



Asociación
Española de
Equinoterapias



Horses Teach me How to Find my Way
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The importance of a multidisciplinary team for Animal Assisted Therapies.

When thinking of Equine Assisted Therapy, the primary concern that comes to mind is that the horse has a crucial role on the outcome of the intervention, therefore it may appear like the most important factor to consider when choosing the setting and the horse/rider pair. This first thought is a crucial part of the therapy and the appointment of the horse is indeed very important: horses, like humans, can differ for physical constitution and character, both to be taken into consideration when paring them with a human partner. But even before this crucial decision there is an even more crucial team work to decide strategies and objectives for each therapeutic project. Equine assisted therapy, as the name suggests, involves the horse (or horses), the person receiving the therapy (with his own abilities) and the therapist/s.

Clearly, the therapist cannot always be an expert on all the parties involved: horse and person, given the wide range of differences among each and every single exemplar of both species. For example, we could have a speech therapist, expert in his field, then probably will not have a deep knowledge of horses. Or a physiotherapist, giving a therapy to a person with both physical and mental impairments. These two examples clearly underline the importance, for the wellbeing of the therapist and the good outcome of the project, to have a team of different professionals that can participate, both directly and indirectly, to the treatment. The beneficiaries of an equine therapy are various, therefore various have to be the professionals involved in a center that provides such treatments. A good team, able to respect and see the singularity of each member, with their own resources, flows and professional abilities, is the key factor to a positive therapy. We must remember that, when we say “positive therapy”, that does not necessarily means that the initial project will be respected and all of its objectives reached, as it is more about a positive attitude towards the whole process, that includes having the insight to understand when and how the initial project needs to be revised, without taking it as a step back or a failure, but a step on the process of well being.

Regarding the different professionals involved in the team, that will depend on the beneficiaries of the therapies, their abilities and impairments. The crucial factor though, is a good interaction among the members: mutual appreciation, the knowledge that they all can rely on each other to design and carry on a therapy that is comprehensive of the different aspects that come into play during each session.