

**Hope Ranch
Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc.**



Volunteer Manual

Volunteering Questions/Comments:

kassidy@hoperanchks.org

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Welcome New Volunteers!

We are delighted that you have volunteered at Hope Ranch. Our program is extremely volunteer-intensive and could not operate without our volunteers. We rely on you to make our operation as safe as it can possibly be for everyone involved, and that is our first priority. It is exciting to watch our students develop their riding skills and become physically stronger, while achieving improved self-esteem and confidence. We appreciate your handling each of our riders with careful and loving consideration, as this is the very essence of the program at Hope Ranch Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc.

Volunteer Summary

Volunteers drive the Hope Ranch program. You are the individuals that give your time and service and who assume the obligations of the program at your own free will. You are indispensable through the entire program at Hope Ranch. You do not need to be equine oriented to volunteer. Some of you will bring exceptional skills for understand and acceptance. Your new ideas and insight to the program are greatly appreciated.

We want to acknowledge and thank all of our volunteers for their contributions and the variety of experience they bring to Hope Ranch. If you ever witness a volunteer act that you believe is "above and beyond" a volunteer commitment, please provide the detail in writing to the Hope Ranch staff. At Hope Ranch, we understand that every volunteer contribution, whether large or small, is immeasurable in it's worth and value for our organization and ultimately for our riders.

You have chosen to give some of your valuable time to volunteer to help improve the lives of the disabled children and adults at Hope Ranch Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. We hope that by doing so, you will that your own life has been enhanced. Thank you for becoming a part of our organization. This manual has been developed to provide you with some guidelines for working with our riders. Please ride it carefully. The information it contains is important and will improve the quality of your work. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. Without you, this program could not exist.

Hope Ranch Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc.
Ken Scroggs, Ranch Director
3841 W. 69th Ave
Manhattan, Ks 66502
(785)587-8180 (leave message)
www.hoperanchks.org

Overview of Hope Ranch

Purpose:

Hope Ranch was founded to improve the lives of physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially disabled and disadvantaged individuals through horsemanship. Horseback riding helps people to achieve a quality of life that is improved, enhanced, and enriched through contact with horses and activity in the outdoors. Based on input from doctors, therapists, teachers, and parents the student's individual goals are designed to complement ongoing therapy and education. The benefits of therapeutic riding include the following:

Physical: The three-dimensional motion of the horse provides the rider hip, back, and trunk action that simulates natural walking. Riding relaxes and strengthens muscles and improves body tone, posture, balance, joint mobility, and coordination.

Emotional: Contact with the horses and horsemanship training provides a noncompetitive setting for learning. New abilities, self-discipline, and improved concentration build self-confidence and self-esteem as well as breaking down barriers to advancement with their situations.

Social: Horseback riding nurtures a positive self-image. Riders may, for the first time in their lives, experience some independence and a sense of being a part of a team.

Hope Ranch serves children and adults with a variety of mental, physical, and/or emotional disabilities. Instructors design and monitor individualized treatment plans for each student to address their physical, emotional, and social needs while they learn the skills of horseback riding. Students are evaluated regularly and goals are set for long term change as well as change upon each lesson. Individual and class goals encourage each rider to be the best he or she can be, on or off the horse. Horse shows and paydays give riders an opportunity to demonstrate the skills and progress they have made in a non-competitive atmosphere.

History: Hope Ranch was founded in March 2006 as a non-profit benefit corporation by our governing Board of Directors. It was the desire of the Board of Directors to meet the need in northeast Kansas for therapeutic riding and instruction.

Volunteer Opportunities

Several opportunities are available for those volunteers wishing to do more than (or instead of) volunteering as leaders and sidewalkers. If volunteering at the ranch doesn't work out, but you want to promote our cause, consider volunteering for one of the "non-horse" projects. All volunteers are encouraged to spread the word about Hope Ranch to friends, clubs, and organizations who would be interested in providing financial support, volunteers, or riders. If you have a contact you would like us to follow up on, please tell a staff member and he or she will get in touch with the right person.

Volunteer Reward Program

This program is just a small token of our appreciation that we have for all of our volunteers. So regardless of the team you are on, or the volunteer role you have filled, the following is a program designed for us to say "THANK YOU" to our volunteers!

- +25 hours of service – 1 Star + Hope Ranch T-Shirt
- +50 hours of service – 2 Stars + Hope Ranch Pullover Hoodie
- +80 hours of service – 3 Stars + Hope Ranch Jacket

You can build up your stars to cash in on the largest prize or you can cash in once you have reach the prize of your choice!

Be sure to SIGN IN so that we can keep track of the volunteer hours you have!



HORSE RELATED OPPORTUNITIES

The major volunteer opportunities are broken up into two categories, The Rider Team and The Barn Team. The Rider teams consist of a leader and two side walkers and work with the instructor to provide a safe comfortable atmosphere for our riders. The Barn Team works with the horses getting them ready for classes and taking care of them.

The BARN Team: The Barn Team needs to be at Hope Ranch about 30 to 45 minutes before the class is to begin. Their responsibility is to bring in the horses from the pasture groom them and tack them up. The Barn Team needs to pay close attention to abnormalities that the horses have such as a limp, pasture injury or sickness. They are to lunge the horse if asked by the instructor. The Barn Team will have to pay close attention to the horse and rider in order to have the right tack for each horse. When class begins, the Barn Team can start cleaning the barn, the tack room or the barn aisle ways. There is a lot of work to do while the classes are in session so we will all stay busy. We need a volunteer that can be the Barn Coordinator and organize everyone in the barn

The RIDER Team:

The Rider Team consists of a leader and two side walkers. The leader is responsible for their team being in attendance to participate. There will be substitutes that can fill each position. Side walkers that cannot come to the sessions must call on the substitute list for volunteers that can attend. The Rider Team works with the instructor to provide a safe, comfortable environment for the riders to participate.

Senior Volunteer:

A senior volunteer helps train new volunteers at orientation and during the session, helps coordinate volunteers for special events, and meets with instructors each quarter to evaluate the program from the volunteer's point of view. Requirements include at least 20 volunteer hours at Hope Ranch, a good working knowledge of tacking, grooming, and knows how to best help the riders.

Schooling:

Our horses need periodic "tune ups" to keep them interested and responsive in their work in the therapeutic setting. Volunteers with 20 or more hours of volunteer time who are experienced riders capable of performing elementary dressage movements (leg yields, turn on the forehand, etc.), getting the horse in a round frame, and bending through turns, in addition to smooth gait transitions, are eligible. Those interested should contact the instructors for a riding test.

Instructor Training:

Hope Ranch will be providing an instructor training course through a certified association, open to approved volunteers with a background in riding who are interested in teaching therapeutic riding. Training is composed of classroom instruction covering horsemanship, disabilities, and teaching techniques, as well as actual teaching of individuals and group lessons under supervision. There may be some expense to this process for the volunteer. Those interested in participating in a future course should contact Ken Scroggs.

Assorted Service Projects:

Tack cleaning and repair, carpentry (finishing our classrooms, building shelves, jumps and ramps, etc.), painting, electrical or plumbing services, poster design, videotaping and photography are just some of the opportunities currently available. Clean-up and workdays are held periodically, generally prior to a special event, to give the ranch a major "sprucing up." Contact a staff member for details.

"NON-HORSE" RELATED OPPORTUNITIES

*If you have a special interest or ability in any of the following, please let us know.

Newsletter: Hope Ranch does not currently have an up to date newsletter. We would like to have a newsletter that is released once a month. We have formed a template that information and pictures can be dropped into. This is very simple to use. Hope Ranch needs someone consistent and timely that can take over this responsibility.

Fundraising: Interested individuals are welcome to join the fundraising committee and help Hope Ranch to meet their financial needs. The fundraising committee plans and executes our annual fundraising drive, contacts clubs and organizations interested in offering financial assistance, helps with getting donations for special events, and contacts vendors to donate needed items, thereby reducing Hope Ranch expenses.

Grant Writing: Experienced grant writers or those people interested in learning are needed to help identify foundations or grants with a potential for donating to Hope Ranch, and to write these grants.

Public Relations/Marketing: Submit periodic press releases as needed.

Obtain media coverage, striving for higher community visibility. Assist in writing proposals and other written material.

Rider and Volunteer Recruitment: Solicit new clients to maximize the utilization of the program and help create community awareness. Notify colleges, universities, schools, and organizations of our need for volunteers. Place volunteer ads in the newspapers.

Office Help: Filing, answering phones, and answering questions or referring them to the appropriate staff members.

Committees: Hope Ranch has several committees that need your support such as Fundraising, Volunteer, Program Administration, Education, Facilities, and Equine. Please see a staff member if you are interested.

Other Options: Displays, demonstrations, long range planning, show and party days, and much more!



Common Questions

Who do I call if I can't come?

Please refer to the "Communication at Hope Ranch" guide within this manual. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at kassidy@hoperanchks.org. If you find out you can't come on the day of class, call us at the ranch: (785)587-8180.

Who do I call if I need more information or I have questions?

You can call Ken Scroggs, Ranch Director, (785)313-1985 or on the Hope Ranch phone (785)587-8180. Or you can find more information online at www.hoperanchks.org.

How do I find out if classes are canceled due to weather or holidays?

Hope Ranch has a "weather hotline" which is updated daily or as needed to reflect that status of classes.

Weather Hotline: (785)587-8180

Also, check our Facebook page for up to date information on classes.

How do I sign-in?

There is a sign-in book in the office. Please fill out the next line on the Volunteer Sign-In Sheet with the date, time in, time out, and work done. Blank sheets are in the back of the book. Sign in and out each time you come. You can always correct your hours later if you forget to sign-in/sign-out.

What do I do in an emergency?

There is more information on this in the manual. Follow the directions of the instructor, the head instructor, or the program director.

General Guidelines

Names Tags:

Name tags are essential for our riders to get to know you. The colors will indicate whether you are a leader or sidewalker, or whether you are on the Barn Team or the Rider Team. The Leaders have teal name badges and the sidewalkers have purple name tags. The Barn Team has maroon name tags. This will also help all of us to get to know each other without the "Hey you's." The stars on the name tags indicated those that have been with us for two or more sessions and their experience level.

Attire:

Please dress neatly and wear closed toe shoes (no sandals or loafers) to prevent foot injuries. Hard shoes with heels are preferred. Unless it is extremely hot, please wear long pants. Avoid loose clothing and jewelry, as they can be obstructive and cause injury. Wear sunglasses or a hat to protect your eyes.

Phones:

Cell phones are not allowed in the arena. If you are expecting a call, please leave your phone with one of the volunteers or parents who is not in the arena. Answering a call takes your attention away from your most important job – the safety of our riders.

Consumables:

Chewing gum, food, and drinks are not allowed in the arena. This is both for your safety and the safety of the riders.

Signing In:

Don't forget to sign in. If you are getting school credit for volunteering, we need proof that you were here. We also use it to make us eligible for certain kinds of funding. Your hours are also noted by us for use in volunteer recognition and volunteer rewards.

Treatment of Horses:

We treat our horses GENTLY. Never kick or hit a horse. If a reprimand is necessary, let the instructor do it.

Treatment of Students:

We treat our students with RESPECT. Talk to them appropriately for their age and never yell. Use positive rather than negative reinforcement. Be patient. Count to 30 before repeating a request, especially if the student is learning disabled. He or she might need extra time to process what you have asked of them. Be understanding of fear, but if you can't handle the problem with a student, ask the instructor for help.

Confidentiality:

Keep what happens at the ranch confidential. We know you are excited about what you do here and want to share it with others. Please do so in a way that does not identify the riders. They have a right to privacy.

Keeping Busy:

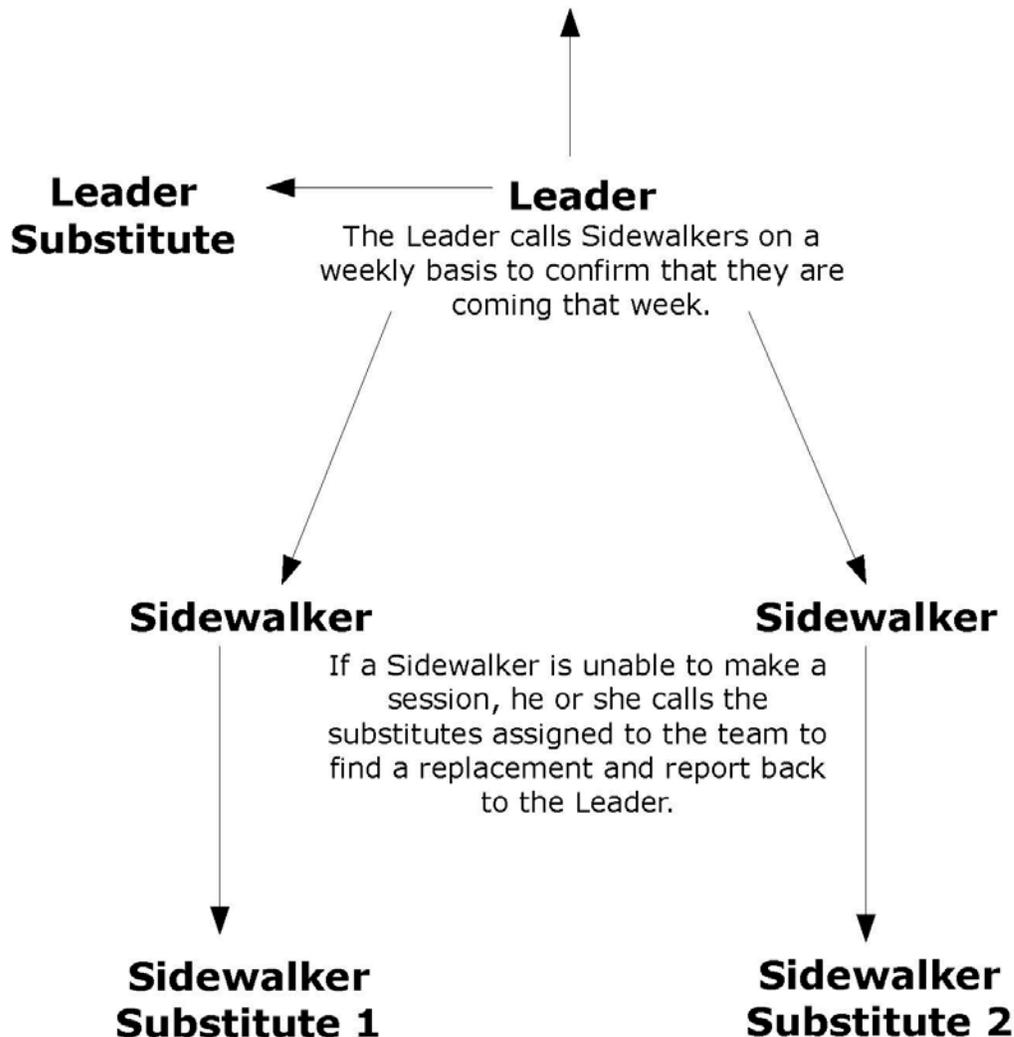
If you have a long break, there are plenty of things you can do to help out. Clean up the tack room or office, wash out buckets, clean toys, pull weeds, groom a horse that isn't being used, muck the stalls, pick up rocks from the arena, or just ask us how you can help.

Communication at Hope Ranch

TEAM CONCEPT

Volunteer Coordinator

The Leader contacts the Volunteer Coordinator if a replacement for the Leader or Sidewalker cannot be found.



Communication methods between members of the team is to be determined by the team. Phone calls or e-mails are acceptable as long as the method is effective.

Safety Procedures *Keeping Our Program Safe*

RANCH SAFETY

Background Checks:

All volunteers will have a background check and will be required to go through the Volunteer Training class in order to volunteer time at Hope Ranch. This is to ensure the safest operating environment for all of our riders.

Smoking:

Absolutely no smoking is allowed on Hope Ranch property.

Drugs and Alcohol:

Drinking and drug use do not mix with horses. Please do not drink or come to the ranch intoxicated, we need committed individuals for volunteering. If you are taking any medications that will impair your reflexes or judgment, it is better to refrain from volunteering until you are no longer using that medication.

Driving at the Ranch:

If you are driving on the ranch property, please drive SLOWLY. The ranch speed limit is 5mph.

Running:

Running is not allowed for your safety and the safety of our horses. If a horse is loose, walk over to catch it. The same goes for any other emergency.

Dogs:

Dogs can frighten horses and many of our students are frightened of them. Please do not bring your dog to the ranch, especially if your dog barks or has aggressive tendencies.

**If there is a problem at any time with riders, horses,
volunteers or any situation arises, please notify a
staff member right away.**

BARN TEAM **The Tack Room**

The tack room is the room where we store saddles, bridles, reins, and other horse related equipment that is collectively known as tack. A well-organized tack room makes the job easier for volunteers. Knowing your way around the tack room and keeping things in order is vital to the smooth running of the program.

RULES FOR THE TACK ROOM:

Saddles:

All saddles are on the saddle racks. Saddles are to be stored on the same rack. They are placed on the rack with the saddle horn facing you, and the rear of the saddle is next to the wall. Saddles are to be covered by dry saddle pads to keep them free of dust. Saddle pads must be allowed time to dry out before putting them away.

Halters:

The halter and lead rope used to put away the horse are stored just outside the tack room along with extra halters and lead ropes.

Reins:

Reins are stored on their own rack. DO NOT leave them attached to the halter/bridles.

Grooming Equipment:

Grooming tools are kept in the grooming boxes. There should be at least body brush, rubber curry, mane comb, and hoof pick in each box. The tools are shared by all the horses. After you use a tool, please put it back in the grooming box. Many volunteers put the hoof picks in their pockets and accidentally take them home. Please check your pockets before you leave.

SAFE TACKING AND UNTACKING:

Think of a horse as having a 6-foot "danger zone" surrounding it. Within a 6-foot radius the horse can kick, buck, cow kick (kick to the side), bite, or rear and you or a student can be seriously injured. Approach the "danger zone" with caution.

Moving

1. If you must walk behind a horse, approach from the side, touch the horse and speak to it. Keep touching it as you walk very closely around the horse.
2. Warn a horse that you are approaching. Use your voice and a gentle touch. Approach from the side, NEVER from the rear.
3. Never walk under a horse's neck (it might rear from fright). Never walk under a horse. You might not be that short, but some children are.
4. Keep your feet away from the horse's hooves and from beneath the horse to avoid getting stepped on.

Standing

1. When standing next to a horse, stand very close. If the horse kicks, he can't kick you very hard if you are close.
2. Never stand directly in front of a horse except to hold the horse for a rider. Never stand behind a horse for any reason.

Feeding:

Hand feeding is an invitation to have your fingers bitten. After the food is gone, your fingers still carry the smell. A horse can't tell the difference between a carrot and a finger that smells like a carrot. Keep your hands away from the horse's mouth. ALL horses bite.

Noises:

1. Don't yell, run, or make sudden movements near a horse. Be slow and gentle.

Fighting:

1. Keep horses well away from each other at all times. Fighting horses are a danger to every one nearby. Keep an eye on their heads and rear ends. If the ears are flattened, the horse dislikes something so act accordingly. If he lifts his leg, he is getting ready to kick.
DO NOT ALLOW HORSES TO SNIFF EACH OTHER.

Tying up:

1. Never tie a horse to the arena or fences. Use the tie rails or hold the horse.
2. Always use a halter to tie a horse in the crossties. Never tie a horse by its bit or by its reins.
3. Always lead a horse by its lead rope not by its reins.
4. If a tied horse rears or pulls back, or otherwise acts very upset, stay calm and let the instructor handle the problem.

RIDER TEAM
Mounting
(Barn Team may assist with mounting)

Tied Horses:

Never mount a horse while the horse is tied. If the horse pulls back, the rider and the horse could be injured. Never mount next to a fence, car, another horse, or a solid object that the rider could be thrown into.

Checking for Safety:

Always check the girth for tightness before mounting or helping a student to mount. Check that the saddle and bridle are placed properly on the horse, the stirrups are the correct length and are down, and that nothing is broken or worn. Make sure the rider has the helmet on securely. Don't assume someone else is going to check. Better to check twice than not at all.

Instructor Supervision:

All riders must be mounted by the instructor or under the instructor's supervision. Ask for assistance if the rider is unable to mount unaided. Do not attempt to help the rider alone. Assisted mounting from the mounting ramp is always done by the instructor or therapist. You may be asked to assist on the opposite side of the horse.

Mounting from the Ground:

When mounting from the ground, one volunteer stands at the head of the horse and holds the lead rope. A second volunteer stands on the off-side of the horse and puts weight into the stirrup to counter-balance the rider. The instructor may assist the rider to mount as necessary. If the saddle starts to slip or the horse starts to walk forward during mounting, stop the mounting and remedy the problem before continuing.

Mounting with a Leg Up:

If a rider is mounting with a "leg up," be sure that both the rider and the person giving the leg up know what they are doing. Do not use your knee as a mounting block, even for a small rider.

Mounting at the Ramp:

When assisting at the ramp, stand on the block, not on the ground. It is dangerous to be standing between the block and the horse, especially if the horse spooks or moves.



Safety Checks

Why do we do a safety check before we mount?

No matter how carefully we check when we saddle the horse, or how many times we have done it before; there is always the possibility that we overlooked something. An incorrectly fitted saddle or saddle pad can irritate or hurt the horse and an unhappy horse may hurt the rider. A loose girth will cause the saddle to slip when mounting or riding. If the bridle is not properly fitted and buckled, it may fall off while riding. An extra minute is all it takes to do a safety check by walking around the horse before mounting and following the steps explained above.

Mounted Activity Emergency Plan

If there is an emergency while a lesson is in session:

1. All horses will be halted.
2. All leaders will position themselves in front of the horse. The leaders are responsible only for the horse, not the rider.
3. All sidewalkers will stabilize their riders (arm over leg support). If there are two riders on the same horse, the sidewalker on the left supports the rider in front and the sidewalker on the right supports the rider in the back. The sidewalkers are responsible for only the rider, not the horse.
4. The instructor will supervise the dismounting, either verbally or personally. If there are two riders on the same horse, the sidewalker on the left is responsible for dismounting the rider in front. The sidewalker on the right is responsible for dismounting the rider on the back.
5. In the event that a rider must be removed from the horse quickly, as in a seizure or a spooked horse, the sidewalker on the left is responsible for dismounting the rider.
6. If circumstances call for the arena to be evacuated, the riders will be escorted out first by their volunteers (if used) and the horses will be removed by their leaders to an appropriate place after the riders are out of danger.
7. The instructor will determine if medical personnel are required and will request assistance in contacting specific personnel.



In the Arena

Students in the Arena: Students should never be in the arena other than when mounted except to mount or dismount and leave the arena or as part of a supervised activity.

Gates: The arena gates must be closed and latched at all time when there are horses in the arena.

Providing Assistance: Help your rider if he or she needs it, but first allow plenty of time for the rider to perform independently. Responses often take longer than we expect. Allow the rider to perform at his or her own pace. But do make sure the rider understands the instructor.

Paying Attention: It is very important to pay attention to the rider and instructor. Don't chat with riders or other volunteers while the class is in session. Be friendly, answer direct questions from the rider briefly, but keep your ears on the instructor and your eyes on the rider.

Reinforcement: You may reinforce what the instructor is saying by showing the rider or touching the appropriate area. Try not to talk. If you are talking, you might miss an emergency situation.

Misbehaving Horses: Never hit or kick a horse. If a horse is misbehaving, call the instructor for help. If a horse is running away (with or without a rider), stay calm. Do not yell and do not run. Halt your rider and stay with him/her. Wait for instructions from the instructor. If you are not with a student but are spotting, walk slowly toward where the horse is running to and wait for instructions.

Horse and Rider Issue: If the horse or rider you are working with is nervous or upset, walk the horse to the center of the arena and ask the instructor if you should dismount the rider. Horses should be calm and riders should be alert. If this is not the case, bring it to the instructor's attention.

Emergency Situations: If another rider has a problem or a fall, DON'T rush to assist. Stay with your rider and listen for instructions. The instructor will handle the problem and ask for assistance if needed. The rider you are assisting is YOUR FIRST RESPONSIBILITY. If your rider falls, the horse leader or leader/sidewalker is responsible for the horse, not the rider. A loose horse is a danger to every rider in the arena. Stop the horse, get it away from the rider and call for the instructor. The sidewalker stays with the rider until the instructor arrives, and then follows the directions of the instructor.

Dismounting: When dismounting to the ground unassisted, make sure the rider takes BOTH feet out of the stirrups before lowering himself to the ground. Assisted dismounts should always be done by the instructor.

Being Comfortable: If you aren't comfortable for any reason with your horse or rider, tell the instructor immediately. You are often the first person to be aware of a potential problem. Trust your instincts.



Sidewalking

The responsibility of the sidewalker, first and foremost, is the safety of the rider. Sidewalkers assist the riders to the degree necessary. Riders on taller horses should, if possible, have tall sidewalkers. Riders on ponies should have short sidewalkers.

HOW TO SIDEWALK:

Basics: The sidewalker walks next to the rider's leg, helping to support the rider's balance if necessary. The Instructor will inform you if you need to use a support hold. There are 3 support holds, listed below.

Changing Sides: Be aware that it may be necessary to change sides frequently if your arm gets tired. If this happens, ask the leader to stop, and tell the other sidewalker that you need to change sides. As the other sidewalker to support the rider as you move around to the other side. Take the support position on the new side and support the rider while the other sidewalker moves to the opposite side. When the other sidewalker has indicated he or she is ready, inform the leader that you can resume walking.

Trotting: At the trot, the sidewalkers must trot alongside the rider at the rider's leg. If providing support, use the arm-over-leg position, holding firmly to the front of the saddle. Additional support may be provided by gentle downward pressure on the rider's ankle with your free hand. Riders using the crutch support should not trot.

Falling Riders: If a rider starts to fall, try to push the rider back into the saddle. If this is not possible, the next best thing to do is to try and break the fall. To do this, the sidewalker on the side of the horse that the rider is falling toward turns and puts his or her back against the rider and goes down to the ground with the rider. This not only slows the fall; it prevents the sidewalker from being injured in an attempt to save the rider.

Fallen Riders: Once a rider has fallen, the sidewalkers stay with the rider while the horse leader moves the horse out of the way. DO NOT attempt to help the rider – this is the responsibility of the instructor. Be prepared to go for help at the direction of the instructor. Know where the first aid kit is, where the phone is, and where the emergency numbers are.

Paying Attention: It is important that the sidewalkers pay attention to the instructor at all times. Conversations should be non-existent when instruction is taking place. Sidewalkers reinforce, but do not teach, so restrain the urge to tell the rider what to do and how to do it unless the instructor tells you to do so.

Independent Riders: If there is only one sidewalker and no leader, the sidewalker takes on the additional responsibility of control of the horse in the event that the rider has trouble controlling his mount. This is only done when the rider's balance is sufficient to not need support and the rider is beginning to ride independently.

Other Responsibilities: Other responsibilities of the sidewalkers include encouraging the rider to pay attention to the instructor, helping the rider to follow directions, showing the rider which side is right and left, assisting in games, demonstrating to the rider where to place the legs and how to keep heels down, encouraging the horse to keep moving (by gently prodding the horse in the side) and providing encouragement and enthusiasm for the rider's efforts.

SUPPORT POSITIONS:

Arm-Over-Leg Support: This position provides support for the rider without interfering with the rider's trunk control, allowing the rider to build up strong trunk support. Facing toward the rider's head, the hand closest to the horse holds the front of the saddle, with the arm resting lightly across the rider's thigh. In the event that the rider slips, a gentle downward pressure with that arm will support the rider in place.

Crutch Support: This is used for riders who have no upper body control. Facing the front of the horse, the hand closest to the horse forms a crutch under the armpit of the rider, with the thumb in front of the shoulder and the fingers behind it. Resting the elbow on the saddle will increase the support and help prevent fatigue on the volunteer's part.

Ankle support: This is the least restrictive form of support, allowing the rider to use all muscles to provide his or her own support. Facing the front of the horse, the hand closest to the horse encircles the rider's ankle lightly. In the event that the rider slips, a light tug will bring the rider back into alignment with the saddle. DO NOT yank on the ankle. DO NOT keep constant pressure downward on the ankle. If the rider loses balance forward, gently moving the leg forward will counterbalance the rider. If the rider loses balance backward, gently moving the leg backward will also counterbalance the rider.

Leading A Horse

HOW TO LEAD A HORSE:

Holding the Rope: The leader holds the lead rope, six to eight inches from the horse's head, in the hand that is closest to the horse. The remaining rope is folded, not looped, and held in the free hand. Be careful not to allow the lead rope to drag on the ground or to be looped around the leader's hand.

Mounting: When a rider is mounting at the mounting ramp or block, lead the horse to the top of the ramp, then move to the front of the horse and walk backward down the ramp, leading the horse as close to the ramp as possible. Remain standing in front of the horse and keep him as still as possible during the mounting.

Standing: The leader usually stands on the side of the horse closest to the center of the arena, next to the horse's neck (between the head and the shoulder). During classes, horses should not stand at the rail (fence) except under the instructor's directions. If your rider needs to stop, come off the rail and move to the center of the arena so you don't block the movement of other riders.

Walking: Walk next to the horse's neck, between the horse's head and shoulder. DO NOT drag the horse or walk ahead of it. If necessary, slow your speed to that of the horse's. The sidewalker can gently prod the horse on the barrel to encourage a faster pace. If the horse is walking too fast, a gentle tug on the lead rope will slow it down. When leading a rider in the arena, always walk on the inside (closest to the center of the arena).

Trotting: After the rider cues the horse to trot, gently tug the lead rope and move into a gentle trot (not a run) next to the horse. Remain alongside the horse's neck during the trot. Control the speed with a tug backwards on the rope if the horse goes too fast. Never trot a horse up to or past a walking horse.

Stopping: When the horse is stopped for more than a second or two, the leader should stand in front of the horse. The lead rope is held folded in one hand, and the sides of the bit or halter are held gently with both hands to prevent the horse from moving forward. Never *yank* on the reins or lead rope to stop the horse. Pull slowly and steadily on the lead rope or reins. Yanking frightens the horse and can cause rearing or backing up. If a horse pulls back, do not resist. Move with him, holding the lead rope. The harder you pull a horse, the harder he will resist you.

Circling: Do not circle a horse near another horse. Watch that no other horses are in the way.

Passing: When passing another horse, always pass on the inside (the side closest to the center of the arena) and at least 6 feet away from the horse being passed.

Direction: All horses should be going in the same direction. If one rider reverses, all riders must reverse. A reverse is always made by turning in toward the center of the arena.

Paying Attention: Pay attention to the instructor at all times. It is important that you not engage in conversation when leading, as this will interfere with your knowing what is going on. The instructor will tell the riders to walk, trot, turn right or left, or halt. The leader needs to hear these commands so as not to interfere with the rider's efforts, and to supplement them if needed.

Communication: When leading or holding a horse with a mounted rider, always inform the rider BEFORE moving or changing directions. Avoid sharp turns or sudden stops. Allow the rider to initiate all movement if possible. Give the rider time to give commands to the horse. ALWAYS let the rider do as much as possible.

Being Aware: Be aware of other horses in the arena, and do not let the horse you are leading approach another horse too closely. There should be a two-horse distance between riders at all times. Horses must NEVER be allowed to put their noses together.

Pulling on the Horse: Do not hold the bit or halter too strongly, or the horse will resist and start to move around or pull its head back. You can calm the horse by holding the halter with one hand and stroking the horse below the forelock (on the forehead) with the other hand.

Glossary of Disabilities

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter in a therapeutic riding setting. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability. Rather, it is a general overview with an explanation of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

Arthritis

Description: Inflammatory disease of the joints.

Types: Osteo rheumatoid and juvenile rheumatoid.

Characteristics: Pain, lack of mobility, deformity, loss of strength.

Benefits: Gentle rhythmic movement to promote joint mobility and relieve pain.

Autism

Description: A self-centered mental state from which reality often tends to be excluded.

Characteristics: Unresponsiveness to the presence of others; withdrawal from physical contact; severely delayed and disordered language; self-stimulating behaviors; unusual or special fears; insensitivity to pain; unawareness of real dangers; hyperactive; passive; unusual behaviors such as smelling/tasting/licking or mouthing all objects; ritualistic behaviors; developmentally delayed; unusual response to sounds; clumsiness; social withdrawal; resistance to change.

Benefits: Interactions in a group setting stimulates interest away from self and toward others and the horses. Postural and verbal stimulation.

Cerebral Palsy

Description: Brain damage occurring before, at, or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

Types and Characteristics:

Spastic – hypertonicity with hyperactive stretch reflexes, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

Athetoid – extensor muscle tension, worm-like movements, abnormal posturing and slow and deliberate speech.

Ataxic – poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements and are often described as having a “rag doll” appearance.

Associated Problems:

Seizures; hearing defects; visual defects; general sensory impairment; perceptual problems; communication problems; mental disability; emotional disturbance; learning disabilities.

Benefits: Normalization of tone, stimulation of postural and balance mechanisms, muscle strengthening and perceptual motor coordination.

Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA or Stroke)

Description: Hemorrhage in brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment.

Characteristics: Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of body. May cause mental impairment, impair speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength.

Benefits: Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization.

Description: A general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade level.

Characteristics: Varied, but can include slow physical, motor and social development.

Benefits: Provides arena for success, opportunity for sport and recreation, stimulates body awareness.

Down Syndrome

Description: Condition, in which a person is born with an extra chromosome, resulting in mental disabilities and developmental delay.

Characteristics: Broad flat face, slanted eyes, neck and hand are often broad and short. Usually Hypotonic, have hypermobile joints and tend to be short and slightly overweight. Prone to respiratory infections.

Benefits: Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, muscle tone, and coordination.

Emotional Disabilities

Description: A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies.

Characteristics: Trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia and schizophrenia may be exhibited.

Benefits: Increases feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness, and provides appropriate social outlet.

Epilepsy

Description: Abnormal electrical activity of the brain marked by seizures with altered consciousness.

Types and Characteristics:

Petit Mal: Brief loss of consciousness with loss of postural tone. May have jerky movements, blank expression.

Grand Mal: Loss of consciousness and postural control, usually preceded by an aura. (Note: an active seizure disorder is a contraindication for horseback riding.) Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound.

Other Characteristics: Communication difficulties – may use lip reading, finger spelling or sign language. Often phase out and have attention deficits.

Benefits: Stimulates self-confidence, balance, posture and coordination. It also provides appropriate social outlets and interactions.

Learning Disabilities (LD)

Description: Catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving, but who appear to have otherwise normal intelligence skills.

Characteristics: Short attention span, easily frustrated, immature.

Benefits: Effects depend upon the particular disorder. Stimulates attention span, group skills, cooperation, language skills, posture and coordination.

Mental Disabilities (MD)

Description: Lack of ability to learn and perform at normal and acceptable levels. Degree of retardation is referred to as educable, trainable, severe or profoundly disabled.

Characteristics: Developmentally delayed in all areas. Short attention span.

Benefits: Stimulates group activity skills, coordination, balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Provides a structured learning environment.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Description: Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.

Characteristics: Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40-year-old range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Fatigues easily. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity. Associated Problems: Visual impairment, emotional lability, and impaired bowel and bladder function.

Benefits: Maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy.

Muscular Dystrophy (MD)

Description: Deficiency in muscle nutrition with degeneration of skeletal muscle. Hereditary disease that mainly affects males.

Characteristics: Progressive muscular weakness, fatigues easily, sensitive to temperature extremes.

Associated Problems: Lordosis, respiratory infection.

Benefits: Provides opportunity for group activity, may slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment, and allows movement free of assistive devices.

Polio

Description: Infectious viral disease.

Characteristics: Flaccid paralysis, atrophy of skeletal muscle, often with deformity.

Benefits: Strengthens non-paralyzed muscles, stimulates posture.

Scoliosis

Description: Lateral curve of the spine with C or S curve with rotary component.

Characteristics: Postural asymmetry. May wear scoliosis jacket or have had stabilization surgery.

Benefits: Stimulates postural symmetry. Strengthens trunk muscles. (Note: Severe scoliosis is a contraindication for therapeutic riding.)

Spina Bifida

Description: Congenital failure of vertebral arch closure with resultant damage to spinal cord.

Characteristics: Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss. Associated Problems: Hydrocephalus, incontinence, urinary tract infection, lordosis, scoliosis, and hip dislocations.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, improves muscle strength and self-image.

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

Description: Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function.

Characteristics: Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury – can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss and pressure sores.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, is an option for sports participation and recreation.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Description: Accidental injury to the head resulting in intra-cranial bleeding with death of brain cells.

Characteristics: Gross and fine motor skills deficits. Often have impaired memory, speech and/or vision. May have psychological effects

Benefits: Stimulates balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, speech and perceptual skills.

Visual Impairment

Description: Moderate to total loss of sight.

Characteristics: Insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity, fearfulness and developmental delay.

Benefits: Stimulates spatial awareness, proprioception, posture and coordination. Provides social outlet, structured risk taking and freedom of movement.

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