



Equi-librium, Inc.

Volunteer Handbook 2017



Partner Agency

Equi-librium, Inc.
524 Fehr Road
Nazareth, PA 18064
610-365-2266
www.equi-librium.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page Number
Letter of Welcome	
Mission, Vision, Goals	
Important Contacts and Directions	1
About Equi-librium – Spread the Word!	2
What is Therapeutic Horsemanship	3
What are the Programs of Equi-librium	4
Guidelines for Volunteers	5
General Safety Rules	6
Volunteer Training Program/Level Descriptions	7
Other Volunteer Opportunities	8
Teamwork! The Equi-librium Team	9
The Role of the Side Helper	10, 11
Volunteering in a Riding Skills Class	12
Volunteering in a Developmental Riding/Movement Experience or Hippotherapy Class	13
Posture and Movement	14, 15
Emergency Action Plan	16
When You Meet A Person with Disability	17
Glossary of Physical and Cognitive Disabilities	18, 19, 20
Safety Rules for Working around Horses	21
Understanding Horse Behavior	22, 23
Reading the Horse's Ears	24
Adaptive Equipment	25, 26
In A Nutshell!	27
Program Calendar	28





2017 Season

Cheryl Baker, CEO

Board of Directors:

Robert D. Makos, *Chairperson*

Colleen Krcelich, *Vice Chairperson*

Denise DeMena, *Treasurer*

Adele F. Fagan, *Secretary*

Alice Balsone

Wenda Boyer

Ronald F. Brubaker

Bernard Bujnowski

Kimberly Hirschman

Diane Cavanagh, Ed.D.

Mark Culp, P.E., LEED A

Timothy J. Duckworth, Esq.

Elizabeth Scofield

Lynne M. Paul

Mark Hartney

Casey Noble

Polly Beste, Chairperson Emeritus

524 Fehr Road

Nazareth, PA 18064

Tel. 610 365 2266

Fax 610 365 2263

Volunteercoordinator@equi-librium.org

www.equi-librium.org

Dear Equi-librium Volunteer:

All of us at Equi-librium look forward to working with you during the 2017 season.

Staff and volunteers are working together to provide you with the best possible learning experience that can be offered. Equi-librium Therapeutic Horsemanship Programs are effective because of the teamwork involved and the feedback provided by the families it serves.

This Handbook is your guide to Equi-librium's services and programs. It contains important information about our programs, our policies and procedures. Please read the Handbook and become familiar with its contents. It is your responsibility to understand and abide by the guidelines within it.

We appreciate your participation and look forward to serving you. Should you have any questions do not hesitate to call me.

Best regards,

Yvonne Darlington
Volunteer Coordinator

Thank you for volunteering at Equi-librium.



Partner Agency

The official registration and financial information of Equi-librium may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1- 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Mission, Vision, Goals

Mission

To empower individuals with special needs to reach their highest potential through horse-related activities.

Vision

Our vision is that through the efforts and activities of Equi-librium and others we will assist in creating communities where...

- persons with special needs and their families will have greater opportunities for self-determination.
- inclusive recreational and therapeutic resources are available to provide needed, quality services to individual and their families.
- individuals with special needs are able to obtain a state of equilibrium in their lives mentally, physically and emotionally.

Confidentiality Policy

Equi-librium recognizes that all participants receiving services are entitled to do so with the expectation that information about them will be treated with due respect and confidentiality. **All participant and volunteer information is considered confidential.** Equi-librium, to the extent provided by law, assumes responsibility for safeguarding each consumer's right to confidentiality and is responsible for all collection, storage, disclosure, and destruction of confidential records. Confidential and protected information includes (but is not limited to) diagnoses, names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses.

Code of Conduct & Discharge Policy

Equi-librium, Inc. recognizes that the primary interest of volunteers is the provision of safe, quality services & activities to participants in our programs. Appropriate conduct of a volunteer is important to the orderly operation of the program, and the interests and safety of staff, volunteers or participants and their families. A guest or volunteer whose actions may result in a situation of a potentially serious nature may be asked to leave the premises. This includes (but is not limited to) the following actions: threatening the safety of others, being disruptive or abusive, not complying with Equi-librium policies, carrying a weapon, being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, mistreating a person or animal or acting inappropriately. Full versions of these policies may be found in the Equi-librium Policies and Procedures Manual located at the Equi-librium Office. Volunteers will be asked to sign a Statement of Responsibility at Volunteer Training.



IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS
Office – 610 365 2266, Office Fax # - 610 365 2263
Email: volunteercoordinator@equi-librium.org
Website: www.equi-librium.org

Program Facility Sites

Administrative Office

610 365 2266

Program director/Barn manager/ PATH Int'l Certified Instructor

Debbie Hutchison

610 365 2266; debbie@equi-librium.org

Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper:

Jen Housden

610 365 2266; jen@equi-librium.org

Volunteer Coordinator

Yvonne Darlington

610 365 2266; volunteercoordinator@equi-librium.org

PATH Int'l Certified Instructors

All Instructors may be reached at 610 365 2266 (Office 8 am – 4 pm only);

Debbie Hutchison

610-365-2266 (Office)

Yvonne Darlington

570-421-3834(H)

Renee Vaughn

484-357-8270 (C)

Christina Coxe

610-704-6254 (C)

Samantha Hartzell

610-597-6294 (C)

Christopher Jones

732-615-8757 (C)

John Murdoch

610-844-3012 (C)

FACILITY LOCATION AND DIRECTIONS

Equi-librium Farm, Fehr Road, Nazareth, PA 18064

- From Route 33 South (from Stroudsburg/Wind Gap) get off at the Belfast Exit.
- At the bottom of the ramp turn right onto Henry Road (toward Boulton Historical Site)
- Follow till the end/stop sign.
- Turn left onto Jacobsburg Road
- Turn (second) right onto Rose Inn Ave (farm on your right)
- Turn first right onto Fehr Road
- We are the first driveway on the right.

- From Route 33 North (from Allentown/Bethlehem) get off at the Belfast Exit.
- At the bottom of the ramp turn left onto Henry Road (toward Boulton Historical Site).
- Follow till the end/stop sign.
- Turn left onto Jacobsburg Road
- Turn (second) right onto Rose Inn Ave (farm on your right)
- Turn first right onto Fehr Road
- We are the first driveway on the right.



ABOUT EQUI-LIBRIUM – SPREAD THE WORD!

Equi-librium encourages every staff member, volunteer, and rider to help in any way they can with the ongoing fundraising, volunteer and client recruiting efforts of the program. This page has been put together to provide general information so that everyone involved in the program is informed and can help spread the word about Equi-librium.

History: Equi-librium began in 1982 in Monroe County as a Monroe County Easter Seal and 4H Joint project and was called Monroe County Riding for the Handicapped. In 1988, Monroe County Easter Seals merged with Lehigh Valley Easter Seals and the program became known as Pocono RISE (Riding Instruction for Special Equestrians) and then as Easter Seal RISE. In 2001, the program became independent of Easter Seals and became Equi-librium, Inc. In the winter of 2013-2014 Equi-librium, Inc. moved from a leased facility in Snydersville to our own farm in Nazareth, Pa. We are a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization and are accredited by PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) International.

Funding: Equi-librium receives no funding from federal or state sources. Equi-librium relies on private and corporate donations, grants, fees for service (tuition), mail campaigns, and fundraising events. If you would like to help with any of these events, or you could help by donating items, prizes or sponsorships, please contact the Equi-librium office at 610 365 2266.

Participants: Equi-librium serves special needs participants with a wide variety of disabilities including, but not limited to, Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Down syndrome, Intellectual Disabilities, Developmental and Speech and Language Delay, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, Spinal Cord Injury, Stroke, and psychosocial/emotional and behavioral problems. Participants range from 2 years – adults. Participants enroll in one or more 10 week sessions throughout the year, and ride once per week for approximately 45 minutes. Participants pay a tuition fee which varies with the assigned program. Equi-librium currently serves about 250-300 individuals per year. Equi-librium also services schools and agencies by contractual agreement. For information on enrolling a participant, contact the Equi-librium office.

Staff and Volunteers: Equi-librium is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and managed by a staff of paid employees. All Equi-librium instructors have attained their PATH International Instructor certification. A contracted Occupational Therapist or Physical Therapist works with Equi-librium to provide Hippotherapy. In addition to the staff, approximately 125-150 volunteers serve as leaders and side helpers annually. Another approximately 50 Volunteers also help with clerical, farm maintenance, promotional and outreach activities, videotaping/photography, the newsletter, and fundraising activities.

Horses: Equi-librium owns or leases approximately 15 horses composed of a variety of breeds. Horses have been purchased or donated. Prior to acceptance into the Equi-librium program all horses are extensively evaluated and screened by the instructor team. Equi-librium only accepts gentle, sound horses with good dispositions. For more information on donating a horse or tack, please contact us.

Programs: Equi-librium provides therapeutic horsemanship instruction through group or private lessons, and includes Hippotherapy, Sensory Integration and Movement Experience, Developmental Riding, Trail Blazers, Equine-Assisted Learning, Therapeutic Cart/Carriage driving, Silver Saddles, Horsemanship for Heroes, Day Camp, Volunteer training, Farm Visits, and visits with our miniature horse at remote locations, including schools, daycare centers, and retirement communities.

WHAT IS THERAPEUTIC HORSEMANSHIP?

Individuals with almost any cognitive, physical and/or emotional need can benefit from equine assisted activities. Both the American Occupational and the American Physical Therapy Associations recognize therapeutic horsemanship as a viable adjunct and alternative to traditional forms of therapy.

The movement of the horse provides sensory stimulation to the body and brain of the rider that affects a variety of muscle groups. The pelvic movement of the horse reproduces the proper motion of the human pelvis at the walk. For people who have lost that natural movement, or have never had the benefit of this stimulation, horseback riding serves to initiate neurological, physical or cognitive responses that normalize muscle tone, improve postural control and motor coordination. Further, the warmth of the horse's body and its rhythmic movements help stiff or spastic muscles to relax or activates muscles for those with low tone.

Other benefits can include:

- Improving gross and fine motor skills
- Stimulating the cardiovascular system
- Building self-esteem and confidence
- Developing social skills and relationships with the horse, volunteers and instructor
- Channeling aggressive or hyperactive behavior into constructive activities
- Improving memory utilization and increased attention span
- Developing sequencing abilities and following directions

PATH International was established to promote, support and regulate the practice of therapeutic riding around the world. Equi-librium is a Premier Accredited Center of PATH Int'l. If you are interested in joining PATH Int'l or learning more, visit the PATH Int'l website: www.pathintl.org or call 1-800-369-RIDE.

Getting a Participant Started:

Equi-librium uses a progressive, therapeutic, and individualized program with each of its program participants. All participants must complete a registration packet that includes a physician's release, and are evaluated by either the program director or the contracted physical therapist/occupational therapist. An individualized program plan is initiated at the start of each season based on goals derived from the evaluation and information received from the participant or participant's family or guardian. The volunteer becomes an integral part in the implementation of this plan.

What are the programs of Equi-librium?

Hippotherapy is a term that refers to a clinical specialty that requires the services of a physical, occupational or speech therapist. A specially trained therapist evaluates the participant, develops specific therapy goals, and works one-on-one with the participants. The rider does not affect the movement of the horse, but rather the therapist uses the horse for facilitating the movements and posture of the participant.

Sensory Integration and Movement Experience: A program that provides the participant with a variety of sensory-motor experiences through position changes (remedial vaulting) on the horse that increases body awareness, improves posture and balance, coordination and motor-planning. This is a private session with a PATH Int'l certified instructor working one-on-one with the participant.

Recreational Riding (Trail Blazers): This is our program that teaches functional riding skills using centered riding techniques. The rider guides the horse through obstacles, games, riding patterns and trails. Students may have the opportunity to learn horsemanship skills such as leading and grooming of the horse and may have the opportunity to show their skills in the onsite horse show. This program is conducted by a PATH Int'l certified instructor in (semi)private or group settings.

Equine-Assisted Learning: An innovative educational program provided to schools that engages the participants in a succession of creative activities and interactive exercises with horses. It teaches positive life skills, development of strength based developmental assets and academics in a non-traditional learning environment. This program is offered to (pre)schools and is conducted by a PATH Int'l certified instructor and volunteers with a background in education or psychology in a group setting.

Therapeutic Cart/Carriage Driving: An activity geared to those individuals who do not wish to or cannot ride astride a horse. Driving produces similar benefits as riding, improving balance, coordination, posture and independence. The activity is conducted by a PATH Int'l certified driving instructor.

Developmental Riding: The main focus in this class is to build core strength and muscle tone through stretching and exercises coupled with riding skills. This promotes flexibility and balance and helps to maintain joint integrity as well as increases and improves mobility. This program is conducted by a PATH Int'l certified instructor in a one-on-one/ private lesson.

Silver Saddles: This riding program combines the teaching of centered riding techniques, stretching, strengthening exercises and social interaction into a group program especially designed for seniors. This program is conducted by a PATH Int'l certified instructor under the consultation of an Occupational Therapist or Certified Athletic Trainer.

Horsemanship for Heroes: This program is a therapeutic riding/driving program where horsemanship skills are taught to meet the physical, mental, or emotional needs of service men and women. Connecting with the horse helps individuals readjust, reconnect, and get back to living. It helps relieve depression, anxiety and stress for those who suffer from PTSD. This program is conducted by a PATH-Certified Instructor.

Summer and Holiday Camps – CampFUN – Horsemanship FUNdamentals: An inclusive week long (half day) program of horsemanship activities, riding and life lessons enforced by fun activities, games and crafts. The camps develop communication and leadership skills, help build relationships and practice cooperation, develop and practice horsemanship, as well as horse care and management. This program is conducted by a PATH-Certified Instructor.

All the above programs are assisted by trained volunteers.

GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS

The program volunteer is a **KEY** element in providing the participant with a safe, enjoyable environment whereby learning takes place. Without the help and commitment of volunteers who provide over 14,000 hours each year, the opportunities that a therapeutic horsemanship program offers to a person with special needs could not be provided. Teamwork is essential.

Requirements: Volunteers who work with the riders/drivers must be at least 14 years old and physically able to walk and jog for short distances during the 45 minutes classes. Horse leaders must have horse experience and progress through the volunteer leader training program. People who would like to work in the arena with participants need not be “horse people”, but it is helpful if they are horse “oriented”. They should like horses, show no fear, and be willing to listen and learn.

Attendance: Regular attendance and reliability is *very important*. You will be assigned to a team. The consistency of having the same team each week is very beneficial to participants. Volunteers are asked to commit to at least one hour a week during the 10 week or extended sessions. Upon arriving at the farm you will sign-in and when you leave you will sign-out recording the number of hours that you have volunteered. **Reliability is essential.**

Absences: We understand if you must occasionally be absent. In the event of a vacation or other event that you know will keep you from coming, indicate on the “vacation day” sheet what date(s) you will be unable to attend so the instructor can modify the schedule accordingly. If an event arises prior to program, please provide 24 hours notice if possible. If an emergency arises on the day of the program, you **MUST** call your instructor or the office (open 8:30am– 4:00pm) at 610 365 2266. Failure to notify program personnel of your absence may warrant a review of your volunteer status. Three no-show absences, after review, may result in dismissal as a program volunteer.

Punctuality: Upon arrival, sign in on your page in the attendance book. Side helpers should arrive at least 15 minutes before the class starts. Leaders should arrive at least 30 minutes before class to help get the horses ready. A volunteer’s late arrival can be very frustrating to a participant who has been anticipating his/her weekly ride.

Class Cancellation: Classes will only be cancelled in the event of extreme cold or heat or dangerous or threatening weather. The Office will notify you by phone one to two hours before program begins if a cancellation is to occur. As weather conditions can vary around the area, **it is your responsibility to call the office to determine cancellation due to weather.** (Office: 610 365 2266).

Parking: *Please drive slowly and cautiously when entering the farm.*

Dress: Wear sensible and comfortable clothing. Boots or tie shoes are a must. No sandals, loafers, or other loose-fitting footwear is allowed. Dangling jewelry, perfume or cologne should be avoided. Low-cut tank tops, mid-riff tops, spaghetti straps, short shorts, cut-offs, loose, baggy or long pants that drag on the ground are not to be worn. Dress according to the weather and temperature.

Children and Pets: Due to safety concerns, unsupervised children are not allowed. Please make other arrangements for your children on days that you volunteer. No personal pets are allowed on Equi-librium property.

Confidentiality: All participant records and activities at the center are considered confidential and can only be accessed at a staff member’s request. If you feel you need more information about someone you are working with, please don’t hesitate to ask the instructor **BEFORE** or **AFTER** class.



GENERAL SAFETY RULES

All participants, volunteers and staff must comply with all posted safety rules. The Equi-librium staff requests that all volunteers help enforce these rules as safety **MUST** be a top priority.

NO SMOKING is allowed anywhere on the property. The use of drugs or alcohol is also strictly forbidden.

If licensed firearms are brought onto the property (i.e. in a car), the vehicle must be locked and the firearms secured.

The mistreatment, abuse or verbal suggestions of abuse of anyone or of any animal will **NOT** be tolerated.

Participants and their family members are not allowed in restricted areas designated by appropriate signage. This is to discourage people traffic in these potentially dangerous areas. Only participants accompanied by a volunteer or instructor are allowed beyond these restricted areas.

It is in the best interest of all involved that no volunteer be alone with a participant at any time. Volunteers are not allowed to accompany participants to the restroom. **Parents or caregivers are responsible for the supervision of their children at all times when the participant is not participating in the riding/driving activity.**

In order to avoid distracting riders or horses during class, everyone is asked to refrain from loud talking, running, or other distracting activities especially loud, abrupt noises or actions that may startle horses or participants. No one is to lean on or climb on the mounting ramp. All visitors, parents and families are to stay in the observation area away from center activities. No flash photography is allowed during the classes unless you have permission from the instructor.

There is to be no use of cell phone or electronic games during program. Cell phones are to be put on silent or vibrate in the arena area.

Horses are never to be hand fed. Carrots and apples **MAY** be allowed as treats for some horses. Participants and volunteers who bring treats for the horses should give them to the instructor or put them in the treat bucket by the helmet cabinet, where they will be distributed when appropriate.

Please remember to help keep our facility clean by disposing of trash properly.

Equi-librium is committed to helping all volunteers perform their duties to the best of their ability. However, the relationship between Equi-librium and volunteers is an “at will” arrangement, and it may be terminated at any time without cause by either the volunteer or Equi-librium.

Volunteer Training Programs

Green Level-**Participant Assistant/Side Helper**

- Attend the Initial Green Level Volunteer Training
- Demonstrate ability to be an effective Participant Assistant/Side Helper
- Understand and practice safety precautions and know how to handle potential emergencies
- Show proper respect and care for all staff, volunteers, participants and equines in the program

Red Level-**Participant Assistant/Side Helper**

- Complete all requirements for Green Level
- At any time attend a Red Level Participant Assistant Volunteer Training about a wide array of topics related to the participants.

Blue Level-**Horse Leader**

- Complete all requirements for Green Level
- Attend Blue Level Horse Handler Training
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to handle potential equine emergencies
- Level will be awarded after evaluation of your skills by instructor

Silver Level- **Mentor**

- Complete all requirements for Green and Blue Level Training session
- One year/ sixty hours of Horse Leader experience at an Equine Assisted Activities Center
- Previous horse experience
- Complete Mentor Training (per invitation from instructors only, let them know you are interested)
- Level will be awarded after evaluation of your skills by instructor

Gold Level- **Horse Handler/ Advocate**

- Complete all requirements for Blue Level
- Attend a series of Gold Level Horse Handler Training sessions (lunging, first aid, wrapping, riding/training, etc.)
- Demonstrate knowledge of proper responses to equine behaviors
- Have at least 90 hours of horse handling experience at an Equine Assisted Activities Center
- Level will be awarded after evaluation of your skills by instructor

OTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Clerical Assistants: We can always use help with mailings, copying, filing, making posters, etc. If you like computers, we can also use help with data entry for databases, and maintaining the website and social media accounts.

Photographers/Videographers: From time to time we need people with videotaping and photography skills who can document the progress of participants or help put together “teaching tapes” or photos for media use.

Horse Shows: Assist with our end-of-season (fall) in-house or the Special Olympics shows. There are also times when our participants are able to take part in a local horse show that has classes for those with special needs. We could use volunteers who are willing to assist at these horse shows.

Open Houses: Once a year Equi-librium has an open house where we need volunteers to register visitors, give tours, explain the program, set-up the facility, and otherwise assist in creating a successful community day at the barn.

Public Relations/Health Fairs, Volunteer Fairs, and Expos: We need volunteers who could help “man” a booth at special events where Equi-librium has been asked to participate. It’s a great way to meet new people and share information about Equi-librium – recruit others to join you! Assist with spreading the word by distributing brochures, signs, and posters across the community.

Fundraising Events: Equi-librium is dependent upon charitable revenue. There are several special events at which volunteers can be a big help. Our annual events include a Basket Bingo in March, a Kentucky Derby party in May, a Polo Match in September, and other events. Serve on event committees and assist on the day of the events and fundraisers that are held throughout the year.

Farm/Equipment Maintenance and Grounds keeping: Equi-librium has one full time employee in charge of the entire 18+ acre facility – it’s a big job! He can always use help with beautification projects and general upkeep, including fence repair, landscaping, and ensuring our equipment and tools are clean, in working order, and in top condition.

Day and Specialty Camps: Equi-librium offers inclusive half day camps (usually 8:45am to noon) for a week at a time in the summer, by age, and during the holiday break in the winter for all ages. Assist with teaching basic Horsemanship, act as a leader or side helper, oversee craft projects and exploration activities, and/or ensure the correct tack is being used and cleaned before and after sessions.

Equine Program – Work directly with the instructor or barn staff to help feed and care for the horses and facility. Assist with maintenance of tack – keeping things in order according to how equipment is labeled and identified for all of the volunteers who need to depend on the correct tack for a lesson.

TEAMWORK



The Equi-librium Team

Building supportive, safe and appropriate relationships:

As an Equi-librium volunteer your role is to be a helpful presence and to support the staff in whatever way you are asked. Over time you will develop friendships and personal relationships with center participants of all ages. This is a wonderful part of being an Equi-librium volunteer, as it allows you to become part of the lives of a variety of people and lets you share your personal skills and talents.

Since many Equi-librium participants are children, you will get to know parents, grandparents and siblings of participants who may come along to observe a lesson. You will get to participate in the rehabilitation of participants who may be recovering from an injury, or share the progress and setbacks of participants who have particular life challenges. You must prepare yourself for participants who, due to their disability or personality, may be difficult, possibly rude, or overly dependent and attached to you. Remaining professional will help you deal with those difficulties.

The key to building supportive, safe and appropriate volunteer relationships is to help where you can, but to keep in mind that you are an Equi-librium volunteer; not a psychologist, a counselor, an instructor or therapist. Know your limits and role.

THE TEAM:

Each lesson centers around a team effort of people and horses working together to accomplish certain therapeutic goals. The Equi-librium team consists of:

1. **THE RIDER/DRIVER:** the reason there is a team at all!
2. **THE HORSE:** whose job is to carry/pull the rider/driver safely, smoothly, and obediently.
3. **THE INSTRUCTOR:** whose job is to set goals for the rider and to help them reach their goals.
4. **THE LEADER:** whose job is to maintain a constant awareness and, when appropriate, control of the horse while at the same time paying attention to the actions of the rider/driver, instructions from the therapist or instructor and when appropriate the lead side helper.
5. **THE SIDE HELPER:** whose job is to maintain constant awareness of the rider, further communicate the directions of the instructor if necessary, and give physical support as needed.

After the lesson, volunteers are encouraged to discuss with the instructor their observations on the effectiveness of the lesson and the progress made by the participants.

THE ROLE OF THE SIDE HELPER

Goal: The goal of therapeutic horsemanship is to encourage the rider/driver to stretch, grow and develop to his fullest potential. Your job is to help the instructor challenge the rider to the best of his/her ability.

Primary Responsibility: Side helpers are directly responsible for the rider. They are the ones who normally get the most hands-on duties in therapeutic riding. As such, they have the capability to either enhance or detract from the lesson.

Before Class:

- Arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the start of class.
- Check the class schedule for your assignment.
- While waiting for your rider, help the instructor set up the arena or put out tack.
- When your rider arrives, greet him/her and help him/her find his helmet and belt.
- Wait with the rider until time to mount; this is a good time to visit and get to know your rider.
- A side helper should supervise the rider from the time he/she arrives until he/she leaves.

Mounting: Riders mount at the ramp. When the instructor says it is time to mount, escort your rider to the mounting ramp.

Mounting at the ramp:

- One side helper should stand on the offside block.
- If there are two side helpers, the other one should follow the instructor's directions, either assisting in a mount with the instructor, or if a trained side helper in mounting, mount the rider with the supervision of the instructor.
- If riding in a saddle, the left stirrup will be placed over the withers of the horse while the rider is being mounted, and will be put down for the rider after the horse has left the mounting ramp.

Holds: Instructors will inform the side helpers about the kind of assistance the rider needs.



Some riders require the **hip-hold or thigh-hold**. (See picture)

- The side helper places a forearm gently over the hip joint or thigh and holds the front of the saddle, pad or surcingle.
- Note: Pressure on the hip or thigh can increase or cause

spasticity, especially for people with cerebral palsy. Then a "knee-hold" or "ankle-hold" may be used.

- Once the rider is securely in the saddle or on the pad, the instructor will tell him/her to give the signal to "Walk On". **Side helpers should always use the "thigh-hold" when exiting the ramp.**

Some riders do not require any "hands on" assistance, just someone to walk beside them to keep them focused on their tasks, and for safety.

Functional Riding Skill Lesson:

- Side helpers should help the rider focus his attention on the instructor.
- Try to avoid unnecessary talking with either the rider or other volunteers.
- Allow enough time for the rider to process directions. Too much input can be overwhelming to riders who have perceptual or processing problems.
- If there are two side helpers, only the inside volunteer or the one assigned by the instructor to be the lead side helper is to direct the team.
- If the instructor says “Turn right”, and the rider seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say “right” to reinforce directions.
- The riders should be doing the activities and side helpers are there to reinforce and assist.
- Avoid being so competitive during games that the rider doesn’t get to use their own skills because you do it for them in an all out effort to win.

Developmental Riding; Sensory Integration & Movement Experience:

- Side helpers must learn the basic remedial vaulting positions – forwards, side-sit, sideways, backwards, two-point kneel, four-point kneel, bear stand, and stand.
- Side helpers will be trained in these techniques – how to assist, and how to discern the quality of the position.
- At all times, the side helper should listen to the directions of the instructor, and ask for assistance if there is any difficulty with the ability of the rider to perform the position.

Dismounting: The instructor will direct dismounting either at the ramp or to the ground.

At the Ramp: (Used only for specific riders.)

- Side helpers stay with the rider as they enter the ramp.
- The horse will be stopped just before entering the area between the ramp and the block. The **side helper on the left** will take the rider’s foot out of the stirrup, place the stirrup over the withers of the horse, and make certain that the rider’s foot does not get pinched between the horse and the ramp.
- The **side helper on the right** steps up on the block and follows the instructor’s directions in assisting with the dismount.

To the Ground:

- Instructors will assist in the removal of rider’s feet from the stirrups, and then assist rider’s dismount to the ground. Trained side helpers under the direction of the instructor may also dismount to the ground.
- Each rider will be assisted in turn, with the assistance or supervision of the instructor. No rider is to be dismounted without the instructor’s direct instruction to do so.

Note: In an emergency situation, the side helper may have to quickly dismount the rider. Side helpers should **remember** that their responsibility is to **stay with the rider as best they can even if the horse is acting up**. A specific emergency dismount technique is taught at the initial volunteer training.

After Class:

- When appropriate, encourage them to thank their volunteers and give their horse a pat.
- The side helper then escorts the rider to the helmet and belt area, and if necessary, assists the rider in putting his/her helmet and belt away.
- **Stay with your riders** until they are returned to a parent or guardian or you are no longer needed.

If you have any questions about your duties don’t hesitate to ask the instructor or a mentor (specially trained volunteer)

Volunteering in a RIDING SKILLS CLASS



Although all Equi-librium classes emphasize correct body position, some are more focused on the teaching of English or Western riding skills. Riding skills classes are taught by PATH Int'l certified instructors.

An important goal is for the riders to become more independent.

Allow them to make mistakes, but always think SAFETY FIRST! BE PATIENT!
Allow time for them to process the instructor's directions.

SIDEHELPERS

- Riders in these classes may have two, one or no side helpers, based on the instructor's evaluation and the rider's abilities.
- At volunteer training you will learn and practice the following:
 - Thigh hold** – hold the front of the saddle while forearm rests on rider's thigh.
 - Knee hold** - rest hand on top of the rider's knee.
 - Ankle hold** – hold the back of the ankle, being careful not to hold the shoe only.
 - Cuff hold** – hold the back of the pant leg
 - Barely there hold** – lay your hand just behind the riders leg on the pad or saddle but do not touch
 - No hold** – side helper focuses on rider even though not holding.
- After allowing plenty of time for the rider to process the instructor's directions, you may need to help verbally – (Be simple and brief, for example, "Turn left" or "Stop at E.") or physically – (For example, a tap on the right hand if there is no response when asked to turn right.)
- Side helpers will be taught how to help with the following riding skills:
 - Position of foot in the stirrup – ball of foot on stirrup bar; safety part of stirrup on the outside (rubber band, or curved side)
 - Proper alignment of rider's body – ear, shoulder, hip, heel in alignment
 - Walking ("Walk on")
 - Trotting or Jogging ("Trot-on, Jog-on")
 - Halting (Whoa")
 - Backing (straight back 3 steps)
 - Turning
 - Reversing (turning & going the other way)
 - Circles
 - Serpentines
 - Obstacles – cones, ground poles, barrels

If you have any questions about your duties don't hesitate to ask the instructor or a mentor (specially trained volunteer)

Volunteering in a Developmental Riding/Movement Experience or Hippotherapy Class

Some classes focus more on teaching human developmental skills rather than riding skills. The riders in these classes usually do not use reins.

They may hold rings, balls or other toys while riding and may change positions frequently. These riders will always have a leader and at least one side helper. Development Riding/Movement Experience classes are conducted by a PATH Int'l certified instructor.

Hippotherapy classes are one-on-one with a licensed physical, occupational or speech therapist with the assistance of a certified instructor.

SIDE HELPERS

- Side helpers are responsible for the rider, but communication with the entire team should occur, if needed.
- Keep talking to a minimum!
- Use good body mechanics and your peripheral vision.
- If there are two side helpers, only the one on the side the rider is being directed to should talk. For instance, if the rider is asked to pick up a ball from the right side, then only the right side helper should verbally reinforce the instructions, while the left side helper stays quiet.
- At volunteer training, you will learn and practice the following:
 - Thigh hold** – hold the front of the saddle, or the surcingle handle, while forearm rests on rider's thigh.
 - Knee hold** - rest hand on top of the rider's knee.
 - Ankle hold** – hold the back of the ankle, being careful not to hold the shoe only.
 - Shoulder hold** – hand on top of shoulder with elbow pointing down, being careful not to dig an elbow into the horses back.
 - Rider position changes** – help but let the rider do most of the work.
 - Side-sit** - where the rider sits with one leg over the surcingle handle as if riding "side-saddle"; one side helper supports the hips, the other the lower leg.
 - Sideways** – rider sits completely sideways facing one of the side helpers; one side helper supports the hips while the other the legs below the knees.
 - Backwards** – side helpers may use a reverse thigh hold, or ankle hold, keeping the riders foot from banging on the side of the horses flanks.
 - Around the world** - rider turns on the pad or in the saddle to face one side, then backwards, then the other side, then facing forward. Side helpers use the same assistance as in side-ways sitting.
 - Side helpers changing sides** – Ask the leader to go to the middle of the arena and stop the horse. Side helpers can change sides **ONE AT A TIME**, by discussing who will go first, then going around the front of the horse while the other side helper does a thigh-hold.
 - Emergency Dismount** - control the fall while putting yourself between the rider and the horse. This will be practiced in volunteer training.

If you have any questions about your duties don't hesitate to ask the instructor or a mentor (specially trained volunteer)

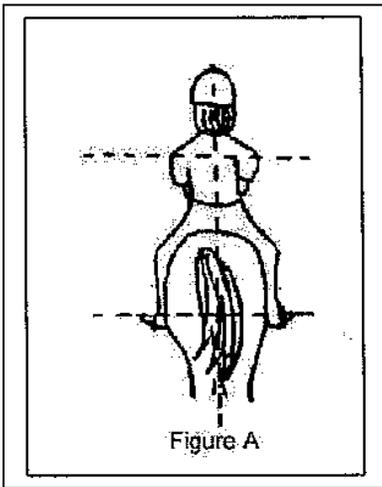
Posture and Movement

It is the responsibility of the PATH Int'l Certified Instructor, Physical, Occupational or Speech Therapist, etc. to evaluate a rider's posture. This information is provided to the volunteer to enhance your understanding of the basic principles of "ideal" riding position.

Position of the Rider

by Lorrie Renker and Martha Biery

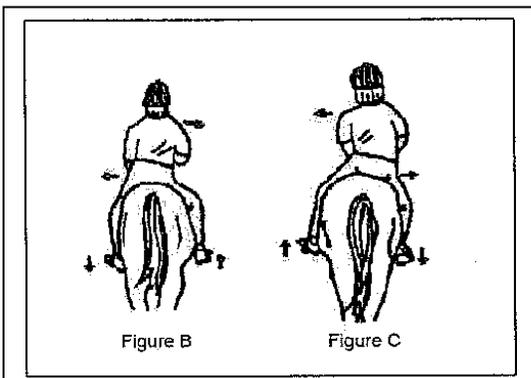
All riders strive toward the "ideal" riding position. It should be no different for riders with a disability. While not all riders will be able to achieve the ideal position, that doesn't mean they shouldn't try. The rider's position has little to do with looking good and everything to do with being in balance and moving in harmony with the horse. The better the body is aligned the better the therapeutic benefit.



The best way to evaluate the rider's position on the horse is to step back and view the rider from all angles. The rider may look great from the side, but could be off center when viewed from behind.

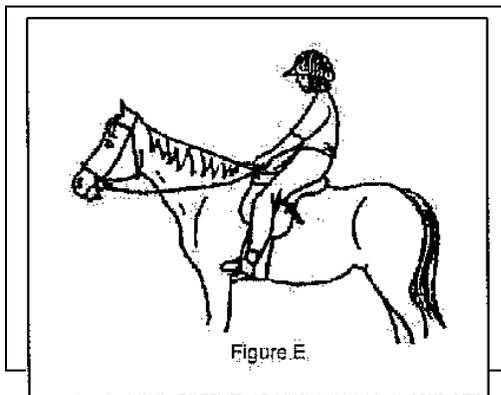
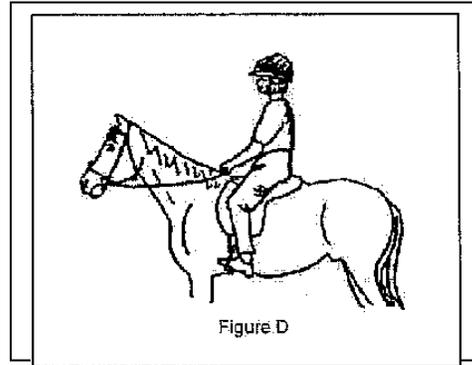
Here are some common problems the instructor may look for:

- 1) When viewed from behind, the rider should sit as straight as possible. (Figure A). Many riders sit to one side, then have to make corrections in the rest of the body to maintain balance.

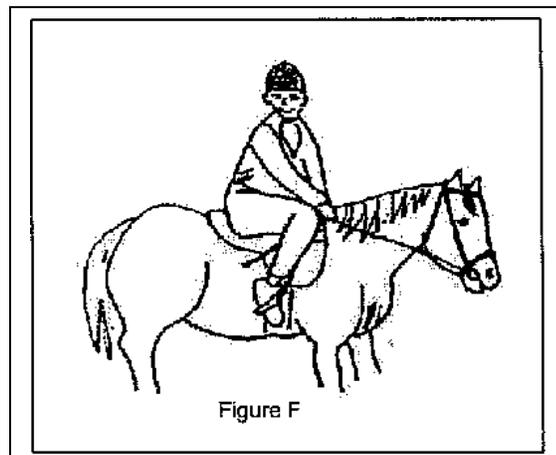


When this imbalance happens, one foot will appear lower than the other. Figure B shows a rider with the left foot lower, the pelvis leaning to the left and the upper body correcting to the right. Figure C shows just the opposite; the right foot lower, the pelvis leaning to the right and the upper body correcting to the left. Neither of these positions help the rider strengthen muscles evenly. Correcting this position usually requires aligning the rider's base (getting square in the saddle).

2) When viewed from the side, the rider should sit as straight as possible (Figure D). Sometimes riders will sit in the “sofa seat” or C curve position (Figure E). Often the rider will sit up if asked. Sometimes the Position will reflect the rider’s posture off the horse. Encouraging elongation of the left usually improves the posture. To achieve a better position, it may be necessary to evaluate the type of saddle being used. Ideally the saddle should be fitted correctly to the horse and the rider. The instructor will make sure the fit is correct.



3) Figure F shows a rider with a toe down and the leg pinched up. This position could indicate a rider with tight adductor muscles, an extreme forward-seat saddle or stirrups that are too short. The rider should be encouraged to lengthen his/her leg. This lengthening could be achieved by riding without stirrups or by trying a different style of saddle.



The important thing to remember is the instructor will constantly evaluate the rider’s position. The instructor will consider all factors, such as disability limitations, posture off the horse and equipment used, what method to use, and then will work toward improving the rider’s position.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN
For Indoor or Outdoor Incident/Accident

1. If an incident/accident such as a fall, a seizure, etc. happens while participants are mounted, all activity STOPS until further notice is given by the instructor.
2. Leaders and side helpers are to stay in charge of their own participant and/ or horse with the leader in a halt position.
3. Horses and participants are to stay in location of halt unless otherwise notified by the instructor.
4. The instructor (or therapist if no instructor is present) is in charge of any riding session emergencies and has current certification in First Aid and CPR.
5. The type of accident or results of any mishap will determine whether the Instructor will dismiss or continue the session.
6. NO ONE, including parents, is permitted in the arena or working area if an accident happens. Only those summoned by the instructor are allowed to enter the area quietly.
7. There is to be no excessive talking or noise.
8. Side helpers are to explain the situation quietly and reassure the other mounted participants.
9. The removal of the horse from an accident scene will be done in the safest way for the situation based on the horse's training and location of the participant.
10. If outside emergency assistance is needed, the instructor or another designated individual is responsible for making the phone call to emergency services.
11. An emergency phone number sheet is located at the telephone call station at the program site.
12. An incident report will be filed for any incident/accident that may occur.
13. In the case of a fire, spill, or other emergency, each building has an emergency plan posted and a map with an evacuation route clearly defined.

Source: PATH Int'l (Professional Association for Therapeutic Horsemanship International)

WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

If you have never had the opportunity to meet people with disabilities, this aspect of working at a PATH Int'l center can be intimidating and a little frightening at first. You may be feeling insecure about how to act or react to people who may look, sound, move, and behave differently from what you usually expect. It can also be unsettling to meet a person who you know has a terminal illness or the parent of a teenage child who has cognitive limitations. What do you say? What do you not say? What is the best way to help? These questions and the feelings of uncertainty they bring with them are perfectly normal and you need not be embarrassed about them.

Here are some basic suggestions on how to relate to individuals with disabilities:

- A person with a disability is an individual first and is entitled to the same dignity, respect and considerations expected by anyone.
- Treat adults as adults. Only call an adult person with a disability by his or her first name after asking for the privilege.
- Only help a person with a disability if they ask for assistance. You may offer assistance, but if it is declined, do not be offended.
- When assisting an individual with a disability, always ask “how” you can help. Do not take over.
- Always address the person with a disability directly. Do not speak “about” them as if they were not present.
- Do not shout. Hearing aids make noises louder, not clearer. Blindness does not affect a person’s hearing.
- If a person has difficulty speaking, allow them to finish their sentence. If you do not understand what they are saying, tell them so. Do not pretend you understood if you didn’t.
- When meeting a person with a visual impairment, always identify yourself and tell them you are leaving before you walk away.
- Do not push a person’s wheelchair, grab their arm or try to help without asking first. Never move someone’s crutches, walkers, canes, service animal or other mobility aid without permission.
- When speaking to a person with a disability who uses a wheelchair, find yourself a chair or crouch down at a comfortable distance so that you can converse on the same level.
- When speaking to someone with a hearing impairment speak slowly, clearly and face them directly while speaking.

“People” First Language

- The individual is always placed before the disability. It is a “person with a disability” – not a “disabled person”.
- Never refer to a person by their disability, example “a paraplegic”, “a blind person”; the accepted terminology is a “person who has paraplegia”, a “person who is blind”.
- People are not “confined” or “bound” to wheelchairs. They “use” these devices for mobility and to enhance their freedom. It is more appropriate to say “an individual who uses a wheelchair”.
- Completely avoid emotionally laden terms such as “suffering with a disease”, “afflicted with”, “burdened by”. A person with a disability may “have” an illness or may be “challenged” by a condition, but one should never assume that a person is suffering, burdened or afflicted.
- When writing or speaking about individuals with disabilities always focus on ability, accomplishment and quality of life.
- Avoid using “us” and “them” language when speaking of people with disabilities versus people who are able-bodied. Statistics have shown that most able-bodied people will experience a disability at some point in their life. We are all people first.

GLOSSARY OF PHYSICAL & COGNITIVE DISABILITIES & EAAT BENEFITS

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter at a PATH International Center and the beneficial outcome equine assisted activities can have. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of specific disabilities. Rather, it is a general overview with an explanation of how equine assisted activities can be beneficial.

Amputations

People who have experienced a loss of a single or multiple limbs.

Benefits: Many para-equestrians have successfully competed with an amputation. PATH centers are experienced in creating adaptations in equipment to accommodate for people with amputations of upper and lower extremities. Drivers can learn one-handed driving and compete in pleasure driving competitions.

Attention Deficit Disorder

Children with attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have difficulties with attention and self-control of behavior.

Benefits: Horseback riding requires attention to the instructor and the horse. Children who participate in a riding program will be taught sequential steps for learning to control their horse and becoming more independent. Riding lessons can be modified in length to accommodate for decreased attention span in the beginning of the program. Children with ADD or ADHD may also benefit from participation in a vaulting program at a PATH center. Vaulting requires attention and timing for approaching the horse on the lunge line as well as mounting and dismounting. In vaulting, children work in groups requiring self-control and team work.

Arthritis

Inflammatory disease of the joints

Types: Osteo, rheumatoid and juvenile rheumatoid.

Characteristics: Pain; lack of mobility; deformity; loss of strength.

Benefits: Gentle rhythmic movement to promote joint mobility and relieve pain.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

ASD and autism are general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. They include autistic disorder, Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and Asperger syndrome.

Characteristics: Difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and repetitive behaviors. Also, intellectual disabilities, difficulties in motor coordination, attention, and physical health issues such as sleep and gastrointestinal disturbances. Some had a heightened sensitivity to tactile touch, sounds, smells, or are resistant to change. Some persons with ASD excel in visual skills, music or math.

Benefits: Interaction in a group setting stimulates interest away from self and toward others and the horses. Postural and verbal stimulation, language development, increased self-awareness & self-esteem.

Cerebral Palsy

Brain damage occurring before, at, or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive neuro- motor disorder.

Types and Characteristics:

Spastic – hyper tonicity with hyperactive stretch reflexes, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

Athetoid - extensor muscle tension, worm-like movements, abnormal posturing and slow and deliberate speech.

Ataxic- poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements and are often described as having a "rag doll" appearance.

Benefits: Normalization of tone, stimulation of postural and balance mechanisms, muscle strengthening and perceptual motor coordination.

Associated Issues: Seizures; hearing defects; visual defects; general sensory impairment; perceptual problems; communication problems; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; learning disabilities.

Cerebral Vascular Accident - Stroke (CVA)

Hemorrhage in brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment.

Characteristics: Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of body. May impair thought processes, speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength.

Benefits: Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization.

Cognitive Delay

Lack of ability to learn and perform within normal and acceptable levels.

Characteristics: Developmentally delayed in all areas. Short attention span.

Benefits: Stimulates group activity skills and provides a structured learning environment.

Deafness

People who are deaf or display hearing impairments.

Benefits: may experience improved self-esteem and a sense of independence and empowerment by becoming an independent equestrian. People with hearing impairments will develop unique ways to communicate with their instructor and equine partner while learning riding or driving.

Developmental Disabilities (DD)

A general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade level.

Characteristics: Varied, but can include slow physical, motor and social development.

Benefits: Provides arena for success, opportunity for sport and recreation, stimulates body awareness.

Down syndrome

Condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome, resulting in mental and developmental delay.

Characteristics: Usually hypotonic, have hypermobile joints and tend to be short and slightly overweight. Prone to respiratory infections.

Benefits: Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, posture, muscle tone and coordination.

Emotional Disabilities

A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies.

Characteristics: Trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia or schizophrenia may be exhibited.

Benefits: Increases feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness, and provides appropriate social outlet.

Epilepsy

Abnormal electrical activity of the brain marked by seizures with altered consciousness.

Types and Characteristics:

Petit Mal: Brief loss of consciousness with loss of postural tone. May have jerky movements, blank expression.

Grand Mal: Loss of consciousness and postural tone. Usually preceded by an aura. (Note: An active seizure disorder is a contraindication for horseback riding).

Benefits: Groundwork with horses can be beneficial; riding is not advised.

Hearing Impairment

Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound.

Characteristics: Communication difficulties - may use lip reading, finger spelling (manual alphabet) or sign language. Often "phase out" and have attention deficits.

Benefits: Stimulates self-confidence, balance, posture and coordination. It also provides appropriate social outlets and interactions.

Learning Disabilities (LD)

Catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving, but who appear to have otherwise normal intelligence skills.

Characteristics: Short attention span, easily frustrated, immature.

Benefits: Effects depend upon the particular disorder. Stimulates attention span, group skills, cooperation, language skills, posture and coordination.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.

Characteristics: Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40-year-old range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Fatigues easily. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity.

Benefits: Maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy.

Associated Issues: Visual impairment, emotional ability, and impaired bowel and bladder function.

Muscular Dystrophy (MD)

Deficiency in muscle nutrition with degeneration of skeletal muscle. Hereditary disease that mainly affects males.

Characteristics: Progressive muscular weakness, fatigues easily, sensitive to temperature extremes.

Benefits: Provides opportunity for group activity, may slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment, and allows movement free of assistive devices.

Associated Issues: Lordosis, respiratory infection.

Polio

Infectious virus disease.

Characteristics: Flaccid paralysis, atrophy of skeletal muscle, often with deformity.

Benefits: Strengthens non-paralyzed muscles, stimulates posture.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Develops after a person is exposed to a traumatic event, such as assault, warfare, traffic collisions, or threats on a person's life. Symptoms may include disturbing thoughts, feelings, or dreams related to the events, mental or physical distress to trauma-related cues, attempts to avoid trauma-related cues, alterations in how a person thinks and feels, and increased arousal. These symptoms last for more than a month after the event. Young children are less likely to show distress but instead may express their memories through play. Those with PTSD are at a higher risk of suicide.

Benefits: EAAT does not require a long process of establishing a relationship between therapist and patient; the real interaction takes place between the client and the horse. Patients tend to be more relaxed and less anxious, and much of the stigma of therapy is not connected to the process by service men and women.

Scoliosis

Lateral curve of the spine with a C or S curve with rotary component.

Characteristics: Postural asymmetry. May wear scoliosis jacket or have had stabilization surgery.

Benefits: Stimulates postural symmetry, strengthens trunk muscles. (Note: Severe scoliosis is a contraindication for therapeutic riding).

Spina Bifida

Congenital failure of vertebral arch closure with resultant damage to spinal cord.

Characteristics: Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, improves muscle strength and self-image.

Associated Issues: Infection, lordosis, scoliosis, hip dislocations, hydrocephalus, incontinence, and urinary tract infection.

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function.

Characteristics: Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury - can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss and pressure sores.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, is an option for sports participation and recreation.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Accidental injury to the head resulting in intra-cranial bleeding with death of brain cells.

Characteristics: Gross and fine motor skills deficits. Often have impaired memory, speech, balance and/or vision. May have psychological effects.

Benefits: Stimulates balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, speech and perceptual skills.

Visual Impairment

Moderate to total loss of sight.

Characteristics: Insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity, fearfulness, and developmental delay.

Benefits: Stimulates spatial awareness, proprioception, posture and coordination. Provides social outlet, structured risk-taking and freedom of movement.





SAFETY RULES FOR WORKING AROUND HORSES

1. Speak to the horse in a low calm voice before approaching it to avoid startling it. Approach a horse from the side, never the rear, so that the horse can see you. Always walk around the back of a tied horse, never under or over a lead rope, with your hand on the horse's rump so that it knows that you are there.
2. Pet a horse by placing a hand on his shoulder or neck, not on the face or nose. Hands belong behind horse's ears and eyes.
3. People weigh a lot less than any equine. If a horse spooks or suddenly pulls back, do not grab the reins, or try to out-pull him. This could cause the horse to pull back even harder.
4. All volunteers, when working in the barn must be supervised by an instructor or mentor, unless they have reached a level of proficiency that allows permission to be there.

ONLY FOR VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN EQUINE CARE:

5. When cleaning hooves, do it from the side, and facing the rear of the horse. Position yourself so that your feet are to the side and not where the horse can step on them. Never squat or kneel down on the ground when cleaning hooves or grooming the legs. Maintain a quick escape position in case the horse moves.
6. When grooming or saddling a horse in crossties, attach the cross tie leads to the side halter rings on the nose band. When tying elsewhere, use the lead rope tied in a quick release knot.

UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR

When developing relationships and working with horses, communication is key. It is critical to provide a safe environment for equine assisted activities. Learning to understand horse senses, instincts and body language is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks and increasing positive relationships. Being aware of horse behaviors is one of the best safety precautions that can be practiced. Knowing how to ready your horse can prevent an accident and increase the quality of your "mutual" relationship. If you ever are uncomfortable working with or handling an individual horse, please speak up.

Equine Senses

Smell: The horse's sense of smell is thought to be very acute and it allows the animal to recognize other horses and people. Smell also enables the horse to evaluate situations.

Implications:

- Allow horses the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling.
- It is recommended that treats aren't carried in your pocket since horses may attempt to go after them.
- Volunteers are discouraged from eating or having food in the arena.

Hearing: The horse's sense of hearing is also thought to be very acute. The horse may also combine their sense of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds. The situation of a horse "hearing and not seeing" is often the cause of the fright/flight response. Note the position of the horse's ears (*pictures following article.*) Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Ears that are laid back often communicates they are upset and/or showing aggression towards another horse or person.

Implications:

- Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him/her in a quiet and calm voice for reassurance.
- Avoid shouting or using a loud voice. This can be frightening to a horse.
- Watch your horse's ears for increased communication. Stiffly pricked ears indicate interest. Drooping ears indicate relaxation, inattentiveness (easily startled), exhaustion or illness. Flattened ears indicate anger, threat or fear. Ears flicking back and forth indicate attentiveness or interest.

Sight: The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head. There is good (lateral) peripheral vision but poorer frontal vision. Horses focus on objects by raising and lowering their head. The horse's visual memory is very accurate. Horses are thought to see quite well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes. There is still controversy as to whether or not horses see in color.

Implications:

- The horse may notice if something in the arena or out on a trail is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects. Introduce new props that the horse may be unfamiliar with.
- As the horse has better peripheral vision; consider a slightly looser rein, enabling the animal to move its head when taking a look at objects.
- Although the horse has good peripheral vision, consider two blind spots: directly in front and directly behind. The best way to approach a horse is at the shoulder. It may startle a horse if you approach from behind or directly in front. The horse may be unable to see around the mouth area, which is a safety consideration if hand feeding. We do not hand feed.

Touch: Touch is used as a communication between horses and between horses and people. Horses are sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person's hands or legs.

Implications:

- Handlers should treat the horses gently but firmly.
- Horses have sensitive areas, and it is important to be familiar with them (i.e. flank and belly areas).
- Watch the riders' leg position. The rider may need appropriate assistance to reduce a "clothes pin" effect with their legs. Ask the instructor/therapist what is the best handling technique.
- Horses will often touch or paw at unfamiliar objects. For example, a horse may paw at a bridge or ground pole before crossing over it.

Taste: Taste is closely linked with the sense of smell and helps the horse to distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

Implications:

- Taste is closely linked with smell and touch; therefore, a horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects and people. Be careful, this could lead to possible biting.

Sixth Sense: Horses do have a "sixth sense" when evaluating the disposition of those around them. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for their sensitive response to the rider. At times there may exist a personality conflict between handlers and horses. It is important for the instructor/therapist to know if you're having a difficult time relating or getting along with a particular horse.

The Horse's Lifestyle: In addition to understanding the horse's sixth senses, we need to appreciate and increase our awareness of the horse's lifestyle. This will assist us in responding appropriately to his/her reactions to situations.

Flight and other Instincts: Horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

Implications:

- At a sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee. Speak to the horse calmly.
- A frightened horse that is tied up or being held tightly might try to escape by pulling back. Relax your hold or untie the horse quickly and usually it will relax. Be sure not to stand directly behind the horse.
- If flight is not possible, the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear, especially in a tight area like the stall. A halter with a lead rope may assist with maintaining control while working around the horse in a stall.
- If a horse is nervous or fearful it may be helpful to allow a more experienced horse handler to lead.
- Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. However, the horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteer remains calm and talks to the horse in a soothing voice.

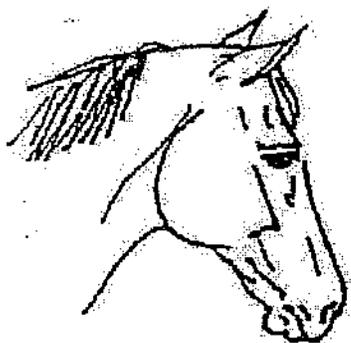
Herd Animal: Horses like to stay together in a clearly defined herd or group with one or two dominant horses "in charge", with the rest of the group living in an established social hierarchy.

Implications:

- Be aware that a horse may not like being alone. This is a consideration when horses are leaving the arena or a horse loses sight of the others while on a trail ride.
- Be aware that if the horse in front of a line is trotting or cantering, the horse that is following may also attempt to trot or canter.
- If one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may also be affected.
- For safety, it is recommended to keep at least two horse's length between horses when riding within a group to respect the horses space and hierarchical order.

READING THE HORSES EARS

The horse's ears and actions are the key to his emotions. He can tell you what he is paying attention to and how he feels by the way he uses his ears and the way he acts. Following are some tips to his emotions.



Ears forward but relaxed

Interested in what is in front of it.



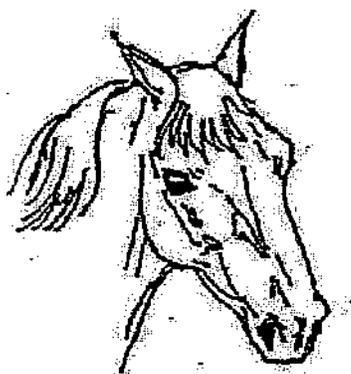
Ears turned back but relaxed

Listening to his rider or what is behind him



Ears pointed stiffly forward

Alarmed or nervous about what's ahead. Looking for danger



Ears pointed left & right

Relaxed, paying attention to the scenery on both sides



Ears stiffly back

Annoyed or worried about what's behind him; might kick if annoyed



Droopy ears

Calm and resting; may be dozing



Ears flattened against neck

Violently angry, in a fighting mood; may fight, bite or kick.

Other signs you should notice are:

- **Tucking the tail down tightly** - Danger to the rear; Horse may bolt, buck or kick; Watch out if ears are flattened too!
- **Switching the tail** - Annoyance & irritation; At biting flies, stinging insects or tickling annoying actions of the rider or another horse.
- **Droopy ears and resting one hind leg or toe** - Calm & resting, horse may be dozing. Do not wake the horse up by startling it.
- **Wrinkling up the face and swinging the head** - Threatening gesture of an angry or bossy horse. Watch out for biting, kicking or pushing if leading.

ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT

VAULTING SURCINGLE OR DOUBLE HANDED SURCINGLE.

Used over a bareback pad or over the pommel of an English saddle. This surcingle has two handles.

ANTI-CAST SLIRCINGLE or SINGLE RANDOM STIRCINGLE.

Also used over a bareback pad or the pommel of a saddle. It has a single center positioned handle.

NATURAL RIDE

This combines the features of a bareback pad and the anti-cast surcingle. The handhold is lower than on the surcingle and is solid so can be utilized better by leaning on it rather than by holding on to it.

SEAT SAVERS

Padded seat cover which reduce stress on seat bones, help in preventing pressure sores and increase rider comfort. They are made of fleece, gel, or dosed cell foam. English and Western styles are available. Full, saddle fleece pads are also available.

RUBBER BANDS

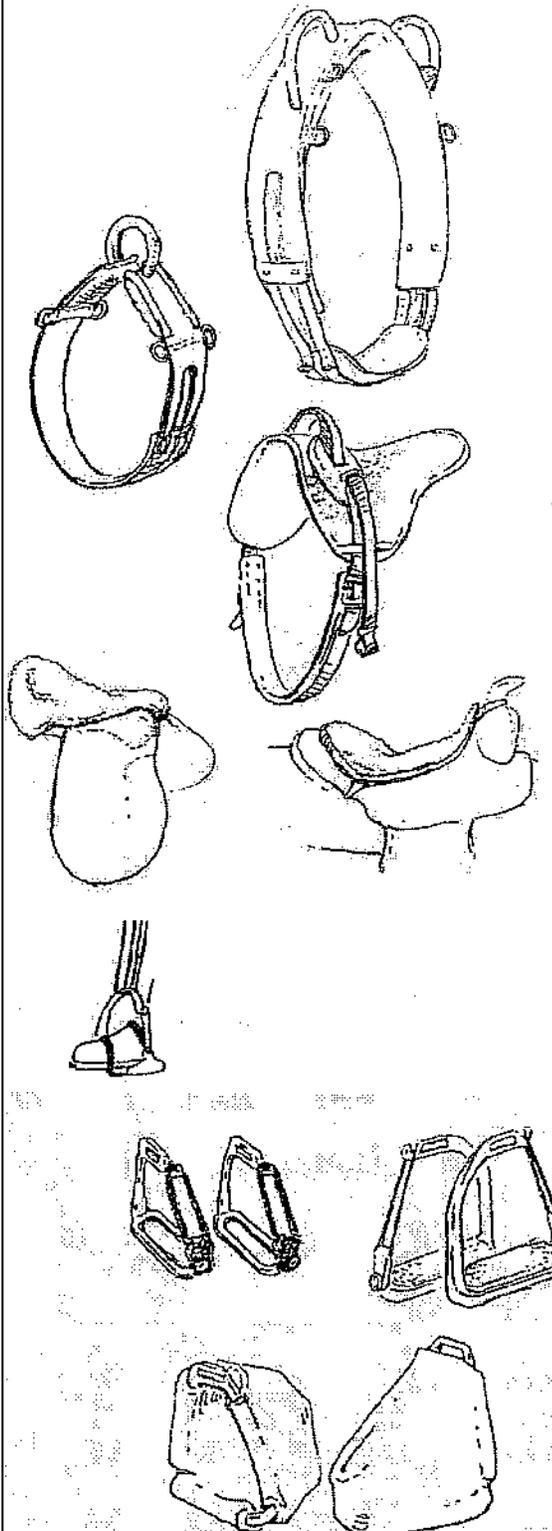
To assist a rider who cannot keep feet in stirrups due to spasticity, lack of sensation, etc. The rubber bands afford security with a quick-release capability in case of emergencies.

PEACOCK STIRRUPS

Stirrups that have a quick-release rubber band on the side that will allow a rider's foot to come out in case of a fall. The safety feature should always face away from the horse when positioned on the rider's foot.

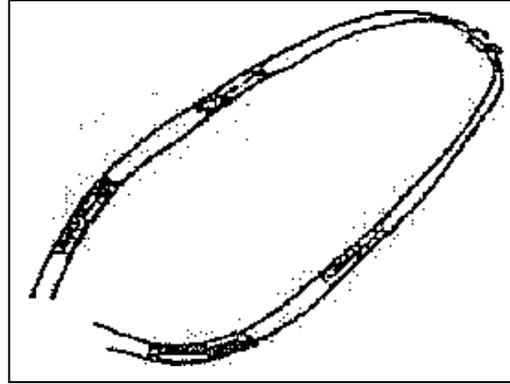
DEVONSHIRE BOOTS

A hooded stirrup with a dosed platform that prevents the rider's foot from moving too far forward.



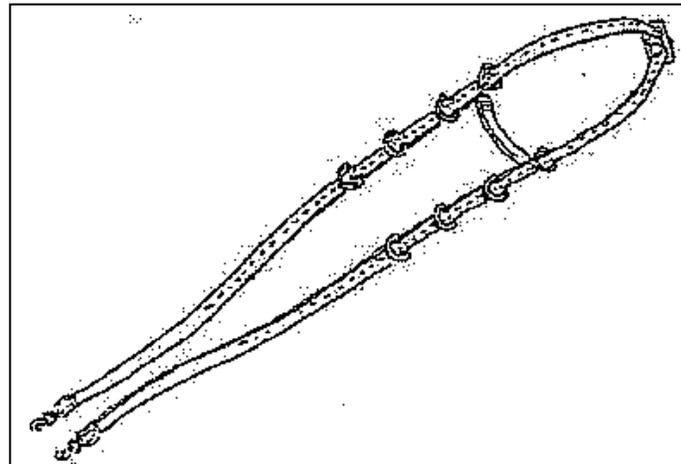
RAINBOW REINS

To teach proper use of the reins, the Instructor can direct a rider to “hold on the green” or to “hold on the red”. The rider can then feel an appropriate response to their aids and have a guide for proper positioning.



LADDER REIN

With the ladder rein, the rider with limited dexterity has control using gross hand motor skills only. A tether is recommended in case the rein is dropped.



IN A NUTSHELL.....



“Wow! This has been a lot of information to remember!” Once you get used to the routine at Equi-librium, it really is quite easy. Always feel free to ask a staff member any questions you may have. This page has been provided as a quick reference to help you get started as an Equi-librium volunteer.

When you arrive:

1. **REGISTER YOUR ATTENDANCE** in the Volunteer Attendance Book. Record ALL scheduled absences by writing on the “Vacation Days” Clip Board, and/or email or call the office and inform the Volunteer Coordinator or Instructor of those days. If you leave keys, jackets or other personal belongings, please remember that Equi-librium is not responsible for loss of those items. When possible, items should be locked in your car.
2. Put on **NAMETAG**. It is very important to wear your nametag to help your instructor and rider recall your name. It also helps the instructor to know what level of volunteering you have attained.
3. **CHECK BULLETIN BOARDS AND THE FRONT TABLE FOR ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS, FLYERS OR SIGN-UP SHEETS**. Since Equi-librium has many volunteers, the bulletin board is one way we have of communicating with everyone in a timely manner. Please remember to check it.
4. **CHECK CLASS SCHEDULE** for your assignments.
5. **SIDEHELPERS** – Greet your rider, and assist them with their helmet and belt. Then wait with the rider until time to mount. While waiting for your rider, you may help with the horses or you may be needed to help set up the arena for the lesson.

Before you leave:

1. **SIDEHELPERS** - Once your last rider has left, you may help put away any equipment in the arena and help sweep up.
2. **CHECK WITH THE INSTRUCTOR BEFORE YOU LEAVE**. If the rider to whom you are assigned is absent, you may still be needed to help with other riders. Volunteers are expected to help sweep and clean up.
3. **SIGN-OUT AND RECORD YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS** in the Volunteer Attendance/Sign-In Book. Collect any personal belongings and **return your nametag**. You are welcome to take any flyers available.

2017 PROGRAM CALENDAR

Dates are subject to change depending on weather conditions, horse changes, or other circumstances. The following holidays are observed: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. **Exact session dates may end on different dates depending on the day and when holidays fall. There also may be changes due to special Equi-librium activities or cancellations. Weekly schedules start on Monday.**

All Therapeutic Horsemanship Programs for 2017:

**Winter: Start: Week of January 9th
End: Week of March 13th
No makeups**

**Spring: Start: Week of March 20th
End: Week of May 22nd
Make-ups: Week of May 29th (Memorial Day – no classes)**

**Summer: Start: Week of June 5th
End: Week of August 7th
Make-ups: Week of August 14th (July 4th – no classes)**

Summer Break: Week of August 21st

**Summer Camps: June 19-23 ages 4-7; July 10-14 ages 8-12;
July 24-28 ages 13-18+; August 14-18 ages 4-7**

**Fall: Start: Week of August 28th
End: Week of October 30th
Make-ups: Week of November 6th (Labor Day – no classes. No classes day of Show)**

Horse Show: September 30th

**Extended Fall: Start: Week of November 13th
End: Week of December 18th
No makeups**

Volunteer Training Schedule: BASIC: March 11th; March 18th; April 8th; May 13th; June 10th; July 8th; August 12th; September 9th; October 14th; All are held from 12:30pm-3:30

Additional Trainings will be held throughout the year as needed; see Volunteer board and volunteer news page on website for topics and dates/times.