

Equine-Assisted Therapy

How Working With Horses Can Help Build Healthier Relationships



What is Equine-Assisted Therapy?

Equine-Assisted Therapy is a structured, experiential form of psychotherapy in which clients engage directly with horses under the guidance of a licensed mental health professional and a qualified equine specialist. Horses are acutely sensitive to human emotional states and respond in real time to what a person is actually feeling, not just what they say. That unscripted, honest feedback creates a therapeutic environment unlike anything found in a clinical office.

How It Works: The Five Phases of Equine-Assisted Therapy

1) **Ground-Based Engagement**

Client interacts with horses on the ground, without riding or instruction.

2) **Authentic Response**

Horses react directly to the client's emotional state, body language, and energy.

3) **Clinical Observation**

A licensed therapist observes the client-horse interaction and notes behavioral patterns.

4) **Guided Reflection**

The therapist facilitates the client's insight into what the interaction revealed.

5) **Skill Transfer**

Insights connect to recovery goals, relapse patterns, and real-world relationships.

Goals of Equine Therapy

- Develop self-awareness through unfiltered, real-time behavioral feedback
- Recognize unconscious emotional patterns
- Build capacity for authentic trust and connection
- Strengthen emotional regulation in real-life situations
- Practice accountability when responses carry immediate consequences

Therapeutic Benefits

- Reduced emotional reactivity and impulsivity
- Improved ability to form and maintain trust
- Greater self-confidence through mastery of challenging interactions
- Deeper insight into chronic relapse behaviors
- Healthier relationships built on honesty and present-moment connection

Equine-Assisted Therapy is Highly Effective For Treating the Following Conditions:

- Substance Use Disorder
- Depression
- ADHD
- PTSD and Trauma
- Anxiety Disorders
- Eating Disorders

Equine-Assisted Therapy at Burning Tree Ranch

Equine-assisted therapy is a one-of-a-kind treatment modality most programs aren't equipped to provide. Programs that do incorporate it often do so as a brief supplemental activity, not as an integrated clinical discipline.

One or two sessions with a horse can surface real insight, but for chronic relapsers, a single moment of awareness rarely changes deeply entrenched behavioral patterns.

This makes Burning Tree Ranch uniquely equipped to provide authentic equine-assisted therapy. Our **long-term, progress-based model** integrates equine-assisted therapy to give clients an opportunity to practice emotional regulation under real, unscripted conditions.



"A horse does not respond to what someone says they have learned. It responds to what they are actually feeling. For chronic relapsers who have become experts at saying the right things, that distinction changes everything."

 **Brook McKenzie, LCDC**
CEO, Burning Tree Ranch



Dual Diagnosis Treatment Using Equine-Assisted Therapy

When combined with other evidence-based treatments in a dual-diagnosis setting, equine-assisted therapy has shown to be highly effective. For chronic relapsers with co-occurring conditions, the nonverbal, experiential nature of equine work reaches emotional and behavioral patterns that medication and talk therapy alone may not address.

At Burning Tree Ranch, we integrate equine-assisted therapy with numerous other treatment modalities as part of an individualized dual-diagnosis treatment plan, helping clients and families move toward lasting sobriety.

Dual Diagnosis Defined:

The presence of **both a substance use disorder and a mental health condition** occurring together. Effective treatment for dual-diagnosis addictions must address both aspects simultaneously.



Have Other Treatment Programs Missed the Deeper Issues?

Burning Tree Ranch is the Nation's only authentic long-term treatment program for chronic relapse. Call us at (866) 287-2877 or visit us online at www.BurningTree.com.

Disclaimer: Burning Tree Ranch aims to enhance the quality of life for individuals battling substance use and mental health disorders through well-researched and professionally reviewed content. Our publications focus on the nature of behavioral health conditions, available treatments, and their outcomes. Reviewed by licensed experts, our material is informative but not a replacement for professional advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the guidance of a licensed health provider for any medical or clinical concerns.