

Equine Assisted Learning Effectiveness Model

"Life skills" are defined as psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of their everyday personal and professional lives. Everyone, everywhere, needs life skills to help them effectively manage their lives, their relationships, their boundaries and their work.

Some examples of essential life skills are;

- Effective communication and interpersonal skills
- Decision-making and problem-solving
- Leadership
- Adaptability and flexibility
- Creative and critical thinking
- Self-awareness and empathy — two critical parts of emotional intelligence
- Assertiveness and equanimity, or self-control
- Resilience and ability to cope with challenges
- Setting and respecting boundaries

Through Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) programs, we can help people to develop these essential skills through working with horses. Horses are highly astute and react only to the stimulus around them. As a prey animal, their main objective is always to be safe. It is because of this that they can sense the escalation or de-escalation of the stimulus within the people working with them. Horses react to this change in stimulus, and trained facilitators can step in to help the participants to understand and apply the learning.

Equine Connection's particular type of EAL is exceptional in that the programs have been tested and researched to have a predictable outcome and how it can assist people with developing the fundamental abilities referenced previously.

The Fundamental Principles, taught by the Equine Connection - the Academy of Equine Assisted Learning, help people to build the specific life skills needed to move forward - regardless of their starting point. It is the foundation of this program that allow it to be applicable and accurate to all audiences of clients who would participate either through day programs (ex. corporate development) or curriculum programs (ex. persons at risk). Thus helping a variety of situations and an endless list of applicable participants.

- Safe learning environment
- Form of Delivery
- Effective and efficient evidence based programs
- Proven and researched programs and methodology
- Trained and experienced horses
- Objectively driven & structured programs
- Certified Facilitators (2:1 horses to facilitator ratio.)
- All course materials
- Location (arena or outdoor space) for programs
- Reflection materials to help clients to parallel the skill to their lives
- Facilitated debrief

- Equine-Assisted Learning programs
- Knowledge of how a horse speaks, teaches and why they are the ideal barometers for learning
- Curriculum programs run between 8-24 weeks or day programs depending on audience
- Objectively driven programs designed for results in a safe environment
- All Programs include visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles
- Both individual and team interaction and dynamics
- Facilitators offer explanations and provide guidance as participants work toward a solution
- Objectively driven programs are designed to provide predictable outcomes

Through working with horses clients will develop and apply skills such as;

- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Decision-making and problem-solving skills
- Leadership
- Active listening
- Articulation
- Adaptability
- Creative thinking
- Critical thinking
- Self-awareness and empathy - two crucial parts of emotional intelligence
- Appropriate assertiveness
- Self-control
- Resilience and ability to cope with problems
- Focus
- Trust
- Relationship building
- Boundaries
- Coping mechanisms
- Mindfulness
- Collaboration
- Diplomacy
- Conflict Management

Retention and application of developed skills to increase the quality of life for participants

Research shows that for experiential programs to be successful, it is not merely about being a part of an experience. The experience must be surrounded with structure and supervision and be reflected upon to have lasting value. In Equine Assisted Learning this is achieved through;

- programs related to the objective and the overall goals of the program;
- personal assessments and reflection that provide evidence of the learning that they can look back at;
- facilitators who understand the learning goals for the student and partner with them or the organization they are with to provide continuous parallels and feedback;
- an opportunity to reflect the learning to their lives and understand its application;
- preparation for the next exercises through the reflection of the last exercise;
- continuous, reflection opportunities to help students link experience and learning throughout the learning experience through facilitated debriefing and personal reflection and evaluation sheets.

Experiential education, such as this program, can also improve the quality of learning itself and increase the likelihood that participants will be able to use the knowledge, critical abilities, and habits of mind acquired in their Equine Assisted Learning sessions with the horse as a teacher.