and volunteers who act as "side walkers" to help insure safety treatment sessions.

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