



**Hope and Healing Academy**

10437 SW 53rd St, Topeka, KS | [hopeandhealingacademy.com](http://hopeandhealingacademy.com)

# **Volunteer Handbook**

A Guide to Volunteering at an  
Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy Program



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## Welcome

We're so excited that you are interested in partnering with our program! Volunteers are the backbone of our program here at Hope and Healing Academy (HAHA). We could not successfully run our program without the time, skills, and energy of the people who give generously of their time. No matter the task—sweeping the barn or side walking during a session—every moment you spend with us is valued, appreciated, and meaningful.

This handbook gives you an overview of our program and the principles and policies that guide it. It describes opportunities for volunteers and provides material covering how to work with horses and clients in an equine-facilitated psychotherapy program (EFP). If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask.

### About Us

Hope and Healing Academy, Inc. (HAHA) was founded in October 2014. Using equine-facilitated psychotherapy (EFP), licensed psychotherapists work alongside riding instructors and trained horse handlers to bring hope and healing to clients of all ages and backgrounds. Situated on 30 acres southwest of Topeka, Kansas, the facilities feature indoor and outdoor riding arenas, beginner and advanced riding trails, a nine-stall barn, tack room, and 12 wonderful therapy horses.

HAHA provides EFP services to nearly 60 adults and youth each week. Our sessions run for 8-week periods. Every ninth week, the program takes a week-long break. During this break, our horses undergo de-stressing activities to keep them mentally and emotionally sharp. We also schedule an in-office appointment for clients during this off-week to review progress and update the treatment plan.

### What is Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy?

Hope and Healing Academy (HAHA) uses equine-facilitated psychotherapy (EFP) to facilitate healing in our clients. EFP is experiential therapy, which means that licensed mental health professionals help clients address issues through active experiences. In the case of EFP, these experiences take place with and around horses. HAHA's mission is "Harnessing the spirit of horses to transform the human



spirit" because we see EFP as a powerful way to address mental and behavioral health issues. We use EFP to work with clients of varied backgrounds and ages who are experiencing symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit disorder, depression, and other emotional or behavioral issues.

EFP is based on a relationship of trust and respect established between the horse, client, and therapist. As prey animals, horses are acutely aware of their environment; this sensitivity causes them to react immediately to changes in a client's mood or behavior. The therapist uses the horse's responses and behaviors to address how the client may be feeling or acting and what may be causing those feelings or behaviors. A restless and constantly moving horse may be responding to a client's anxiety or fear, and together, the therapist and client work on addressing the feelings or behaviors that are affecting the horse. To have a good relationship with their horse, the client must earn his trust by demonstrating that their intentions are good, by showing kindness and goodwill, and by making an emotional connection with their horse.

## Natural Horsemanship

Much of our work with horses is guided by natural horsemanship and the Parelli methodology. The Parelli program was founded in 1981 by Pat Parelli. The program emphasizes learning horsemanship by understanding horse behavior, psychology, and communication. Teaching clients the power of non-verbal communication and sensitivity is essential to developing their confidence and self-respect. For more about Parelli Natural Horsemanship, please visit their website, [www.parelli.com](http://www.parelli.com).

# HAHA Policies

## Confidentiality

To volunteer with HAHA, you must sign a Confidentiality Agreement (included herein and online). If you violate client confidentiality, you will be dismissed from your role at the barn.

- While you may speak in general about your experiences at HAHA, you may not refer to clients by name, nor post or share any media that includes clients.



- Occasionally, parents may ask you questions about the session. Direct them to the therapist; it's not your job to answer any questions about the session or the client.
- Remember to keep casual conversations and mention of other clients outside the barn and away from the clients who are in sessions.

You must sign the Confidentiality Agreement prior to spending any time during session hours at the barn. See Appendix A.

## **Working in a Therapeutic Environment**

Working with people with emotional or behavioral disorders may be new for some volunteers. Please treat all clients with respect and be considerate of their needs. You will be informed about a client's background only if a therapist thinks it is appropriate.

### **Benefits**

Clients participate in EFP for emotional growth and healing. Horses are non-judgmental and offer clients a safe space to learn trust. Establishing a relationship with a horse involves patience, confidence, energy, and intuition. Horses provide feedback on a client's emotions and behaviors and require clients to be present and engaged, a task that is difficult for people who have handled life by tuning out or pulling inward. The skills gained during sessions transfer to situations in the clients' lives.

In addition to the emotional and behavioral benefits, there are also great physical benefits to riding. Riding a horse strengthens and stimulates core muscles, improves posture, and builds the cardiovascular system.

### **Etiquette**

Remember that as a volunteer, you are there to support a safe environment for the horse and rider. Please do not talk during a session unless you're specifically asked something or unless you have a concern about safety. Remember, we don't know how simple questions like "how's your week" or "how has school been" might affect a client. Intuition goes a fair way in how to interact with clients, but if in doubt, it's best to be quiet rather than talkative. If you have any questions about how to interact with clients or how to respond to clients, please ask a therapist.



Here are some general tips about working with clients:

- Confirm with a therapist or instructor before assisting a client in a session (unless it is an issue of safety). Completing a task may be the goal of the session.
- Respond calmly and neutrally to outbursts of behavior or emotion.

## **Cancellations & Inclement Weather**

We use Facebook to communicate any canceled sessions. We still conduct sessions in thunderstorms, in the cold, and in the heat; we just adjust our activities to the climate. Remember to dress appropriately and dress for the weather. Mud boots are often essential.

If you cannot make it to a time you are scheduled, please contact the Equine Program Director.

## **Emergencies**

- Call 911 for serious medical emergency or fires.
- A first aid kit is located in the office. Use gloves when around bodily fluids.
- Consult the Emergency Contact list for staff and volunteer emergency contact info, as well as doctor and hospital preferences. Make sure you keep this information current with the Volunteer Coordinator.
- In case of an emergency, follow the instructions of the Equine Program Director or Clinical Director.
- In the case of tornados, staff and volunteers will shelter in Chris and Kim's house.

## **Volunteer Requirements**

Volunteers do not have to have any previous horse experience; they just must be patient and enthusiastic. Volunteers have the opportunity to advance through different levels of expertise based on how they wish to be involved in the program. There are four levels: Barn Volunteer, Horse Handler, Groundwork Instructor, and Riding Instructor. The basic requirements for any volunteer are as follows:



## General Competencies

- Be age 18 or older.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding our client information, including names of clients and their needs.
- Be willing to learn and follow HAHA's procedures.
- Be on time for sessions and contact the Equine Program Director or Volunteer Coordinator if you cannot make a session that you are scheduled for.
- Be able to walk continually for 30–60 minutes, bend, twist, raise arms up, and jog for short distances on uneven ground.
- Be able to lift a 35-pound child from horseback and/or assist an adult to the ground from horseback in an emergency.
- Be able to perform tasks with minimal supervision after training.
- Be willing to help with barn chores and other general grounds keeping.
- Love people, kids, and horses.

## Commitment

We understand that many of our volunteers are full-time students or have full-time jobs. However, we wish for our volunteers to attend consistently, which not only helps the therapist and instructor in lesson planning, but also provides structure and consistency for clients.

If you cannot attend consistently, you will not be able to perform any duties beyond that of a Level 1 volunteer. You may be asked to leave if attendance continues to be an issue.

## Trial Period

Because our training program is intensive, we ask that all volunteers participate as a Level 1 Barn Volunteer for a trial period of a quarter (3 months). We are looking for volunteers who are both a good fit for the program and who attend regularly and demonstrate willingness to listen and learn. During this time you will do barn



chores, learn more about the program, and may observe some sessions and training.

## **Attire**

Regardless of your volunteer level, wear clothes that are weather-appropriate and that you don't mind getting dirty. Don't wear open-toed shoes. Don't wear excessively tight or revealing clothing. Wear sturdy, comfortable work boots, if possible. Bring sun screen and bug spray in the summer. Wear gloves and hats in the winter.

## **Background Check**

Once you have committed to volunteering with HAHA (generally by your third visit), a background check will be performed through the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and the Kansas Child Abuse and Neglect system. The cost of this is \$40. It is necessary to perform background checks when working with clients, especially in a psychotherapy environment.

## **First Aid/CPR**

Once you are interacting regularly with clients (Level 3 and higher), you must become certified in First Aid and CPR. HAHA will periodically offer certification sessions at minimal cost, but you may need to get certification locally. It is also strongly recommended that you are tested for tuberculosis on a yearly basis.



## Volunteer Levels

We use levels of certification for volunteers to demonstrate their competency and to gain responsibility and independence in the program. Every volunteer, regardless of previous experience, must demonstrate the required skills to be certified to the level of their experience. You attain the skills of the next level through observation, volunteer training, and experience. You will have the opportunity to demonstrate your skills as scheduled with the Equine Program Director. You may remain at a level as long as you wish; you will not be required to pass to other levels. If you have questions any concerns, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator or the Equine Program Director. A summary of the levels follows, and each level has a separate section that addresses the competencies for that level.

### Level 1: Barn Volunteer

A Level 1 volunteer is new to HAHA. It is possible you do not have previous horse experience or that you are not yet familiar with specific policies and procedures that HAHA follows (e.g., Parelli). Until you pass to Level 2, you will be responsible for helping out around the barn, monitoring safety, observing sessions, and side walking as required.

### Level 2: Horse Handler

A Level 2 volunteer's primary responsibility in a session is the horse and its safety. To become a Level 2 volunteer, you must demonstrate all of the necessary proficiencies for handling horses. You can greet and catch a horse, lead a horse at a walk and a trot, demonstrate all seven Parelli games, understand horsenalities, groom and tack a horse, communicate neutral observations about sessions and horse behavior, and describe your role as a horse handler.

### Level 3: Groundwork Instructor

A Level 3 volunteer is ready to instruct clients who are doing groundwork with their horses. They must demonstrate basic horsemanship skills such as asking a horse for all gaits and leads in the round pen. They must also be able to work one-on-one



with clients. They can facilitate lesson plan warm-ups, express lesson observations to the client and therapist (SPUDs), provide clear and simple instruction to clients, and recognize emotional or behavioral issues.

## **Level 4: Riding Instructor**

A Level 4 volunteer can instruct clients who are riding their horses. They must be able to demonstrate their own advanced horsemanship as well as their ability to instruct clients who are riding. They can tack a horse with Western and English saddles and bridles, can complete an equipment check, demonstrate a thorough mounted warm-up, and ride through walk/trot/canter with proper position and independent hands and seat. They must be able to assess a horse's rider readiness, demonstrate basic horse first aid, facilitate a lesson plan, and adapt lesson plans according to the conditions of the rider and horse.



## Level 1: Barn Volunteer

A Level 1 volunteer is new to HAHA. It is possible you do not have previous horse experience or that you are not yet familiar with specific policies and procedures that HAHA follows (e.g., Parelli). For at least the first quarter (3 months), you will be responsible for helping out around the barn, monitoring safety, observing sessions, and side walking as required. During this period of your volunteering, you will be evaluated for listening skills, willingness to learn, adaptability, attendance, and understanding of the program.

### Barn Chores

There's always work to do around the barn! Here's a list of common tasks:

- Sweep the main aisle.
- Muck stalls or the arena.
- Clean and fill water buckets.
- Clean and fill water tanks in pens.
- Clean the bathroom.
- Remove cobwebs from rafters and stalls.
- Organize and clean tack and equipment.

### Barn Safety & Maintenance

All volunteers must follow the barn safety and maintenance guidelines.

- Wear appropriate attire.
- Park by the fence line by the house.
- No smoking in the barn.
- Do not bring pets.
- Do not feed the horses unless asked to by staff.
- Do not enter stalls/pastures/paddocks without permission from staff.
- Close all gates behind you. If you find them open, close them.
- Recycle plastic and cardboard; do not litter.

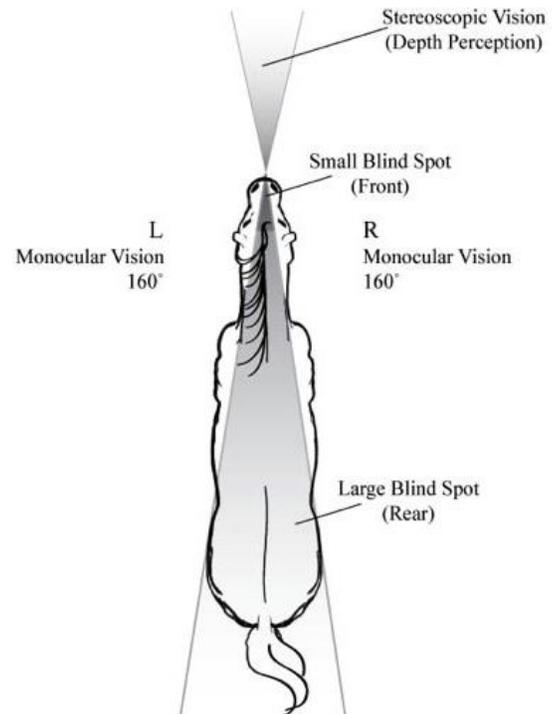


- Keep barn aisle clear of obstacles.
- Only staff, volunteers, and clients should be in the barn around the horses. Parents and guests should remain in designated areas unless asked by therapist, and children under 12 on the property must be supervised by their guardian.
- Riders must always wear a helmet.

## Horse Safety

All volunteers must understand and demonstrate basic horse safety.

- Do not make sudden movements or noises around the horse.
- Approach horses slowly at their shoulder or side.
- Be aware of a horse's blind spots. Make sure the horse knows where you are by speaking to him or putting your hand on his body while moving around him.
- Don't pass directly behind a horse or under the horse's neck or belly.
- Do not kneel around a horse; bend at the knees so you can get out of the way quickly.
- Never leave a halter on a horse turned loose in a stall, pasture, or paddock.
- Never wrap a lead rope or reins around your hand or throw over your shoulder or neck.
- Use cross ties or quick release knots at designated areas to secure a horse.



<https://zenmindzenhorse.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/view.jpg>

## Feeding Horses

Do not feed the horses or other barn animals unless asked to by the staff; this includes treats. If you are asked to assist with feeding, use the following guidelines:



- Check the Horse Care whiteboard by the office for feeding details for each horse; some horses receive supplements, which are mixed in with grain.
- Start with Pen 6 and end with Pen 1 giving grain measured for each horse.
- Don't give hay in pens with round bales or in open pasture.
- Check all water tanks. Remove excess debris and fill as needed.

## Observations

In most sessions, we try to limit the number of people involved so that the client can focus and not feel self-conscious. However, observing sessions is an important part of understanding how our program works. You will be able to schedule time with the Equine Program Director for opportunities to observe sessions.

When you are observing a session, pay close attention to how the volunteer, instructor, and therapist interact with the client and the horse. Please do not talk during an observation unless asked to. Feel free to ask the instructor and therapist questions about the session after it is finished.

## Side Walking

Side walkers walk alongside the horse as a client mounts and rides and must be constantly attentive to the rider's safety. A side walker must be able to walk or jog for 30-60 minutes and be of sufficient strength and stature to offer stability to the rider. The side walker should monitor the client's posture and balance. Conversation should be minimal so as not to distract the rider, therapist, instructor, or horse handler.

Some clients will require a constant ankle or thigh hold for stability; others may only require a hold during more strenuous activities, such as reaching or trotting.

- An ankle hold is lightly cupping the back of the rider's ankle or heel.
- A thigh hold is placing a forearm across the thigh of the rider, gripping the front of the saddle to increase stability. Be careful not to exert pressure in your forearm or elbow onto the rider.

If a rider starts to fall, push them back in the saddle at the hip. If the fall cannot be prevented, break the fall as much as possible. The instructor will give you additional



instructions if a fall should happen. If a fall occurs, do not attempt to move the rider in case of neck or back injury. In the case of an emergency, stay with the rider until more help arrive.

During a dismount, the side walker may be asked to remove the rider's foot from the stirrup and guide the rider's leg over the horse. The instructor will assist the client in the complete dismount.

## Moving to Level 2

Once you've passed your trial period, you will begin regular training to become a Level 2 Horse Handler, if that's your goal. While you are training to move to Level 2, you will still be expected to carry out Level 1 tasks and will not be a part of sessions without direct supervision. Take advantage of down time at the barn by bringing your handbook and reviewing the material for additional levels.

## Volunteer Training Log

Use the following pages to record your notes and activities from your volunteer hours. Write down details about what you did during your volunteer hours, both in sessions and in training. Use the notes to give details and to write any questions you might have. The Equine Program Director will look at your training log as part of the demonstration that you're ready to move to the next volunteer level.

<b>Volunteer Training Log Examples</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Notes</b>
12/09	1	General cleaning	Cleaned bathroom and swept aisle.
1/6	1	Mental Health Training	Learned about anxiety disorders.



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## Volunteer Training Log

Date	Total Hours	Activity	Notes



## Level 2: Horse Handler

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### Volunteer Training

Volunteer training generally takes place every Saturday. You can sign up for training on the HAHA Volunteer Schedule, and you should communicate that you are coming to training to the Volunteer Coordinator and/or Equine Program Director. You are expected to attend training to progress through the levels of volunteering. This training time provides interaction with horses and time to practice skills and learn more about mental health. You cannot proceed to additional levels without regularly attending training.

### Understanding Horses

Horses are grazing prey animals with exceptional senses that keep them safe from predators. They have three basic needs: safety, comfort, and food. If a horse is eating, they feel safe and comfortable. If a horse does not feel safe, they will not be relaxed and they typically will not stand still. Horses have a strong flight instinct but are also naturally curious. They are social and enjoy company. They will respond to you based on their senses and their observations of you. They will also respond to situations based on what Parelli calls "horsenalities"—their individual personality traits (explained further later).



## Horse Senses

### Sight & Vision

Horses have monocular vision, which means they can see different things out of each eye. Horses' eyes are on the sides of their heads, which create blind spots directly in front of their head and behind them. They will often swing their heads from side to side to increase their field of vision. If something moves unexpectedly, a horse will often respond in fear.

### Ears & Hearing

Horses have keen hearing and react to sound by swiveling their ears in the direction of the noise. You can often determine where their attention is based on the position of their ears. Ears that are flat back show aggression or fear, whereas ears that are forward and perked up indicate an attentive horse. Horses respond to tone and volume, so use a voice that is calm and confident.

### Nose & Smell

Horses have an acute sense of smell that helps them identify other horses, people, predators, and food. When introducing yourself to a horse, hold the back of your hand to the horse's muzzle to let them smell you.

### Touch

Horses are extremely sensitive to touch, and much of our communication with them is based on touch. They respond to pressure by moving away from it, which is why you can move a horse in one direction or another based on the pressure you apply (like in the Porcupine game). It is important to create a relationship based on trust and kindness through touch.

### Taste

Horses like sweet and salty tastes. A horse may lick your arm or hand if you are sweaty for the salt, or may show preference for sweet treats like apples or peppermints.



## Horses as Mirrors

Horses will often mirror the energy, attitude, behaviors, emotions, thoughts, and body language of the people around them. They use their senses to assess the danger or safety of the person they're interacting with. They can identify if someone's energy is high or low, authentic or fake. We often rely on the horses to show us how clients are really thinking or feeling because horses cannot lie.

## Horses as Partners

In a therapy session, the horse is the client's partner, rather than just a tool. The client must work to establish a relationship with their partner that is built on trust and safety. The horse has the right to say "not today" if the client is not willing to contribute to the partnership. As handlers, we must be attuned to how a horse is responding to the client and if the horse is checking out.

## Caring for Horses

### Recognizing Illness or Wounds

Be attentive to the horse's body. Notify the Barn Manager if you see any visible wounds, lameness, or sensitivity. Cuts and grazes are the most common injury.

- **Clean-cut (incised)** – caused by something sharp. This can be serious as there is often a lot of bleeding. The edges of the wound appear clean and straight and the wound can be a lot deeper into the tissue than may first appear.
- **Torn (lacerated)** – caused by something hard but blunt, such as barbed wire. The edges of the wound are irregular and jagged, although bleeding is not usually as profuse as for clean-cut wounds. There may be associated swelling.
- **Puncture** – caused by a piercing object, such as a nail or thorn. These wounds can be far deeper than the external wound suggests and they pose a considerable risk of infection. They are also more easily overlooked.
- **Grazes (abrasions)** – may appear superficial but have a large surface area that poses an increased risk of infection. There is often associated bruising and they can take a long time to heal.



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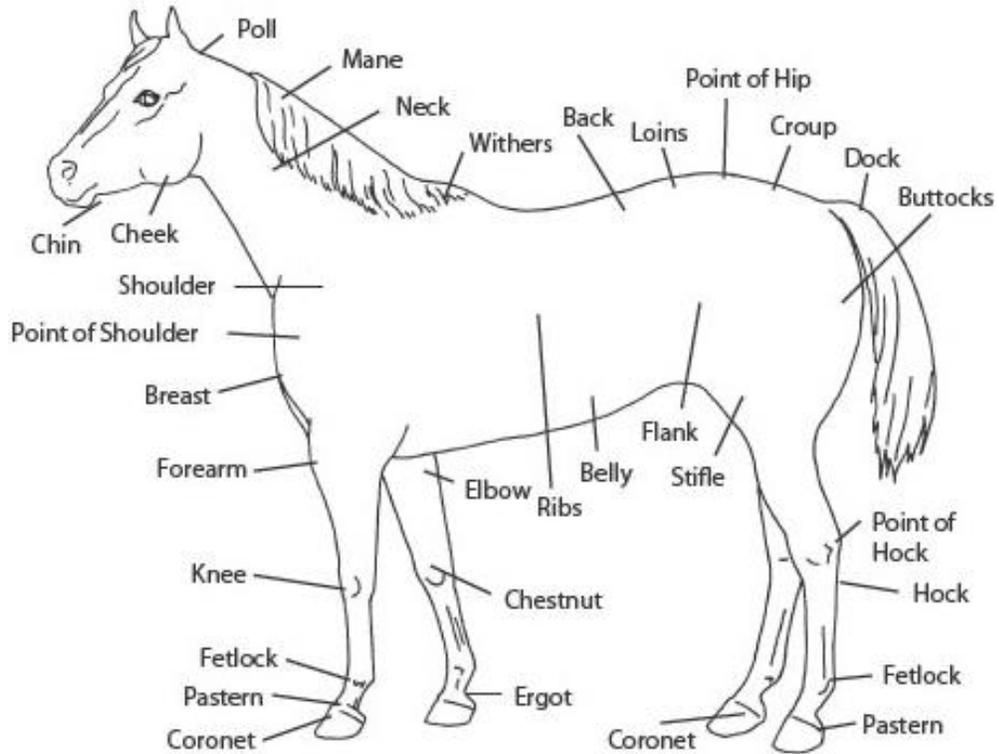
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- **Bruises, lumps, swellings and inflammation (even in the absence of an obvious wound)** – can be evidence of an underlying injury, and veterinary advice should be sought.

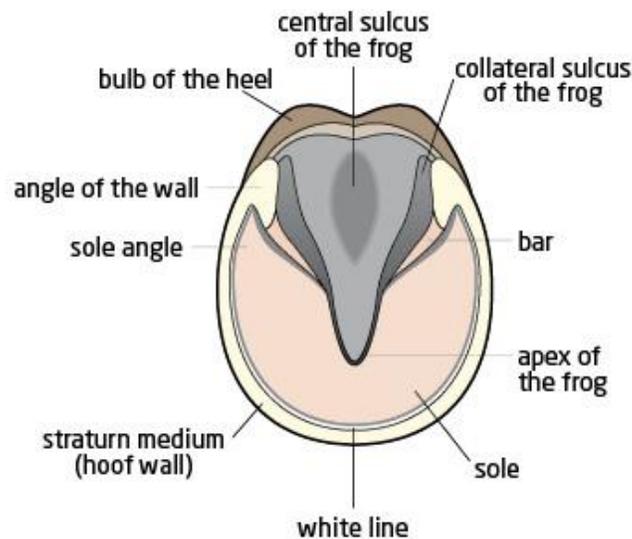
Source: <https://www.bluecross.org.uk/pet-advice/basic-first-aid-horses>



## Parts of a Horse



## Parts of a Hoof



## Parelli Games

The Parelli natural horsemanship program has four levels. In Level 1, you learn the seven games that build a relationship of confidence and leadership between you and your horse.

# The Seven Games - On the Ground & In the Saddle



**The Friendly Game** builds trust and relaxation. It is the most important game to play with horses who are tense and skeptical.



**The Porcupine Game** teaches your horse to yield from steady pressure when leading, moving your horse backwards or away from you, or responding to the rein and your leg when riding.



**The Driving Game** teaches your horse to yield from rhythmic pressure without touching him.



**The Yo-Yo Game** equalizes backwards and forwards, and develops straightness. It's part of transitions and promotes engagement of the hindquarters.



**The Circling Game** sends the horse around you and teaches him to come back to you. It also teaches him the responsibility of continuing to circle you without being reminded. Unlike lungeing, this encourages your horse to engage his mind and feel more drawn to you.



**The Sideways Game** develops the skill of moving sideways. This is important for everyday things like opening gates, all the way up to building suspension for lead changes.



**The Squeeze Game** teaches horses to overcome their fear of small or narrow spaces. This is valuable for things like wash racks, horse trailers, racing gates, veterinary stocks, gates and narrow passageways. The Squeeze Game pattern is relaxing for horses.

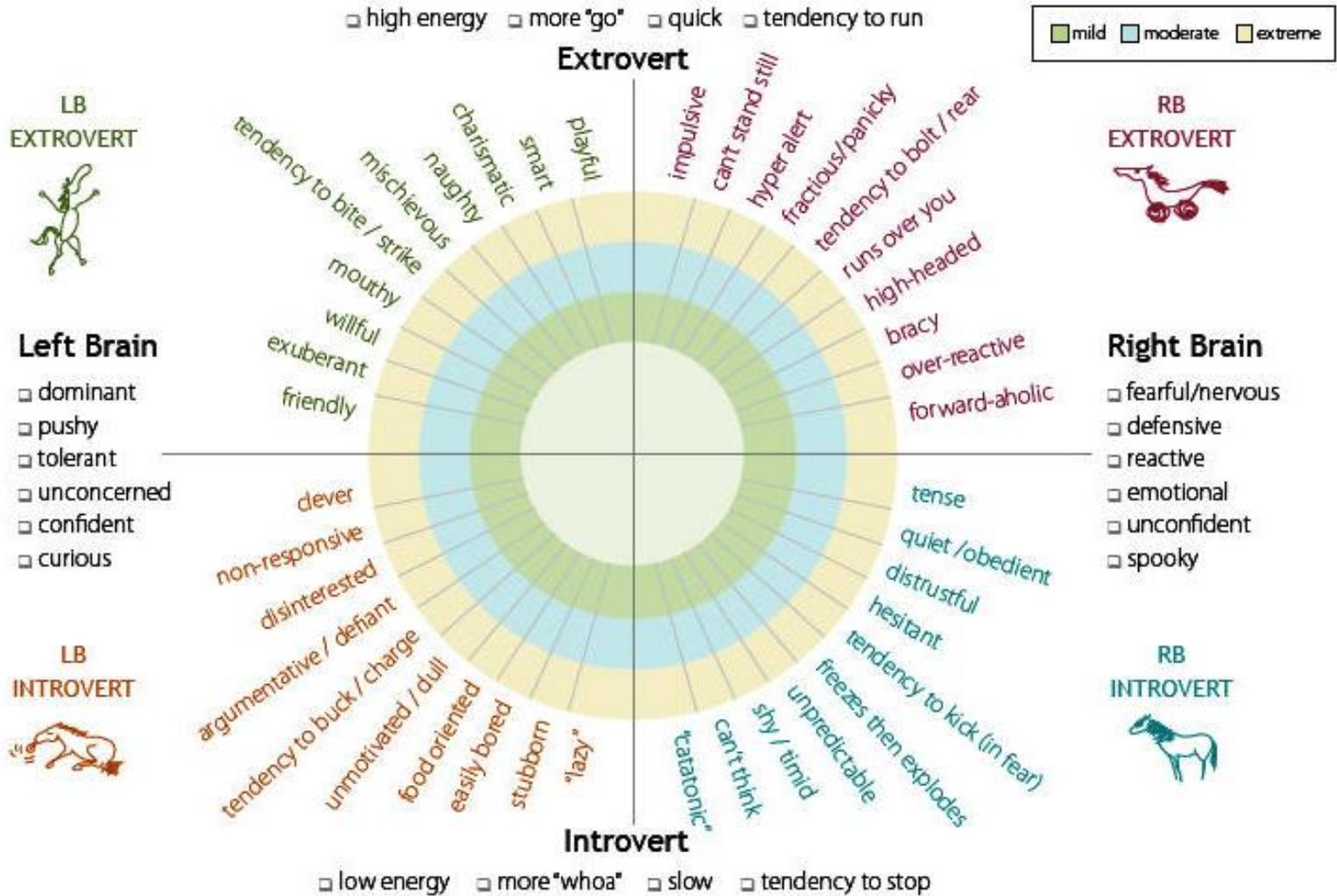


*"The better you play The Games, the more your horse looks to you as a leader. The Seven Games changes everything."  
-Pat Parelli*

From Parelli Natural Horsemanship: <https://www.parelli.com/the-seven-games.html>

# Horsenalties

“Horsenality” is a Parelli concept about types of horse personalities. Knowing a horse’s horsenality will help you understand your horse and how he is motivated.



<http://www.parelli.com/resources/horsenality.html>



## Working with Different Horsesenalties

### Left-Brain Extroverts need to be more: **RESPONSIVE**

*"You're not the boss of me!"*

Left-Brain Extroverts are born to argue. If you can use their curiosity to develop responsiveness, rather than demand it, they'll get calmer and more connected.

*The Touch It Pattern is ideal. Keep them guessing, and don't be too repetitive – you usually get to do it the same way about three times and then you'd better think of something new! Remember this horse is a super-learner. Be provocative and progressive – it keeps sessions mentally stimulating.*

### Right-Brain Extroverts need to be more: **CALM**

*"I don't feel safe."*

When you can help the RBE get calm, they get more connected to you. Only then you can work on responsiveness as they will be less reactive.

*You need to be a strong, calm, focused leader; rapid disengagements will help you get control as they interrupt the horse's flight response. In some circumstances, asking the horse to speed up for a lap and 'cruise for three' until he volunteers to slow down or stand next to you is very effective.*

### Left-Brain Introverts need to be more: **CONNECTED**

*"What's in it for me?"*

When you give the Left-Brain Introvert what he likes (cookies, rest, scratches), he'll get more connected to you and then more responsive to your ideas. LBIs are already calm, so that's not usually the issue!

*Give him a treat and rub him – don't ask him to do anything. Once he's looking to you with a more positive expression, ask him to do something really little and give him more treats and scratches. Build from there by occasionally asking for more effort or two or three tasks before treating. One day, you'll be more interesting than the treat! LBI horses are physically slow (at first) but mentally fast. Learn to be mentally intense but move more slowly at first, and use reverse psychology by doing things like asking him to go slower rather than speed up. This helps keep the connection.*

### Right-Brain Introverts need to be more: **CONNECTED**

*"I don't trust you."*

When you can prove to the Right-Brain Introvert that you are not going to rush them and you understand their need for things to be slow, they start to trust you, becoming calmer and then more responsive.

*Doing nothing is the best thing when it comes to Right-Brain Introvert horses. Just standing next to them, or sitting, or leaning in a friendly way until they take a deep breath is worth waiting for. As they start to let down their defenses and relax, you can begin to communicate, gently asking for what you want and waiting for them to respond rather than 'upping your phases.' Gentle repetition works better than increasing pressure.*

From Parelli Natural Horsemanship: <http://www.parelli.com/resources/horsenality.html>



## Greeting and Catching a Horse

Because horses are prey animals who see humans as predators, catching a horse can be difficult to do. Displaying frustration or aggression will not help you or the client catch the horse. A horse does not like to be cornered or chased. Instead, think of ways to attract the horse to you.

- Approach the horse from their side, not head on.
- Hold out your hand or the halter and lead rope for the horse to smell. Do not touch the horse until the horse has touched you first.
- If the horse walks away, stand still. Take a horse breath.
- Approach the horse again, calmly, and with respect. It may be necessary to try several times before you succeed, especially with right-brained extroverts or left-brained introverts.
- When the horse greets you and stands still, lightly toss the lead line over their neck, making sure not to leave extra rope on the ground that you or the horse might trip on.
- With the “little loop in your left hand and big loop in your right hand,” place the rope halter on the horse’s muzzle and slide it up, securing the halter with a half-hitch. Wrap the extra lead rope into a figure 8 and hold it in your left hand, and lead the horse from the left side, guiding with your right hand on the lead rope near the horse’s head.

A Level 2 Horse Handler must be able to independently catch and halter any horse. Often horse handlers will accompany a client and supervise while the client catches the horse. Do not immediately intervene if the client is not successful. Advise the client to take horse breaths, to be calm, and to be patient. If the catching process is taking a long time, a therapist will likely come out to intervene.

## Grooming a Horse

Clients are generally responsible for grooming the horses. Grooming is time for the client to connect to the horse and to show responsibility and kindness. There will be some occasions when the horse handler will be asked to groom the horse or to help with specific tasks, such as picking the feet. However, in general, the horse handler should not intervene in grooming unless the therapist approves it.



## Grooming Checklist

Whether you or the client grooms the horse, remember to follow the grooming checklist and to begin grooming from the horse's left side.

### GROOMING CHECKLIST





#### Curry Comb

Using small circles, start at the neck and move to the shoulders, back, belly, and hind end. For dried, caked mud, use a metal curry.



#### Body Brush

Using short, quick strokes, start at the neck and move to the shoulders, back, belly, and hind end, brushing in the direction that hair grows and removing the dirt and loose hair from currying.



#### Face Brush

Using short, gentle strokes, brush away any dirt or loose hair from the horse's face.



#### Mane & Tail Brush

Remove large tangles or debris with your fingers. Brush the mane like you would your own hair. Stand to one side and hold the tail in one hand and pull the brush through the hair to remove tangles, dirt, and debris.



#### Hoof Pick

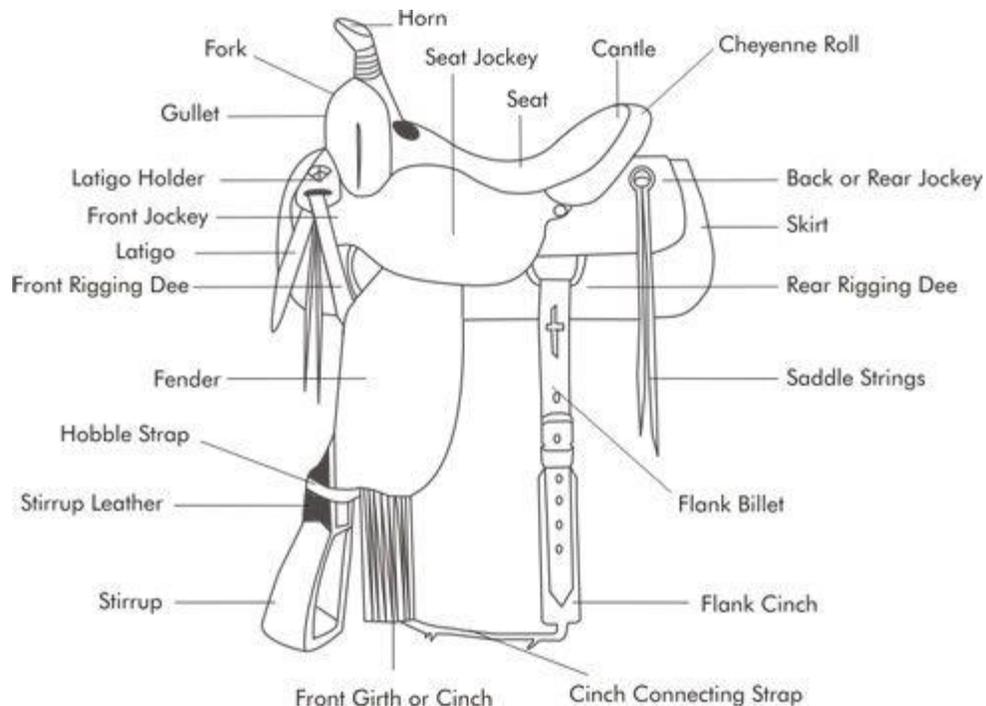
Start at the heel of the foot and pick forward to the toe, removing all rocks, dirt, and debris. Make sure to clean the grooves on either side of the frog, the U-shaped part of the hoof.



## Know Your Tack

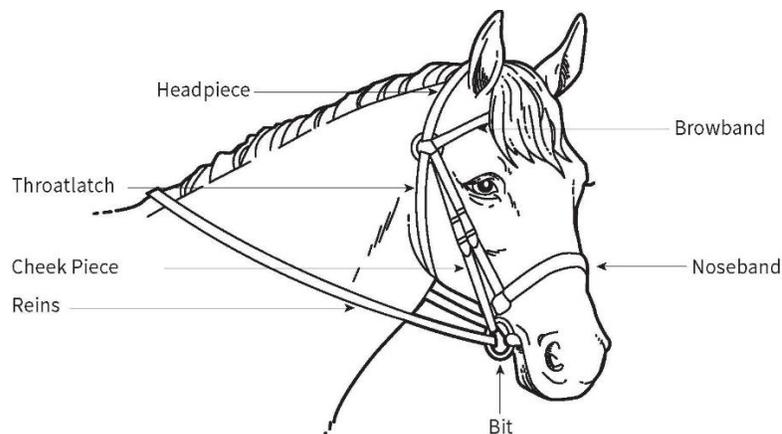
A horse handler is expected to know the basic parts of English and Western saddles and of bridles and halters.

### Western Saddle



[https://images.hayneedle.com/images/custom\\_site\\_images/669/western-saddle.jpg](https://images.hayneedle.com/images/custom_site_images/669/western-saddle.jpg)

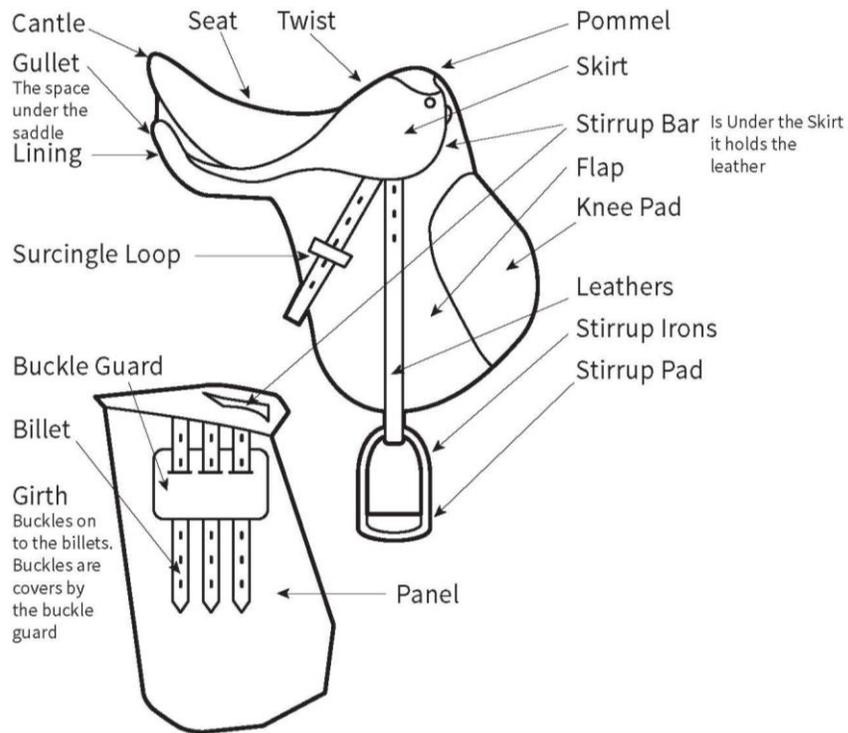
### Bridle



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## English Saddle



This shows the parts located under the Flap

[https://images.hayneedle.com/images/custom\\_site\\_images/669/english-saddle.jpg](https://images.hayneedle.com/images/custom_site_images/669/english-saddle.jpg)



## Leading a Horse

Your energy and your focus are key to leading the horse successfully. Keep your energy up and your eyes focused on your destination. Be calm and confident. The basics of leading a horse are as follows:

- Stand on the left side of the horse.
- Keep your right hand on the lead rope about 6 inches from the snap on the halter.
- Use your left hand to hold the excess lead rope, which should be folded into a figure 8 (never looped around your hand).
- Stand where you can see the horse's eye, roughly at the horse's neck.
- Keep your eyes up and focus on your destination.
- Begin walking forward and use a slight forward motion with your right hand on the halter. Say "[Horse name], walk."
- To increase or decrease the speed of the walk, increase or decrease your energy and your forward movement.
- To ask the horse to trot, pick your energy and speed up while moving forward. The horse may require slight forward rhythmic pressure on the lead rope for the first few steps.
- When you reach a corner of the arena, guide the horse in a wide, smooth turn. If you have been trotting, take turns at a walk.
- To stop, say "whoa" and bring both of your feet together at a full stop.
- Ask your horse to back up by turning to face him and use your right hand to lightly pull back toward his shoulder. Step forward.
- Remember that any time you apply pressure with the lead rope, the moment the horse responds, release the pressure. Never hold pressure on a horse's head; they will pull back against the pressure and make a spooking situation worse.
- Do not walk ahead of the horse or allow the horse to drag you along behind him.

While you are leading, be attuned to both the horse and the client. Your main focus



should be on the horse and its behavior, but you also want to be aware of the client's safety. If the horse stops immediately or is unwilling to follow a request from you or the client, you may need to get the attention of the therapist so they can check in with the client. This may be the horse telling you that the client has checked out. Remember that you and the client can take horse breathers to release your energy and to refocus.

## Observing Horse Behavior

Your role as horse handler is primarily to observe the behavior and actions of the horse. You must be constantly aware of the horse's energy level, disposition, movements, and reactions. If you observe something potentially unsafe, you should tell the instructor or the therapist right away. When you are around the client, make sure to use clean language in your observations.

## Clean Language

Clean language is a form of questioning and observation in psychotherapy. When you use clean language, you observe the client or the horse without interpretation or opinion. Observations should be specific, objective, and behavioral. For example,

<b>Instead of saying...</b>	<b>Use clean language...</b>
The horse is really anxious.	The horse is moving his feet and head a lot.
The horse is running around the arena.	The horse is moving their feet quickly.
The horse bit me.	The horse put his mouth on me.
The horse is being stubborn about getting his feet clean.	The horse is not allowing the client to lift and hold his feet.
The horse isn't listening to me.	The horse is not responding to my leadership.

With clean language, the therapist also doesn't rephrase what a client is saying; rather the therapist uses the client's exact words to explore what the client is currently thinking or feeling. The equine specialist uses the SPUD's model, which asks the client to identify horse behavior in the session. The horse handler might also be asked about the horse's behavior in a session, with the expectation that the



handler will use clean, objective language.

**Shifts-** What behaviors or attitudes shifted or changed?

**Patterns-** What patterns did you notice?

**Unique-** Did anything unusual happen?

**Discrepancy-** Was there any discrepancy in nonverbal v. verbal communication?

**Stuff-** Did you use clean language, keeping your interpretations and opinions out?

## Equine Posture and Movement

Observing the body language of a horse allows you to understand what the horse is experiencing. Pay attention to the horse's ears, eyes, nose, muzzle, head position, foot movement, tail movement.

For example, a stressed horse may:

- clench his jaw and have a tightened muzzle
- open their eyes wide enough that the whites show
- flare their nostrils and breathe in quick, short breaths
- hold their head and neck high and stiff
- stiffen their ears toward the stressor
- quickly swish their tail

A relaxed horse will:

- hold their head level or below level with their body
- have soft eyes, ears, and muzzle
- cock a hoof to rest
- be still
- take big breaths ("horse breaths")

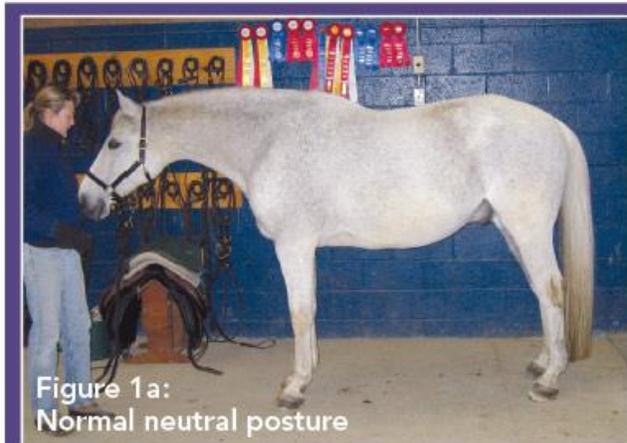


A horse's posture also tells us how their neuro-musculoskeletal system is functioning. An abnormal posture could indicate neurological, muscular, or behavioral problems. The normal neutral posture of a sound horse at rest balances and stabilizes the horse's center of mass, which allows them to move quickly if necessary. A relaxed horse lowers his head and may cock a hind leg and occasionally shift his weight.

If you notice unusual posture or movement, tell the instructor. Failing to correct a situation could lead to real injury in the horse—for example, if the horse is limping and becomes lame. It's always better to ask than to keep quiet.

For additional reading, about equine biomechanics and body language, see:

- <http://www.horsemagazine.com/thm/2012/10/why-is-an-understanding-of-biomechanics-important/>
- <https://equusmagazine.com/behavior/how-to-read-your-horses-body-language-8577>



**Figure 1a:**  
Normal neutral posture

When a horse is standing on level ground, all four cannon bones should be perpendicular to the ground, like a table. Equine anatomy is adapted so that this posture is the most energy efficient – any other posture takes more muscular energy to maintain, and puts strain on tendons and ligaments.



**Figure 1b:**  
Abnormal compensatory posture

One of the most common causes of poor posture is imbalanced hooves, especially long toes. When toes are too long, the flexor tendons are taut and put pressure on the heels, resulting in the compensatory posture we call "goat-on-a-rock", where both front and hind legs are camped in. Chronic compensatory posture causes sore backs, hind limb lameness and heel pain (navicular syndrome).

Retrieved from <http://ivcjournal.com/normal-and-abnormal-equine-posture/>

## Equipment Safety

- Make sure the rider is always wearing a helmet that is properly fitted. A fitted



helmet does not slide around when the client shakes his head up and down or side to side. You should be able to fit two fingers under the chin strap, and the straps should not be twisted.

- Check the girth on the saddle pad or saddle before the rider mounts. You may need to tighten the girth several times before the client mounts. You should be able to fit one finger to the first joint behind the strap.
- Do not attach the reins until the rider is ready to mount. Remove the reins before leading the horse from the arena to the barn.

## Equine Emergency Procedures

In any emergency, your responsibility is the horse. If another horse gets loose or a rider loses control in the arena, immediately halt your horse. If your rider falls off, move the horse away from the rider.

In an emergency dismount, halt the horse and position yourself directly in front of the horse, facing the horse's head. Once the rider has dismounted, move the horse away from the rider. If the horse needs to be turned out quickly, remove all tack and equipment.

## Volunteer Training Log

Use the following pages to record your notes and activities from your volunteer hours. Write down details about what you did during your volunteer hours, both in sessions and in training. Use the notes to give details and to write any questions you might have. The Equine Program Director will look at your training log as part of the demonstration that you're ready to move to the next volunteer level.

<b>Volunteer Training Log Examples</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Notes</b>
12/09	1	Observed Elroy in the 1pm session	Elroy was putting his mouth on the client as the client led him. The riding instructor stopped the session and had the client take horse breaths to relax, and he improved.



## Volunteer Training Log Examples

Date	Total Hours	Activity	Notes
12/09	1	Worked on circle game with Amigo.	Need to practice trot to walk.
1/6	1	Mental Health Training	Learned about anxiety disorders.



## Volunteer Training Log

Date	Total Hours	Activity	Notes



## Level 2 Test

To pass to Level 2, you must demonstrate the following skills to the Equine Program Director.

- Greet a horse.
- Catch a horse.
- Groom a horse and tack with bareback pad.
- Describe how to groom to a client.
- Recognize signs of illness or wounds.
- Demonstrate the Parelli games:
  - Friendly
  - Porcupine
  - Driving
  - Yo-Yo
  - Circle
  - Squeeze
  - Sideways
- List the four horsenalities and give one characteristic of each.
- Lead a horse at walk and trot along the rail and in a figure eight.
  - Without rider
  - With rider
- Ensure rider is wearing well-fitted helmet.
- Bring the horse to the mounting deck and ensure a successful mount.
- Describe/reenact what you would do if your horse spooked.
- Describe what you would do if a client or horse were displaying unsafe behavior.
- Describe your role as a horse handler (written response).
- Reflect on an observed session and describe horse behavior observations in neutral and clean language (written response).

Date Passed: \_\_\_\_\_



## Level 3: Groundwork Instructor

A Level 3 volunteer has mastered horse handling and is ready to instruct clients who are doing groundwork with their horses. They must show basic horsemanship skills such as asking a horse for all gaits and leads in the round pen. They must be able to demonstrate all of the skills and knowledge necessary for working one-on-one with clients. They can provide clear and simple instructions to a client throughout the lesson. This includes describing horse behavior and how to approach, greet, and halter a horse; instructing how to groom; and facilitating lesson activities. They can adapt and problem solve whenever necessary, and recognize both horse and client emotional or behavioral issues. They understand their role versus that of the therapist and can express lesson observations to the client and therapist (SPUDs) using clean language.



## Confidentiality Agreement

It is understood and agreed to that Hope and Healing Academy (HAHA), the identified discloser of confidential information, may provide certain information that is and must be kept confidential. To ensure the protection of such information, and to preserve any confidentiality the following conditions are understood and agreed to:

I understand that all client information, including medical records, other medical information, billing and financial data, is confidential.

I agree to keep all client information confidential.

I agree to comply with all HAHA Privacy Policies and Procedures including those implementing the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule.

I understand that if I violate client confidentiality by using or disclosing client information improperly, I may be subject to disciplinary action.

I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about the Privacy Rule and/or the proper use or disclosure of client information, I shall ask my supervising instructor, or HAHA Clinical Director.

I understand and agree that the HAHA Privacy Policies and Procedures will apply to all client information even after my observation, visit, or demonstration has been completed.

I understand that no information about any client I may observe or hear discussed while at HAHA, at any time thereafter may be transmitted to any third party or person via text message, posting on any social network or another online site, or via any other written or verbal communication.

WHEREFORE, the parties acknowledge that they have read and understand this Agreement and voluntarily accept the duties and obligations set forth herein. Failure to adhere to the Agreement constitutes dismissal.

### Recipient of Confidential Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Discloser of Confidential Information

Name: Chris A. Moran, LSCSW  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_