

## What is Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)?

Animal-Assisted Therapy, or AAT, is a mental health counseling approach that involves incorporating an animal(s) as a therapy partner. The animal works with the mental health professional to guide the client and provide growth and healing. Sessions can be in an office, out in the natural world or even in a horse barn. Some of the many benefits of working with animals include non-judgmental acceptance and emotional regulation through the release of dopamine and oxytocin in a person's brain when petting and physically interacting with animals. These reactions help us to feel calm and happy and promote a sense of safety that opens new space for therapy and healing.

### Canine-Assisted Therapy (CAT)

In Canine-Assisted Therapy the mental health professional utilizes a specially trained dog to assist during sessions. Canine-Assisted therapeutic activities can include visiting nursing homes, hospitals and colleges as well as grade schools. Why dogs? Dogs have been bred for centuries to respond to the emotional state of humans and be exceptionally tuned in to our needs and reactions. They have no secret agendas. They are spontaneous, friendly and like to play, easily disarming a tense human and helping us to open up.



### Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP), or Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP), is an experiential therapy that takes place in an arena within an equine therapeutic facility and typically involves a team consisting of the horse(s), the Mental Health therapist and the Equine Specialist. The Mental Health therapist guides the client through the counseling session, providing emotional safety, growth and healing with the help of the horses, and the Equine Specialist is responsible for watching the horse's movement and expressions to provide for physical safety during the session as well as insight into how the horses are responding to the client. Sessions can be indoors or outdoors and engages all of the physical senses.

### Benefits of Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP)

Research shows that spending time with animals and being in natural settings is beneficial to our health. Horses are particularly sensitive animals and make excellent therapy partners because they are aware of our emotions, body language and small changes in our demeanor that people often miss. The horses act like mirrors to our internal world and provide the opportunity to heal, gain insight and practice social interactions within the safety of the therapeutic relationship and the bond with the horses. Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy is effective for a wide variety of mental health issues such as; emotional regulation, attachment, anxiety, depression, trauma, ADHD and many others. One of the benefits of EFP is that there is usually much less talking during a session than in an office setting. The focus instead is on the experience and interacting with the horses.

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**EFP is a holistic approach that creates rich memories that stick with clients for long periods of time.**

- Working with large animals is empowering
- EFP is a full body experience
- All five senses are engaged
- Many EFP therapists have noted that clients often progress more quickly with equine sessions than with office based therapy



### **Types of Equine-Assisted Activities**

There are many types of equine-assisted activities, however; not all of them are for mental health. Therapeutic riding allows for people of all ages and abilities to benefit from the movement of the horse, building balance, core strength and confidence, but it does not include mental health therapy. Hippotherapy is therapeutic riding that is facilitated by a trained and licensed occupational, physical or speech and language therapist. This type of therapy does not involve mental health but can be excellent for many candidates who are also involved in mental health services. When searching for Equine-Facilitated or Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy it is important to verify that the program you are considering does in fact provide mental health services and that they are provided by a trained and licensed mental health clinician.

### ***Who can benefit from Animal-Assisted Therapy?***

AAT can be used for individuals, groups, families, couples, adults, teens and children. People of all ages benefit from interacting with animals in a therapeutic setting. Animals can assist in many types of therapy and are effective for a wide range of mental health concerns including but not limited to: recovery from addictions, grief and trauma, attachment, emotion regulation, ADHD/ADD, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, eating disorders, chronic and persistent mental health disorders, panic attacks, self-harm and suicidal ideation and many others.

### ***Is it affordable?***

Most insurance companies will pay for AAT sessions with a licensed therapist, including the Oregon Health Plan. Some programs bill insurance directly and others will provide clients with a bill to submit to their insurance company for reimbursement. It is important to ask about payment and insurance options before scheduling an appointment.

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## Research and Media

Why Close Encounters with Animals Soothe Us:

[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/18/magazine/why-close-encounters-with-animals-soothe-us.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/18/magazine/why-close-encounters-with-animals-soothe-us.html?_r=0)

How Horses Help Us Heal:

<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/patient-advice/articles/2016-09-02/equine-therapy-how-horses-help-humans-heal>



Benefits of Animal-Assisted Therapy:

[https://www.uclahealth.org/pac/Workfiles/PAC/ReviewofBenefits\\_Morrison.pdf](https://www.uclahealth.org/pac/Workfiles/PAC/ReviewofBenefits_Morrison.pdf)

Canine-Assisted Therapy:

<http://time.com/4498/the-dog-will-see-you-now/>

Autism and Animal-Assisted Therapies:

[https://iancommunity.org/cs/ian\\_treatment\\_reports/animal\\_assisted\\_therapies](https://iancommunity.org/cs/ian_treatment_reports/animal_assisted_therapies)

At-Risk Youth and Equine-Assisted Therapy:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02650533.2011.561304>

PTSD and Equine-Assisted Therapy:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272999924\\_Equine-Assisted\\_Therapy\\_for\\_Anxiety\\_and\\_Posttraumatic\\_Stress\\_Symptoms\\_Equine-Assisted\\_Therapy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272999924_Equine-Assisted_Therapy_for_Anxiety_and_Posttraumatic_Stress_Symptoms_Equine-Assisted_Therapy)

Eating Disorders and Equine-Assisted Therapy:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15401383.2013.852451>

Aggressive Behavior and Persistent Mental Illness with Animal-assisted Therapy:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25269512>



# What is Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)?

A Program of Northwest Resource Associates

## Oregon AAT Resource List

### Portland Metropolitan Area

#### Therapy Gone to the Dogs

City, State: Portland, OR  
Phone: 503 764-9508  
Website: <http://therapygonetothedogs.org/>  
Offering: Canine-Assisted Psychotherapy

#### Mindful Trails Counseling

City, State: Portland, OR  
Phone: 503-389-043  
Website: <https://www.mindfultrailscounseling.com>  
Offering: Psychotherapy

#### Forward Stride

City, State: Beaverton, OR  
Phone: 503-590-2959  
Website: [www.forwardstride.org](http://www.forwardstride.org)  
Offering: Psychotherapy, Occupational, Physical, and Speech and Language therapies, riding and other activities

#### Firefly Counseling Services

City, State: Hillsboro, OR  
Phone: 503-560-5822  
Website: <http://www.fcspc.org/animal-assisted-therapy/>  
Offering: Canine-Assisted Psychotherapy

#### Dream Acres

City, State: Tualatin, OR  
Phone: 503-505-0466  
Website: <http://www.dreamacres1.com/>  
Offering: Psychotherapy

#### The Center at Heron Hill

City, State: Canby, OR  
Phone: 503-221-4531  
Website: <http://thecenteratheronhill.com/>  
Offering: Psychotherapy, Ecotherapy, outdoor activities

### Central Oregon

#### Love Reins

City, State: Salem, OR  
Email: [lovereinsranch@comcast.net](mailto:lovereinsranch@comcast.net)  
Website: <https://www.lovereinsranch.org/>  
Offering: Therapeutic riding

#### Healing Reins

City, State: Bend, OR  
Phone: 541-382-9410  
Website: <http://www.healingreins.org/>  
Offering: Psychotherapy, Occupational, Physical, and Speech and Language therapies, riding and other activities

#### Horses of Hope

City, State: Turner, OR  
Phone: 503-743-3890  
Website: <https://horsesofhopeoregon.org/>  
Offering: Occupational, Physical, and Speech and Language therapies, riding and other activities

#### HART

City, State: Independence, OR  
Phone: 971-301-4278  
Website: <https://horsesadaptiveriding.org/>  
Offering: Psychotherapy, Occupational Therapy, riding and other activities

### Coastal Area

#### Bright Horizons

City, State: Siletz, OR  
Phone: 541-961-4156  
Website: <http://www.brighthorizonsriding.org/>  
Offering: Psychotherapy, Therapeutic riding, recreational riding and other activities



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## Southern Oregon

### Therapeutic Animal Interactions and Life Skills

City, State: Eugene, OR  
Phone: 541-335-1390  
Website: <http://www.horsetails.org/>  
Offering: Psychotherapy

### Solid Ground

City, State: Klamath Falls, OR  
Phone: 541-539-6303  
Website: <http://www.solidgroundkf.com/>  
Offering: Psychotherapy and Therapeutic riding

### Hope Equestrian Center

City, State: Eagle Point, OR  
Phone: 541-776-0878  
Website: <http://www.hopeequestrian.com/>  
Offering: Therapeutic Riding