

Psychology Practice Bridges Mental Health and Horsemanship for Illinois Riders

New resource helps Northern Illinois riders transform their partnerships with horses through evidence-based equine-facilitated learning

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EINPresswire.com/ -- [Montesano Psychological Center](#) has released a free "Equestrian Mental Health Guide" designed to help riders and horse owners understand how their mental health directly impacts their horses-- and how [equine-facilitated learning](#) can facilitate profound healing for both.

"Every rider knows horses sense what we're feeling before we do," says Dr. Liara Montesano, founder and lifelong horse enthusiast. "That [anxiety](#) your horse mirrors? That hesitation when you ask for trust? Those aren't training problems: they're invitations to heal. When you address your mental health, your horse transforms too."

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This isn't about fixing yourself to ride better. It's about healing yourself to experience the full depth of partnership that horses make possible. Your horse is already offering this. Are you ready?"

Dr. Liara Montesano, Psy.D, LP



Montesano Psychological Center helps riders develop authentic confidence through healing, allowing their horses to respond with deeper partnership and respect.

The guide is available at:

<https://montesanopsych.com/equestrian-mental-health-guide/>

The Hidden Connection Between Mental Health and Horsemanship

While equestrians recognize horses' therapeutic benefits, fewer understand how unresolved anxiety, trauma, and self-doubt directly impact their horses' behavior. As prey animals with heightened sensitivity, horses mirror their

rider's nervous system, creating a feedback loop that either strengthens or limits the partnership.

"Unprocessed trauma shows up as hypervigilance in the saddle. Anxiety creates tension your horse feels in your hands and body. Self-doubt translates into unclear communication," Dr. Montesano explains. "Traditional talk therapy is valuable, but sometimes healing happens through genuine connection with another being, the kind riders already understand with horses."

Dr. Montesano completed specialized training with equine therapy pioneer Leigh Shambo, MSW, LPCCC, founder of Human-Equine Alliances For Learning (HEAL), bringing together clinical psychology expertise with equine-facilitated learning.

Why Equine-Facilitated Learning Works

Horses offer what traditional therapy cannot:

- **Honest Feedback:** Horses respond to authentic emotional states, not the version shown to the world
- **Bypass Defenses:** Working with horses accesses deeper parts of the psyche where real healing occurs
- **Embodied Experience:** Physical presence grounds clients in their bodies rather than rumination
- **Immediate Reflection:** Changes in emotional state are immediately visible in the horse's response

The approach is particularly effective for anxiety, trauma, self-doubt, emotional disconnection, and difficulty being present; issues that create barriers both in life and in the saddle.



Montesano Psychological Center emphasizes that the profound bond between horse and rider begins with authentic connection—when you heal, your partnership transforms.



Dr. Montesano's equine-facilitated learning shows how a calm, present rider creates a relaxed, trusting horse—evidence of how mental health work translates directly into the saddle.

The Ripple Effect: How Personal Healing Transforms Partnerships

When riders address their mental health, the benefits extend beyond the barn:

- Anxious riders become calm and present – horses relax and trust their guidance
- Self-doubting riders develop authentic confidence – horses gain respect and partnership deepens
- Trauma survivors become grounded and resilient – horses can finally just be horses
- Distracted individuals cultivate mindfulness – communication clarifies and rides become restorative



Through equine-facilitated learning at Montesano Psychological Center, horses offer honest feedback to our authentic emotional states, creating opportunities for healing that traditional talk therapy cannot provide.

"This isn't about fixing yourself to ride better," Dr. Montesano says. "It's about healing yourself to experience the full depth of partnership that horses make possible. Your horse is already offering this. Are you ready to meet them there?"

Personalized, Evidence-Based Care

Montesano Psychological Center combines equine-facilitated learning with evidence-based approaches including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), trauma-informed care, and person-centered therapy. Sessions can take place at Dr. Montesano's private barn in Antioch, at the client's own stable (within 1 hour of the office), or via secure telehealth.

The practice serves riders, horse owners, and equestrians throughout Northern Illinois, with multilingual services available in English and Spanish. The practice is in-network with major insurance providers including Aetna, United Healthcare, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Cigna, and Medicaid.

What the Free Guide Includes

The comprehensive guide provides:

- How horses detect and reflect human emotional states
- The connection between nervous system regulation and horse behavior
- Signs that equine-facilitated learning might help
- Real examples of how personal healing transforms horse partnerships

- What to expect in sessions with Dr. Montesano
- Information about insurance coverage and session formats

About Montesano Psychological Center

Montesano Psychological Center provides comprehensive mental health services to individuals, couples, and families throughout Northern Illinois. Led by Dr. Liara Montesano, the practice specializes in telehealth therapy, equine-facilitated learning, couples therapy, and individual therapy, delivered in English, Spanish, and Hindi.

For more information or to download the free Equestrian Mental Health Guide, visit <https://montesanopsych.com/equestrian-mental-health-guide/> or call (224) 603-2058.

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