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Equine Therapy Helps with Grief and Loss

Written by [David](#) on September 21, 2012

There are countless situations that can cause grief for an individual— anything from the loss of a loved one to a major act of violence can turn a person's life upside down as they quickly become immersed in the stress of their emotions. Finding the strength to finally reach out for help to better navigate through feelings of grief is the first step to gaining some clarity on the situation.

Not everyone is going to be responsive to the traditional forms of grief counseling, such as seeing a therapist on weekly basis or joining a support group. For some, a non-traditional route such as equine therapy can start to help them regain control over their lives, as well as their emotions.

Ways that Equine Therapy Helps Grief and Loss

Allowing conversation: By attending a equine therapy session, both children and adults can partner with the horse in a supportive, non confrontational approach. Through experiential exercises the participant can begin to address the emotions of grief and loss. Sometimes it may be as simple as the participant sharing their feelings with an animal, which can be too difficult to share with others.

Playing games: While games are more common in classes where children are present, adults can engage in game playing as well, which will encourage them to express bottled up emotions. "Simon Says" is one of the most popular games, where children and adults direct the horses and do what Simon (equine therapist/ or parent will act as Simon) says. Simon will say to do things such as "whisper in your horse's ear something that you liked about your loved one who passed." This helps the participant to develop a bond with the horse, allowing for them to feel more open and willing to discuss their loss and/or grief associated with it.

Finding closure: Not all situations where a loved one is lost or a traumatic experience occurred will allow for closure, and this can be one of the most crucial steps towards a full recovery. Equine therapy will work with people to find that closure through creating it on their own. For example, Herd By A Horse may have the participant create memorial horseshoes, or videos for their loved one that has passed on. This lets them get hands on with their closure and create their own way of saying goodbye as well as talking about it.

Equine therapy is one of the best forms of grief counseling there is, as it removes the stuffiness of a therapists office and encourages



people to get hands on and interact with other people and horses. As horses are more social like humans are, they can be incredibly receptive to a person's need for emotional support, allowing for individuals to feel comfortable expressing their emotions surrounding their grief. Through activities such as these and the support from the equine therapist, a person can quickly begin to let go of their grief and move forward into the next stage of their life.

Written by: Michelle Bazinet, contributing writer to Herd By A Horse

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Contact Us

[bestwebsoft_contact_form]

Email: info@HerdByAHorse.com

Cell: [610-914- 6106](tel:610-914-6106)

Mail address: [P.O. Box 2129 Sinking Spring, PA 19608](#)