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Horse therapy makes sense

Ava Benny-Morrison | 14th April 2010

LUSH green hills, friendly horses and an outdoor surrounding is not the stereotypical environment for a therapy session.

But equine specialists Holly Ohlson and Tiffany Carmichael have created an alternate and effective form of therapy in Teven.

Horse Sense for Humans is a form of equine associated psychotherapy that brings people of all ages together with horses to help address and solve personal life issues.

People with anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorder and relationship issues had all been clients of the program which, had created many 'wow moments' said co-founder Tiffany Carmichael.

"Horses have a high level of intuitiveness and they can read what is going on with the clients by mimicking real life situations," Mrs Carmichael said.

"We have those wow moments where the horses will mirror the clients or the same horse will act completely different for different clients.

"The clients will interpret the horses' actions in different ways and this allows them to see what is going on in their lives," she said.

Horse Sense for Humans uses the EAGALA model of equine therapy, of which there are only about five in Australia.

The local group, which also comprises of a registered psychologist and mental health worker, does not involve horse-riding but interaction activities like guiding a horse through an obstacle course and grooming.

People who are bored with standard therapy sessions often find comfort and 'emotional safety' within the horse therapy said co-founder Holly Ohlson.

"Horses have no bias and hold no agenda for people," Ms Ohlson said.

"People who have been in talk therapy that come out here and see a response, especially in kids."

Nortec Youth Services Ballina youth connections case worker Joanne McAnally is someone who has seen 30 young people participate in the program to deal with issues from substance abuse to low literacy issues.

"Initially most young people participating have hesitations, as the activities are often placing them outside of their comfort zone and offers them the opportunity to experience new challenges," Ms McAnally said.

"After completing the program, the majority of young people have expressed feelings of a boost to their self confidence and have a greater sense of belief in their abilities."



Holly Ohlson (left) and Tiffany Carmichael of Horse Sense for Humans with Nick who plays a role in helping people tackle mental health issues.

David Nielsen



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