

Significance of Equine Assisted Interventions: A perspective from clinical practice.

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Horses are seen as precious animals which work for thousands of years together with people on farms, in wars, and in transportation. They are highly appreciated by humans, not only because of their physical power but often also because of their loyalty, and their willingness to collaborate with humans.

Nowadays in western society most of the horses are used for sports and recreation. Another growing insight is the fact that horses also give possibilities to humans to learn about themselves. The use of horses in learning how to deal with individual ambitions, social work and school related issues is on the rise. "Horses provide vast opportunities for metaphorical learning, an effective technique when working with even the most challenging individuals or groups" (www.eagala.org).

At De Gagelhoeve in Mill we provide an environment for youngsters and adults to work with Friesian horses. The activities with the horses are a starting point for coaching, training modules and treatment trajects for persons or groups. It is a way of experiential learning in which physical contact and communication with animals is a starting point to provide new insights and to experiment new behavior, more effective in daily living.

From professionals in clinical practice questions arise about the supposed effectiveness of this kind of approach. Therefore, clinical practice needs theoretical insights, shared procedures, instruments for evaluation. Shortly, we need a scientific point of view to develop the field and the profession in this field. In my contribution to the symposium practice-based research questions for the science world will be presented.