



EAGALA with Warriors – Session Example

EAGALA's model of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy involves creating activities designed to reflect real-life issues. Because horses are so adept at responding to non-verbal messages, they provide powerful feedback. This provides the clients an opportunity to experience and explore their current behaviors and beliefs, and discover those which may be more effective for healthy living.

The following is an example of an EAGALA Model equine therapy session with warriors designed to address the psychological challenges of redeployments:

Participants are asked to build two spaces utilizing various props in an arena setting; one space represents their time being deployed, the second home or life in garrison. What they build and the meaning behind it is then discussed. For example, the props may represent physical and emotional reminders of their deployment and can be labeled accordingly. Also discussed is how the horses in the arena responded to their building each space – and the meaning that may have to their process.

The warriors are then asked to move a group of horses from the home space to the deployment space and back – representing their deployment transitions. This in itself presents them with a number of difficulties. Horses have different personalities, may not want to get separated from each other or might not want to be brought to a certain area. How the soldiers go about this activity – which horses they pick and how they communicate with each other and the horses - each aspect of this process and the horses' responses to their choices is then discussed and related to parallels in their transition experience.

The warriors will determine what metaphor the horses become for them: the horses may become a representation of themselves or family members, or they may represent feelings, expectations, strengths, dreams or hopes. By creating an experience like this, the warriors have the opportunity to project on to the horses and experience real-life concerns, patterns, and beliefs. By addressing the metaphors, the behaviors of the horses and experienced difficulties and successes, participants have the opportunity to draw parallels to how they react in similar situations with similar difficulties. They not only talk about challenges and solutions, they experience it in a hands-on way providing opportunity for powerful and meaningful learning.