

## **EAST, a complex theory of how change happens in EAP, made understandable.**

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Licensure Credentials: Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP)

**Secondary Presenter:** Angela Fournier PhD

Licensure Credentials: Licensed Psychologist

The purpose of this presentation is to 1. introduce equine-assisted story transformation (EAST), a theory we are using to explain what happens for humans and horses during equine-assisted learning or psychotherapy incorporating horses; 2. Explain the components of EAST and demonstrate how they work in dynamic interaction; 3. Provide the participants with tools (the SUPC and component tables) that can be useful in clinical and research settings and finally we will share a fun way to conceptualize EAST.

EAST, an integrative, explanatory intervention theory is based on clinical observations, interviews, and the literature and is constructed from the science and theory of different disciplines. It has its origins in the Eagala model. In EAST, humans and horses are understood as sentient beings, both species are social mammals with a drive to survive, be safe, and connect. EAST is organized, for the human, by physiological (polyvagal), sensory, symbolic, and cognitive domains of experience and emphasizes the influence of body-state on human thought, experience, story, and meaning. The horse's physiological, sensory, and cognitive domains of experience are also considered. EAST explains the dynamic processes that can happen within and across these two species including the integration of mind-body experiences and reciprocity of nervous systems between social mammals.

EAST minimizes the objectification of horses while acknowledging that the horse can serve as a concrete, embodied, physical experience and a symbolic one, leading to a deep understanding of an abstract thing. EAST also lends credibility to the human perception of connectedness and reciprocity during some, but not all equine encounters. The presentation will introduce EAST and discuss ways to test the theory through empirical research.

**Objective 1:** Participants will discuss and the core components of EAST, an explanatory theory of change in equine-assisted interventions

**Objective 2:** Participants will describe the human domains of experience activated when in interaction with the horse, environment and facilitators

**Objective 3:** Participants will describe a simple evaluation tool that can be used in both clinical and research EAL-EAP settings

### **Presenter Bios:**

Dr. Noreen Esposito is a board certified psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner, an Associate Professor emerita from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a fellow in the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, who has a private practice as a nurse psychotherapist and is the owner of "Knowing Horse," providing psychotherapy and professional development incorporating horses. She is the author of "How change happens in equine assisted interventions."

Angela Fournier, PhD, LP has a PhD in clinical psychology and is a licensed psychologist in Minnesota. Dr. Fournier partners with Eagle Vista Ranch & Wellness Center in Bemidji, MN to provide Eagala services and conduct research. As a professor in the department of psychology at Bemidji State University, she directs the Human Animal Interaction Laboratory. Dr. Fournier has authored several journal articles and book chapters, is author of the book - "Animal-Assisted Intervention: Thinking Empirically" and co-author

of the book "How Change Happens in Equine-Assisted Interventions: A Theory of Horses, Humans, and Psychotherapy."