

RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION OF QLD INC

Megan Wray

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Our Organisation

Provides horse base activities for people with disabilities

We are:

- Not for profit,
- Volunteer based
- Registered Charity and TDGR
- RDAQ office is located at the:
 - Shaftesbury Campus, Deception Bay Road
Deception Bay



What we do:

Our Centres provide:

- suitable horses,
- trained volunteer helpers,
- accredited RDA coaches,
- riding and safety equipment

to run a range of equestrian activities



These currently include:

- Structured classes
- Therapeutic exercises
- Mounted games
- Competition opportunities



How our programs help

Horse riding is a natural reflex inhibiting position which helps:

- improve balance and posture
- providing a unique form of
- exercise and rehabilitation.



Benefits of riding with RDA

Our programs make a huge difference to the lives of children and adults with special needs and disabilities.



SOCIAL BENEFITS

Friendship

Although riding can be a solitary activity, it is normal performed in groups. Riders share a common love of horses and a common experience of riding, a good foundation on which to build a friendship.



PHYSICAL BENEFITS

Improved Balance

AS THE HORSE MOVES THE RIDER IS CONSTANTLY THROWN OFF BALANCE, REQUIRING THE RIDER'S MUSCLES TO CONTRACT AND RELAX IN AN ATTEMPT TO REBALANCE. THIS EXERCISING IS SIMILAR TO PHYSIOTHERAPY, REACHING THE DEEP MUSCLES, BUT MAKING THE THERAPY MORE ENJOYABLE AND EVEN FUN! THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL RHYTHMIC MOVEMENT OF THE HORSE IS SIMILAR TO THE MOTION OF WALKING, TEACHING RHYTHMICAL PATTERS TO THE MUSCLES OF THE LEGS AND TRUNK. BY PLACING THE RIDER IN DIFFERENT POSITIONS ON THE HORSE (THERAPEUTIC RIDING) DIFFERENT MUSCLES ARE WORKED. STOPPING AND STARTING THE HORSE AS WELL AS CHANGING THE SPEED AND DIRECTION INCREASES THE BENEFITS.



Strengthened Muscles

Muscles are strengthened by the increased use involved in riding. Even though riding is exercise, it is perceived as enjoyment, therefore the rider has increased tolerance and motivation to lengthen the period of exercise.

Improved Coordination, Faster Reflexes and Better Motor Planning

Riding a horse requires a great deal of coordination in order to get the desired response from the horse. Since the horse provides instant feedback to every action from the rider, it is easy to know when you have given the correct cue. Repetition of the patterned movements required in controlling a horse quickens the reflexes and aids in motor planning.



Stretching of Tight or Spastic Muscles

Sitting on a horse requires stretching of the adductor muscles of the thighs. This is accomplished by pre-stretching exercises prior to mounting and by starting the rider on a narrow horse and gradually working to wider horses. Gravity helps stretch the calf muscles when the rider sits on the horse without stirrups. Stomach and back muscles are stretched by encouraging the rider to maintain an upright position against the movement of the horse. Arm and hand muscles are stretched by the act of holding the reins. The rhythmic motion and warmth of the horse aids in relaxation, particularly of the legs. Sitting astride the horse helps break the extensor spasms of lower limbs. Holding the reins helps to break the flexor spasm patterns of upper limbs. Fatigue helps to decrease spasticity by producing relaxation.



Increased Range of Motion of the Joints

As spasticity is reduced, range of motion increases. Range of motion is also improved by the act of mounting and dismounting, tacking, grooming and exercises during the lesson.

Improved Respiration and Circulation

Although riding is not normally considered a cardiovascular activity, trotting and cantering do increase both respiration and circulation.

Improved Appetite and Digestion

Like all forms of exercise, riding stimulates the appetite

Sensory Integration

Riding stimulates the tactile sense both through touch and environmental stimuli. The many sounds of the outdoor farm situation helps to involve the auditory system



PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

General Sense of Well Being

Exercise in the fresh air of the country away from hospitals, doctors offices, therapy rooms, home helps to promote a sense of well being.

Increased Interest in One's Own Life

The excitement of riding encourages the rider to speak and communicate about their activities

Improved Self Confidence

Confidence is gained in mastering new skills normally performed by able-bodied people. The ability to control an animal much larger and stronger than oneself is a great confidence builder

Emotional Control and Self Discipline

The rider quickly learns self control



EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

Remedial Reading

Before one can be taught to read, it is necessary to recognise the difference in shapes, sizes and colours. These can be taught on horseback in the form of games and activities. There is less resistance to learning when it is part of a horse riding lesson.

Remedial Maths

Counting is learned by counting the horses footfalls, objects around the arena etc. Because the concepts of maths are taught through games, the resistance to learning is less.



Sequencing, Patterning and Motor Planning

Something as simple as holding a pencil requires a great deal of motor planning. Knowing which comes first in a sequence of events is an important part of most activities. These and other skills are taught on horse back through the use of obstacle courses, pole bending and many other games and activities.

Improved Hand/Eye Coordination

Eye and hand coordination is necessary for skills such as writing. These skills are taught in grooming and preparing the horse as well as other activities and exercises



Visual Spatial Perception

This includes our awareness of form and space and our understanding relationships between the forms in our environment. Included in this is directionality (knowing right from left), space-perception (knowing when items are close in shape but different), perception of depth (picking out an object from a background) and visual sequential memory (such as remembering patterns).

Differentiation

The rider learns to differentiate significant from less significant stimuli in the environment. An improvement in this area occurs as the rider learns to attend to their horse and those things that may influence the horse rather than attending to the environment in general.



People with all types and levels of disability are accepted into RDA programs (including but not limited to):

- Attention Deficit Disorder
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Cerebral Palsy
- Down Syndrome
- Epilepsy
- Hearing Impairment
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Spina Bifida
- Vision Impairment



Presentation by
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