



## What is Therapeutic Horseback Riding?

Therapeutic horseback riding is the use of horses and equine-assisted activities for people with disabilities to enhance physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social skills.

## Benefits of Therapeutic Horseback Riding

Therapeutic horseback riding activities provide many benefits, including:

Physical Benefits	Strength Balance Coordination Flexibility Range of Motion Posture
Cognitive Benefits	Focus Concentration Attention Executive Function Sensory Integration
Emotional Benefits	Self Confidence Calming Satisfaction Stress Reduction
Behavioral Benefits	Patience Control Self-Discipline Interpersonal Skills

## What is Hippotherapy?

Hippotherapy is a physical, occupational, and speech-language therapy strategy using equine movement to help achieve neuro-muscular functional outcomes. Hippotherapy is conducted by therapists working closely with horse professionals.

## Benefits of Hippotherapy

Physical Benefits	Gross Motor Function
Occupational Benefits	Fine Motor Function Sensory Integration Attention
Speech-Language Benefits	Physiologic Systems Function Communication Skills

# Fragile X-Specific Benefits of Equine-Assisted Therapies

## **Low Muscle Tone**

- The physical activity involved in riding helps strengthen muscles that support the core, thereby improving posture.
- Riders adjust their balance and posture to the horse's gait, resulting in movements that simulate and strengthen human movements needed for sitting, standing, and walking.

## **Motor Skills**

- Participants develop the ability to maintain gross and fine motor balance and to move rhythmically with the horse.
- Participants become involved in interpreting and reacting to the horse's movements.
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## **Sensory Integration**

- The horse's movements are variable, rhythmic, and repetitive, providing sensory input.
- The natural outdoor setting minimizes sensory overload, allowing for success.

## **Focus, Concentration, and Attention**

- Participants learn to control the horse's movements independently, giving them an experience of being in charge.
- The need to direct the horse encourages students' abilities to focus and concentrate for longer periods.

## **Social Skills**

- Participants interact with peers, volunteers, and instructors in a fun setting while participating in animal care, equipment use, sports games and riding. This encourages appropriate social interaction skills.

## Where Can I Find More Information or a Riding Program?

American Hippotherapy Association (AHA) – [americanhippotherapyassociation.org](http://americanhippotherapyassociation.org)

Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association (CanTRA) – [cantra.ca](http://cantra.ca)

Federation of Riding for the Disabled International – [frdi.net](http://frdi.net)

Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) – [pathintl.org](http://pathintl.org)