



ARION Therapeutic Riding Association

BENEFITS OF THERAPEUTIC RIDING

The benefits to therapeutic riding are numerous and generate improvements in multiple areas of benefit for individuals with special needs. Therapeutic riding can be particularly beneficial to individuals with Autism. Therapeutic riding has an extensive history of increasing the physical ability, mental wellness and overall synchronization of brain regions. Only recently has the scientific research become available to confirm these benefits.

One of the major benefits from therapeutic riding is the simulation of the human gait. For individuals with coordination and movement challenges, sitting on a walking horse will encourage the natural movement of the hips in time with the horse's **movement**. The rhythmic movement along with the strengthening of the core body muscles has been correlated with significant improvements in numerous areas including posture, muscle tone, flexibility, body awareness, balance, fine and gross motor skills, and circulation. These studies also show reduced spasticity in children with autism. For those with speech challenges, riding can assist in opening the diaphragm, strengthening the core body muscles and improving airflow which are essential components for assisting speech.

Those with Autism and other development disabilities can be challenged with performing left brain functions such as processing verbal information and fine motor skills and with working memory challenges occurring in the pre-frontal lobe. Treatment therapies for autism often include working on the integration of different parts of the brain or synchronization. Therapeutic riding does just that! Using a combination of games, specific riding patterns and use of communication combined with the horse's movement; this form of therapy utilizes both sides of the brain develops synchronization of brain regions.

Whether the individual is challenged with mild or severe forms of Autism, a physical disability, mental health issues, or a developmental disability, therapeutic riding can provide significant benefits. The immense enjoyment of the program participants paired with the significant benefits; make this form of therapy very popular.

The farm setting at Arion nurtures many other essential life skills such as concentration, compassion, trust, independence, friendship and socialization.