



Flying High Farm, Inc.

Psychotherapy Services for Youth

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Flying High Farm has Pony Power!

Flying High Farm incorporates the therapeutic magic of animals toward optimizing one's emotional growth.



Duncan and a very young rider

Flying High Farm, an Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy program in Lunenburg, MA, continues to grow in response to an unprecedented demand for these unique services.

Sarah Charest, LCSW and NARHA Registered Therapeutic Riding Instructor, who has been with FHF since June 2006, is now on-site Monday through Friday. This allows more chil-

dren to participate in this pony-powered psychotherapy.

Christine Randle, LICSW, NARHA Registered Therapeutic Riding Instructor and President of FHF, continues to work with children individually and in small groups while also developing new programming.

The tremendous response for this innovative therapy inspired Christine to expand FHF to meet the needs of significantly more children. FHF is waiting for final government approval on these plans and hopefully will have exciting information in the next newsletter.

Additionally, a challenge of EFP as a science has been validating, or scientifically measuring the benefits of, this form of therapy. We are very fortunate that Trish McConnell, a PhD student, is using the EFP conducted at FHF as the source of her doctoral dissertation. Only children whose parents give permission will be included in this pioneering research. We are very excited about this, because quantitative research is vital to the future expansion of our program and the practice of

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EFP as a whole.

Currently, FHF has limited openings for individual treatment and for the boys social skills groups. These groups operate at the following times:

- ★ 8 and under (starting 9/18)
Every other Tuesday at 4:15
- ★ 9 -11 years (starting 9/11)
Every other Tuesday at 4:15
- ★ 12-14 years (starting TBD)
Date/time still being finalized

If you feel your child would benefit from these services, please call Christine at 978-582-7103 or email her at Christine@flyinghighfarm.com.

FHF accepts:

- Aetna
- BCBS
- Fallon
- Magellan
- PacifiCare
- Tricare
- UBH/UHC
- ValueOptions

Horse Therapy - changing lives

Children with autism and attention deficit disorder often struggle to communicate - but put them with horses and they can achieve so much. That's what American Franklin Levinson found when he introduced Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) to children with serious emotional challenges.

Therapy with horses has been around for ages, but what Franklin did was to take the work of the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association a step further to help children with severe anti-social behavior.

What is EFL?

EFL is a therapy where the children learn about themselves, other people and interacting with the world. It's not about teaching riding or horse care skills and the children don't need any previous experience of horses.

"It's been clinically proven that just being in the vicinity of horses changes our brainwave patterns," says Franklin. "They have a calming effect which helps stop people becoming fixated on past or negative events - giving them a really positive experience."

EFL has proven to be particularly useful for children with autism, attention deficit disorder and bipolar disorder - all of whom may find it difficult to communicate, interact with other people and carry out instructions.

The results are startling. Even those showing severe anti-social and aggressive behavior become calmer and more communicative.

How it Works

"Horses react as a mirror to the person who's with him," says Franklin. "He's a prey animal so he wants to feel safe and is always on the lookout for predators. A horse will

become very fearful if he's with someone who's aggressive, noisy, disrespectful or too controlling. On the other hand, if the person makes requests rather than demands the horse will begin to cooperate. He is always looking for a leader."

This is why horses are so good to use as therapy for children. A child who is given just a little insight into dealing with a horse in the right way can become the natural leader the horse is looking for. The horse in return feels safe and peaceful and will cooperate with what the child asks of him.



Children, even those with emotional or mental disorders, can often manage a horse more easily and more quickly than adults. Children accept things at face value and are more open to developing an equal relationship rather than trying to control.

A horse is looking for simple and clear commands, and a child, with the right encouragement and in the right situation, can carry these out very effectively. "Go, stop, back up, turn this way or that way" is all that's needed.

"For children with mental and emotional disorders the positive benefits of getting a horse to carry out these commands are often profound." Says Franklin.

"Children with ADD will focus on

the horse for long periods while grooming or leading the horse when usually they can't concentrate long enough to do anything much. Autistic children who are withdrawn and living very much in their own world will begin to express themselves - often using new words or gestures they've never expressed before.

"Once children realize what they can achieve their self-esteem increases in leaps and bounds. Imagine what it must feel like to lead an animal through an obstacle course, stopping and starting when you want to, when you usually find it difficult to concentrate, communicate or stay in control?"

EFL in the UK

Franklin wants to bring EFL to the UK and he's already been over here to spread the word and to hold an introductory course for people interested in becoming EFL therapists. A full training course must be undertaken before being allowed to do this work, and Franklin is planning one for later this year.

Anyone desperate to get started can train in America with a qualified therapist - they would then be able to practice as an EFL therapist over here. Franklin is happy to mentor people on his ranches, in Colorado and Hawaii, while they learn the skills needed. EFL is well-accepted in the US and there are strict training courses, protocols and standards to adhere to.

All the children are referred for EFL through a physician, therapist or agency and the funding for their treatment comes from these sources.

The Horses

There isn't a specific type or breed of horse that is suitable for EFL. It really is an individual thing. All horses, perhaps with the exception

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Wordsearch

Find the items below that you need in order to ride at Flying High Farm.

Hoofpick	h	s	e	a	g	i	r	t	h	s
Brush	o	p	r	a	y	y	p	e	e	n
Flyspray	o	n	y	s	c	a	o	v	l	i
Halter	f	d	h	l	l	r	e	a	m	s
Bridle	p	p	a	e	n	p	d	u	e	n
Saddle	i	c	l	p	a	s	s	n	t	p
Saddlepad	c	i	t	x	e	y	a	i	e	s
Girth	k	x	e	p	e	l	d	i	r	b
Helmet	p	i	r	e	z	f	d	s	m	i
Pixie	d	u	n	c	a	n	l	d	d	p
Duncan	v	e	i	x	i	p	e	s	a	i
	b	r	u	s	h	z	a	r	r	s

Common Misconceptions about Horses

Do you ever wonder why Pixie sometimes has a really thick coat during the summer months when Duncan and Penny do not? Pixie has what is called Cushing's Syndrome. Cushing's Syndrome is caused by a small benign tumor in the pituitary gland of the horse or pony. A horse with Cushing's usually develops the condition in the mid to late years of life (average age is 20 years), although it is sometimes diagnosed in horses as young as seven.

Some of the symptoms associated with Cushing's are:



- not shedding winter coats out in time for summer
- loss of muscle tone and loss of weight
- increase in appetite and thirst
- chronic laminitis (a serious and life-threatening hoof ailment)

Unfortunately, there is no cure for Cushing's Syndrome, but the good news is that there are medications that can slow down the progress of the disease. Once Cushing's Syndrome has been diagnosed, treatment is simple although long term. In many cases horses can return to close to normal health. Pixie is on a medication called Peroglide in order to treat the effects of the disease. Pixie is clipped several times a year (since her coat doesn't shed) so that she is comfortable. The pony in this picture has Cushing's and you can see how her coat has not shedded out.

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of stallions and competition horses, can be used for EFL. What is important is that they have a calm, patient and trainable temperament.

Safety is the top priority and every horse has to undergo a thorough assessment before being considered for EFL. The horse must not kick, rear, buck, bite or mouth and he must be sound.

During therapy the children are asked to carry out

exercises including leading and lunging, sometimes over cavaletti. The horse must be capable of doing all of these without getting stressed.

EFL horses have to carry out commands without being touched and can't be easily fazed by children working in different ways. For example, a child might lead from the wrong side or not stand in the best place when halting him.

Meet Franklin Levinson

Franklin's dad, a polo player, started taking him to

the yard when he was about seven. He became a polo "hot walker" and was quickly in demand as the riders recognized his talent for settling horses. This experience was the start of Franklin's lifelong interaction with horses and being near them made him feel peaceful and calm.

His career followed an unusual path - he was a polo player, worked as an instructor at a summer camp and was a music therapist working with emotionally disturbed people. He then began to think about how horses could help people with emotional challenges and a search on the internet took him to the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) website - an organization which was already doing a kind of EFL.

The association's work struck a chord with Franklin - he knew that working with horses and people in this way was something he could do, so he went on a variety of courses to get started.

Returning to his ranch on the Hawaiian island of Maui, Franklin started the Maui Horse Whisperer Experience, an interactive, hands-on experience of horses for non-horse people. Over time he discovered that he had a natural way with children and the obvious next step was to develop EFL for children who had emotional or mental disorders.

*This article was edited for space and was originally and fully published in Your Horse Magazine.
A Special Report by Julie Brown*