

BENEFITS OF ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY AND THERAPEUTIC RIDING THROUGH THERAPEUTIC RECREATION

Therapeutic recreation participants benefit from touching and interacting with animals and caring for the animals' needs, learning skills that are normally taught in the classroom and acquiring job skills. The objectives of therapeutic recreation are to:

- ♣ Increase environmental awareness
- ♣ Increase relaxation
- ♣ Teach environment and care of animals
- ♣ Build self esteem
- ♣ Teach expressions of emotions in a constructive way
- ♣ Teach cooperation and compromise with others
- ♣ Develop fine and gross motor skills
- ♣ Build and maintain muscle tone and increase flexibility
- ♣ Increase tactile tolerance and awareness
- ♣ Increase expressive language skills; i.e., indicate requests for objects or information, answer questions, indicate choices, etc.
- ♣ Indicate appropriate communicative intent through use of specific mode of communication
- ♣ Increase use of specific linguistic structures appropriately
- ♣ Increase comprehension of questions
- ♣ Increase prelinguistic skills
- ♣ Encourage reach, capture and manipulation of objects
- ♣ Achieve means to end concepts through demonstration
- ♣ Teach use of conventional tools
- ♣ Promote responsibility
- ♣ Encourage gestures and/or sounds
- ♣ Increase vocabulary through recognition and memory of various objects seen and used with the animals
- ♣ Increase motivational level
- ♣ Teach syntax or how to combine words to express ideas
- ♣ Teach grammar categories including verbs, which are difficult to address in traditional settings
- ♣ Teach practical aspects of communication – requesting, greeting, calling, commanding, expression of feeling, pretending, giving and asking for information
- ♣ Increase self-worth and pride
- ♣ Encourage responsibility and an awareness of needs of others rather than one's own
- ♣ Increase and build cognitive skills
- ♣ Increase attention span and facilitate low distractibility
- ♣ Provide a sense of accomplishment
- ♣ Provide opportunity for assertiveness and increased self-image

In addition to the many benefits listed above, Kopper Top Life Learning Center offers horseback riding, which provides more intense physical rehabilitation to its participants. Therapeutic riding objectives include:

- ♣ Build and maintain muscle tone and increase flexibility
- ♣ Increase head control through use of vestibular and oculomotor neural system
- ♣ Develop balance equilibrium responses
- ♣ Strengthen upper and lower extremities
- ♣ Develop fine and gross motor skills
- ♣ Promote body symmetry
- ♣ Provide an interesting and challenging opportunity for general strengthening and conditioning exercises
- ♣ Increase spatial relationship
- ♣ Stimulate tactile and proprioceptive systems for proper sensor motor development
- ♣ Develop concepts of right/left discrimination and body awareness
- ♣ Improve posture, trunk extension, balance and protective responses
- ♣ Provide a position that encourages proper development of hip joints

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- ♿ To give the expression of movement free from mechanical devices
- ♿ To increase appropriate behavior
- ♿ To increase work skills and knowledge of appropriate dress for this particular activity
- ♿ To teach awareness and understanding of protective equipment and safety rules
- ♿ To teach recognition and use of basic tools and equipment and identify material needed for a specific activity
- ♿ To increase the individual's self-concept by encouraging demonstration of positive feelings about him/her self, and recognition of feelings and moods of other people/animals