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# EQUINE ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY

## aids CRIME VICTIMS

Hudson Valley HorsePlay

(845) 616 - 3608

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**Kerhonkson, NY** — Clients who seek services at Hudson Valley HorsePlay have been traumatized by physical, sexual, psychological, and/or emotional abuse. Many times this may cause our clients to experience a wide array of symptoms varying from lack of trust of human relationships (therefore hindering the rapport building process between client and therapist), feeling socially marginalized due to the stigma attached to being the victim of domestic violence, inability to initiate or reciprocate the process of socially normative touch or physical contact, anxiety, loneliness, and depression. These trauma symptoms are at times so debilitating for a client that the client may have lowered self-esteem, difficulty in self-regulating, socializing, maintaining focus, and feeling in control of their lives.

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Equine assisted psychotherapy is a solution focused treatment modality that incorporates equines into a therapy session in order to promote experiential growth and learning for the client. Specifically, the EAGALA model is a collaborative effort between a mental health professional, an equine specialist, and the equine(s). These three entities form the “treatment team”. EAGALA providers become certified after completing Level One and Level Two training and upon acceptance of a Professional Development Portfolio. They must complete 20 hours of EAGALA approved continuing education every 2 years to retain certification. Providers are governed by the EAGALA Code of Ethics.

Equines are able to influence the session in several powerful ways, including: teaching responsibility, assertiveness, confidence, communication, and modeling how to build healthy relationships. They are social animals with distinct personalities, attitudes, and moods. Because of this, horses provide unique opportunities for metaphorical learning. Equines are sensitive to non-verbal communication and respond to the message the client is presenting in the moment. Equine Assisted Psychotherapy or EAP is about the horses doing the work of effecting change in people’s lives, because it is the relationship between the horses and the clients that effects change, not the relationship between the facilitators and the clients. EAP is effective when used with an individual client, a family or a group of unrelated clients.

In a typical EAP session, the client or group is given a task to perform based on the therapeutic focus. One or more equines will be used to accomplish the task. The equine specialist and mental health professional report their observations back to the client(s) based upon the reactions of the equines during the EAP session. The clients then interpret the horses’ responses and use that metaphor to better understand their own patterns of behavior within relationships.

Hudson Valley HorsePlay was founded by Eagala Certified facilitator Cori Nichols. HorsePlay provides services year round for individuals, groups and families at its private Kerhonkson NY location.

Contact HorsePlay [via email](#) or phone Cori Nichols (845) 616 - 3608.

No-cost customized demonstrations held year-round.

<http://www.HudsonValleyHorsePlay.com>