

The Psychological Benefits of Therapeutic Riding

Resource: STRIDES
Therapeutic Riding,
Northridge, CA

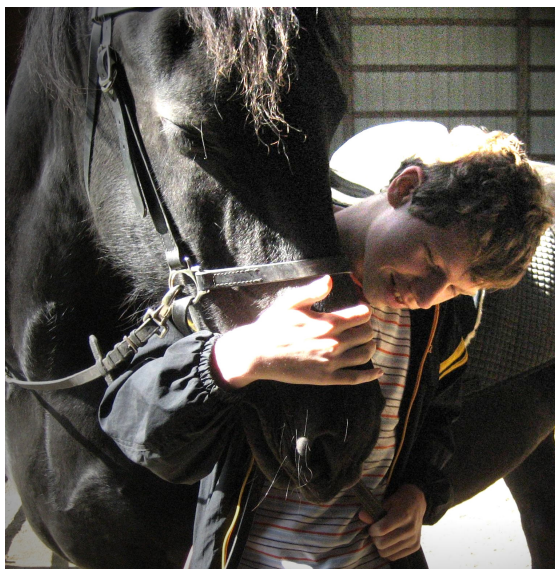
General sense of well-being. Exercise in the fresh air of a ranch, away from hospitals, doctors office, therapy rooms, or home help to promote a sense of well-being.

Improved self-confidence. Confidence is gained by mastering a skill normally performed by able-bodied people. The ability to control an animal much larger and stronger than oneself is a great confidence builder. Participating in events such as shows and play days add to the sense of achievement.

Increased interest in the outside world. For those confined by a disability, the world tends to shrink in size. Riding increases interest in what is happening around the rider, as the rider explores the world from the back of a horse. Even exercising becomes interesting when done on horseback.

Increased interest in one's own life. The excitement of riding and the experiences involved stimulate the rider, encouraging the rider to speak and communicate about it.

Improved risk-taking abilities. Riding is a risk sport. The rider learns to master fears through the act of staying on the horse, as well as attempting new skills and positions on the horse.



Development of patience. Since the horse has a mind of its own, the rider learns patience as he or she attempts to perform skills on the horse when the horse is not cooperating. Repetition of basic riding principles also helps to develop patience.

Emotional control and self-discipline. The rider quickly learns that an out-of-control rider means an out-of-control horse. Shouting, crying, and emotional outbursts upset the horse, which in turn frightens the rider. Riders learn to control these emotions and appropriately express them.

Sense of normality. By being able to master a skill considered difficult by the able population, the rider experiences him/herself as being normal.

Expansion of the locus of control. The rider begins to view him/herself as having control over his/her world as control over a powerful animal increases.