**Connecticut Equine Development Center, LLC**

 ***(860) 759-3484 ctequine@gmail.com*** <http://ctequine.wix.com/cedc>

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Located at Lexi’s Place Farm Higganum, CT

**Individual Equine-Assisted Therapy: For Children and Adults with Developmental Challenges and Disabilities**

An individual session includes up to 45 minutes one-on-one with the therapist and team of therapy horses working on the specific goals of each client. This includes unique equine activities created and implemented for each client’s specific needs, challenges, and goals.

Lexi’s Place Farm is a privately owned equine facility providing EFP/EAL services. Clients are afforded privacy and security in a safe/quiet environment.

**EFP/EAL Therapist: Allison Behnke, MSW, MA EAGALA and PATH, Intl. trained Please contact me for further information.**

**Why Horses?**

Equine-facilitated psychotherapy (EFP) and equine-facilitated learning (EFL) are experiential forms of psychotherapy and learning that involve equines. The equine is a critically important partner in the work of both EFP and EFL. The equine’s prey nature and intense sensitivity to subtle changes in their environment make them perfect partners for me to teach a wide range of life and coping skills.

The concept that horses might be helpful or healing to people struggling with developmental and mental health issues is based on the idea that horses (as domesticated prey animals) are extremely sensitive to changes in the human being (as a predatory creature). Due to their sensitivity, horses react and respond to people differently based upon the person's emotional state. Since we know that emotional states in human beings also impact our physiology, it only makes sense that horses can smell or sense) those changes. The horse acts as a large ***biofeedback machine***, providing the client and the therapist with information regarding the client's moods and changes within those moods. If a client arrives anxious the horse will act and respond one way. If the client is able to reduce his or her anxiety, the horse's behaviors will also change. This provides a plethora of information and skill building opportunities for both the client and the therapist.

In an educational setting, horses and the lifestyle that goes along with maintaining horses, provides opportunities to teach ***critical life and communication skills***. Horses mostly use non-vocal communication and thus are wonderful teachers to help us better understand and learn how our ***non-verbal communication*** might be impacting or influencing others in our lives. Horses also demand that we are aware of our surroundings at all times. In order to stay safe around horses we must be observant and ***present in our bodies***. We have to ***listen to*** each other and to the horses. We have to stay ***focused and attentive***. To care for horses takes dedication, time, and effort and our clients can learn a strong ***work ethic*** that may transition back into their daily lives. Furthermore, clients gain ***self-esteem and self-confidence*** while learning how to work with such a large and powerful creature. In all, horses provide us with a way to see our internal landscape and modes of operation exposed. They offer us humility, compassion, and challenge - all critical elements to supporting self-growth and self-awareness. (Taken from PATH, Int. website 2014)