



SAFETY RULES

Horses are large, powerful creatures and even the most mild-tempered horse can spook and accidentally hurt someone. While being around horses, it is extremely important to be aware of your surroundings, your actions and the horse's behavior. Staying calm, focused and alert at all times is a key safeguard. For the safety of you, the therapist, the equine specialist and the horse, please follow these simple rules.

Before you interact with the horses, we will go over some basic safety principles. We will also be available during sessions to teach you how to safely interact with the horses, for support and to answer any questions you might have. If at any time you feel unsafe or scared, please let us know **immediately** so we can help you.

Safety is our number one concern. Your therapist and Equine Specialist are both well-trained and have many years of experience with horses. You must be able to follow directions. If at any time we give you an instruction, you must comply immediately. Our safety phrase is "Time Out". If we tell you to take a Time Out at any time, you must immediately, calmly and safely get to the side of the ring and away from the horse.

Helmets are **required** for everyone who participates in mounted work with the horses and they are also available for anyone who would like to use them during ground work. Though a helmet cannot entirely prevent head injuries, it reduces the risk by about 96%. The Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) certifies helmets that meet or exceed the American Society for Testing & Materials (ASTM) standard for equestrian headgear. Use only helmets with the ASTM/SEI mark. We have helmets available for your use or you can buy an ASTM approved helmet and make sure that it properly fits your head. The back of the helmet should extend to the bottom of your skull, and it should not move when you move your head up and down.

Wear sturdy boots with a heel and hard toes that will protect your feet if your horse or pony steps on them.

Do not wear jewelry or loose-fitting clothing as they may get tangled and could cause injury.

Horses can kick to the side and behind their body so be very careful when you're around his hindquarters. If you must pass behind a horse, touch his rump while you do so or stay at least four feet away. Even horses who are generally safe and reliable can kick due to unknown causes, like being bit by a horsefly on their leg. They are instinct-driven animals and may react without consideration of a nearby human's safety. Never stand directly behind a horse. If you are [grooming](#) its tail, stand to one side and pull the tail gently over.

Never run in the barn or around horses. Keep your voice calm and gentle.

Never approach a horse that you don't know. Spectators and family members are NOT allowed to roam the farm and will need to stay either in the office or in their car while the client is in session.

Treats are not allowed at the farm. Because we are trying to establish an appropriate, positive connection based on mutual respect and communication, we do not allow clients or their guests to feed treats to the horses. We understand that you may want to do something nice for your horse and we are happy to discuss ways to "pamper" your horse without food.

Lead horses with the rope neatly folded in your hand. Never bunch up a rope or wrap it around your hand so that it can be easily released if a horse moves suddenly. The safest way to lead a horse is with a halter and lead rope. Don't hook your fingers through the halter straps, rings or the bit. If the horse pulls away, your fingers could be caught, injuring them or catching your hand so that you are dragged. Never loop lead ropes, longe lines or reins around your hands or any other body part. If your horse pulls away, you could be injured.

If we determine that mounted work will enhance your therapeutic growth, we may incorporate some riding into your treatment plan. In this case, we will have your horse saddled and ready for your session. Tack is your horse's equipment - saddle, bridle, reins, girth, etc. If your tack doesn't fit you or the horse, you could be in serious trouble. **DO NOT** attempt to tack the horse without one of us directly supervising. We will check the girth frequently during any riding, but if at any time you feel the saddle slipping, the reins aren't a good fit, stirrups are not the right length or any other concern, please let us know immediately.

If something dangerous happens - if your horse takes off, for instance - kick your feet free of the stirrups. This way, if you fall, you will not get hung up in the saddle and be dragged. It is much better to hit the ground safely than to be attached to your horse as he gallops off into the distance.

In the wild, horses use body language to communicate to one another. By watching their body language we can generally know what to expect. Here are some basic tips:

- A frightened horse will pick its head up abruptly, pointing his ears forward and flaring his nostrils. This is considered the startle response.
- When a horse has his ears back, head lowered and showing its teeth, this is a display of aggression. A horse's natural defense is fight or flight.
- If a horse perceives something as a threat, it may run away or stand and fight.
- A horse's vision is different than ours. A horse's eyes are on the sides of their face. They can only see a clear picture directly in front of them. Therefore, it may cause a horse to be unpredictable at times and spook at things it can not see. It may also trigger their fight or flight instincts. Standing at their shoulder allows them to see you best.

Please feel free to ask any and all questions. We will do our best to answer them immediately and if we don't know, we will find out as soon as possible.

I, the undersigned, acknowledge that I have been provided with a copy of the safety rules for Adirondack Equine Assisted Psychotherapy, LCSW, prior to horse exposure.

Signature

Parent Signature for client _____

Date: _____

Witness Signature