



HEALING REINS.^{INC}
of KENTUCKY

Volunteer Manual

Welcome to the Healing Reins Volunteer Team!

Thank you for volunteering with Healing Reins of Kentucky! Volunteers are the core of our program. Your generosity, caring, and hard work from allows us to change lives through Therapeutic Riding. We greatly appreciate the gift of your time, energy and your commitment. Our volunteers have a special experience that allows you to form strong connections with our participants, horses and other volunteers.

To assist in providing the safest and most enjoyable volunteer experience possible, new volunteers are required to attend an on-site training. This training includes a classroom session on our history, volunteer opportunities, program policies and procedures and the methodology and reasoning behind how we do things. A hands-on session with the horses will also take place during training; however, if you are only interested in volunteering in a non-lesson role, you will only need to attend the first part.

Healing Reins is pursuing PATH accreditation for our facilities and instructors. The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International, a 501c3 non-profit was formed in 1969 as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association to promote equine-assisted activities and therapies for individuals with special needs. Through this structured and highly recognized program, Healing Reins will be able to offer more services to the community.

Healing Reins wants your volunteer experience to be safe, rewarding and fun. It is essential for our participants that we uphold consistency in activities, procedures and policies. As we grow, Healing Reins will continue to offer training and development to provide our volunteers and staff with the foundation, tools and knowledge to contribute to the success of our program. We look forward to sharing this experience with you.

Sincerely,

Healing Reins of Kentucky

MISSION STATEMENT:

“To assist individuals in reaching their full potential through interaction with horses.”

VALUES:

- **Safety** is the first priority for participants, volunteers, staff and horses
- **Commitment** to providing the best experience possible and to uphold our vision and values with the highest regard.
- **Care and Trust**
- **Transparency** in all of our proceedings
- **Enthusiasm and Passion**

OVERVIEW OF HEALING REINS: OUR HISTORY

Healing Reins of Kentucky is the result of chasing a dream, filling a need, and having a facility available to do both. Stacy Denton, owner of Blue Moon stables founded “SpiritHorse at Blue Moon” in 2015. Stacy Denton was simply ready to stop saying “no” to everyone who inquired about equine assisted therapy lessons. Stacy felt an overwhelming desire for many years to give free lessons to special people who needed horses in their lives, but simply could not afford them. She attended training in Corinth, TX with SpiritHorse International and

proceeded to bring SpiritHorse to Kentucky. In order to establish the building blocks necessary to the program, a determined Board of Directors began the task of establishing this brand new 501c3 program.

Since then, the plans have turned into reality, and with the joining of our new partner barn, Rolling Hills Equestrian, owned by Bill and Peggy Fidler, "Healing Reins" evolved. Bill and Peggy share the same passion and enthusiasm for helping people in the community and wanted to enhance their lives by using Rolling Hills Equestrian as a means to facilitate this. Through this dedicated partnership, Healing Reins will now offer Therapeutic Riding and Equine Assisted learning through the PATH program.

Healing Reins is currently undergoing daily transformation. Currently in Phase 1 of Operations, Healing Reins is pursuing PATH accreditation for its centers, Certification of Instructors and training and assessing therapy horses. Volunteers are the foundation to our development and expansion. Healing Reins is completely dependent upon the volunteers, community support, donors and fundraisers.

Healing Reins Contact Information:

Website: www.healingreinsKY.org Phone: (270) 857-3150

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Instructors		
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EQUINE ASSISTED ACTIVITIES AND THERAPIES:

Healing Reins is excited to bring Equine assisted activities and therapies to the Tri-State. The following is a brief description of each activity Healing Reins will offer and a proper definition as described by the PATH International Health and Education Committee.

EQUINE ASSISTED ACTIVITIES & THERAPIES (EAA&T) is an umbrella term inclusive of all the various offerings of PATH Intl. centers and all of the equine activities and therapies designed for people with disabilities or diverse needs. This term will be used by Healing Reins to accurately make global statements about center activities.

THERAPEUTIC RIDING (TR) is mounted activities including traditional riding disciplines or adaptive riding activities by a PATH certified instructor. At Healing Reins these activities are taught in private and group lessons during the day and evening. Mounted activities are designed to meet each participant's individual needs and the intent is for participants to progress in equestrian skills while improving their cognitive, emotional, social and/or behavioral skills. Secondary benefits include improved fine and gross motor skills, balance, strength, coordination, proprioception, tactile senses, team work and much more.

HIPPOTHERAPY (HPOT) is a physical, occupational or speech-language therapy treatment strategy that utilizes equine movement as part of an integrated intervention program to achieve functional outcomes. Services are provided by a licensed/credentialed physical therapist, occupational therapist, or speech and language pathologist.

EQUINE FACILITATED LEARNING (EFL) is an educational approach to equine-assisted activities. EFL content is developed and organized by credentialed practitioners with the primary intent to facilitate personal growth and development of life skills through equine interactions. EFL promotes personal exploration of feelings and

behaviors in an educational format. Goals may be related to self-improvement, social interaction and/or education. At Healing Reins, these activities will not include riding and may be conducted by a PATH certified instructor, an educator or licensed therapist.

Confidentiality Policy—Please read carefully

At Healing Reins, we place great importance on protecting the confidential information of our clients, our staff and our volunteers. “Confidential Information” includes, but is not limited to, personally identifiable information such as name, nickname(s), telephone numbers, addresses, e-mails, etc., as well as the non-public business records of Healing Reins. In particular, medical information about clients, and information about their disabilities or special needs, must be protected as Confidential Information. Volunteers shall never disclose Confidential Information to anyone other than Healing Reins staff. In addition, volunteers must seek staff permission that consent has been given before taking any pictures or videos. Any violation of the Confidentiality will result in disciplinary actions.

Volunteer Expectations: Guidelines

Healing Reins accepts volunteers regardless of race, color, nationality or ethnic origin and economic status. In the interest of maintaining the highest standards of quality and safety, volunteers of Healing Reins of Kentucky Center will be assessed according to the criteria outlined below.

General Criteria

All Healing Reins volunteers must:

- Be dependable, honest and flexible
- inform their volunteer coordinator when they are unable to attend
- be a minimum of 12 years of age and demonstrate mature, responsible and reliable behavior
- If under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent/guardian on first day of volunteering
- submit to a criminal background check if over 18 years of age
- abide by HR barn rules and general facility procedures as well as the guidelines outlined in this manual

Team-centered Guidelines

All HR volunteers must:

- demonstrate good judgment
- work with students, staff and fellow volunteers in a respectful, cooperative and positive manner
- take direction willingly from staff and Lead Volunteers
- communicate areas of concern to the instructor or Volunteer Director

GENERAL GUIDELINES The following guidelines are for the safety and well-being of our participants, volunteers, staff and therapy horses.

Safety 1st: ALL persons on Healing Reins (HR) property must sign a volunteer waiver or visitor release form.

- Please leave your phone in your car or turn your phone on silent while participating in lessons. Cell phone use could create a dangerous lesson situation.
- A Healing Reins coordinator will oversee all activities and take charge in the event of an emergency.
- Stay calm in the event of an emergency, know HR emergency procedures and the location of emergency exits.
- Be aware of your surroundings and others.
- Be prepared to remain focused during your volunteer commitment, any guest accompanying you at the barn, must remain in the designated waiting area.

- Please do not pet the horses through the stall bars or while they are in the grooming or wash racks. Please respect their quiet time when they are stalled. Our therapy horses are “at work” during lesson activities and should not be distracted.
- Only instructors, horse handlers and wranglers are allowed to have contact with the horses when they are in their stall, paddocks or cross-ties.
- Do not feed the horses.
- Wranglers, instructors, and horse leaders are the only approved personnel to enter a stall or paddock.
- No pets other than support dogs for individuals with disabilities are allowed.
- Smoking is not allowed on property.
- Familiarize yourself with the confidentiality policy and this entire manual.

VOLUNTEER AND PARTICIPANT INTERACTION GUIDELINES

When volunteering, it is important to use appropriate language and interaction. Our desire is to create an environment where participants, volunteers and staff feel welcome, safe and respected.

KNOW YOUR ROLE AS A VOLUNTEER, NOT EVERY POSITION WILL HAVE VERBAL INTERACTION WITH PARTICIPANTS WHILE MOUNTED

- Healing Reins (HR) celebrates diversity and sees value in all individuals. Respect and cordiality toward everyone is expected.
- **NEVER be alone with a participant!** Always stay in a group area. Never take a participant to the bathroom. If necessary, send the participant with a caregiver or staff member.
- **Be yourself.** Use your normal voice and give support but do not try to over praise.
- Do not sensationalize the accomplishments of individuals with disabilities. While accomplishments should be recognized and applauded, people in the disability rights movement have publicized that excessive recognition and praise has a negative impact.
- Use appropriate terminology. A person has a disability, rather than suffering from, afflicted with or a victim of a disability. A person uses a wheelchair rather than is confined or restricted to a wheelchair.
- Use first-person language: This means you should not define a person by their disability, For example, you do not say “the autistic person” but would instead say “the person with autism”
- Use age appropriate language: For example, do not talk to an adult participant the same way you would talk to a child or younger participant. They are adults and deserve to be treated as such.
- Do not discuss inappropriate personal topics with a participant.
- Remember, even if a participant is non-verbal, they still listen and want to be part of the conversation. Many times people think that just because a person does not talk, they can not hear. Make sure to respect the participant and talk to them, not about them.
- Encourage autonomy! Do not do something for a participant just because it will go faster or you don’t think that they can do it. Allow our participants to use their abilities to complete a task and be there if they need you. It is a good idea to ask before helping.
- When giving directions to a participant, be polite, direct and firm. Keep directions simple and positive. Avoid the use of the word don’t.
- Many of our participants will have sensory processing difficulties. Keep distractions and non-essential conversation to a minimum.

FAQ:

What do I do when I arrive?

- Please stay home if you have a fever, or were exposed to Covid-19 or have any symptoms.

- Arrive on time, call if you are running late.
- Park in the designated parking lot.
- Check in at the volunteer station and check the lesson assignments.
- Get your nametag
- Check in with your instructor
- Find your horse or participant
- Before leaving make sure to log your hours and put away your nametag.
- During Covid-19 restrictions, have your temperature taken.

What should I wear?

- Dress appropriately for the forecasted weather
- Please consider wearing clothing appropriate for a child and family environment.
- Wearing appropriate shoes is a must. Tennis shoes, hiking boots and riding boots etc. are all acceptable footwear. No sandals, open toe/heel shoes, slide on shoes or high heels.
- If wearing a hat, make sure it fits securely and that the brim is not too large that it interferes with your vision and responsibilities, or is distracting to the participant or horse.
- Sunscreen or insect repellent is strongly recommended. Minimize perfume. Heavy scents can attract bees and may be a sensory overload for some participants and horses.
- Do not wear dangling or excessive jewelry, is it distracting and unsafe.
- During Covid-19 restrictions, please have a mask available to wear when applicable.

How do I report an absence or tardy?

- Please notify your instructor at the beginning of the session of any dates that you will be absent.
- If you must miss a lesson or are running late, please call the instructor directly.
- Please give a 24 hour notice if possible, some exceptions will be made in case of emergency.

How do I know if participant services are cancelled?

- Snow days- HR follows the same snow closure schedule as Henderson County schools.
- If your services are not needed due to participant cancellation, the instructor will contact you by the best method contact, listed on your volunteer application.

Horse Usage Relative To Heat Concerns - Periodically, due to heat and humidity elevation, it is necessary to monitor and limit the workload on program horses. The Equine Manager will keep instructors advised using the following guidelines:

- If the HEAT INDEX is over 101 degrees F there will be no riding, but alternative lesson may be offered.
- If the HEAT INDEX is over 105 degrees F the lesson will be cancelled.

Horse Usage Relative To Cold Concerns – In the event temperatures are below 10 degrees Fahrenheit and are not likely to rise, mounted lessons will not be held. Individuals working in the aisle ways are subject to extreme cold and it is unhealthy for horses to become heated during extreme cold. Elderly horses will need to be carefully monitored in extreme temperatures, cold and hot. Please remember they cannot endure as much as the younger horses.

Alternative Lessons Policy

Volunteers will be expected to assist with Alternative Lesson Plans. Your Instructor or Coordinator will give you your role.

1. Alternative lessons may be offered in lieu of cancellation when heat, cold or other weather conditions such as thunder and lightning storms are factors.
2. There may be circumstances when a class needs to be canceled due to weather just after it has begun. In these cases the instructor may choose to provide an alternative lesson in the classroom or barn. The alternative lesson will consist of age appropriate, educational and fun activities that will benefit the rider in furthering his/her knowledge of horses and horsemanship. When an alternative lesson is conducted, NO mounted make-up lesson will be given in the future.

Dismissal Procedures: Three Strikes Volunteer Policy:

“No-Shows” and Failure to follow Guidelines- Healing Reins of Kentucky relies greatly on volunteers as important members of the team that provides services to and assists our clients. We also recognize the extreme importance of the safety and well-being of our clients, volunteers, staff, guests, and animals. Any time a volunteer does not call ahead or report to a scheduled commitment; it is considered a “no show” situation. After 3 consecutive occurrences in a 6 month period, the volunteer is removed from the current schedule. The VC will ask the volunteer to take some time away from the program or change responsibilities. The volunteer will be encouraged to return when they are better able to fit the program into their schedule.

All volunteers/guests are expected to follow Healing Reins rules and policies and may not engage in disruptive, unsafe or inappropriate behavior. In the event a volunteer/guest does not comply, **the following actions may be taken:**

Level 1 Verbal warning - Breaking of HR's rules and/or policies and procedures may be followed by a verbal warning from the Executive Director and be documented in the incident report book.

Level 2 Written warning - Breaking of HR's rules and/or policies and procedures for a second time will be followed by a Personnel Committee meeting for discussion regarding the infraction. The purpose of the meeting is to determine the exact reason the infraction occurred for a second time and discuss with the volunteer/guest how to avoid the circumstance ever occurring again. This meeting will be documented and placed in the incident report book.

Level 3 Dismissal from organization- Immediate dismissal from the property and organization will occur for:

- Purposely endangering the safety of others
- Inappropriate use of the facilities, mailing lists or monies
- Disruptive or abusive behavior to the animals or people at HR
- Repeated disregard of the organization's rules, policies and procedures
- Possession of a weapon
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs - Healing Reins will take appropriate measures and including calling the local police department if a staff person suspects that a parent, participant, or volunteer is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Lesson volunteers

Commitment and Requirements:

Lesson volunteers are asked to commit a minimum of one lesson per week, for each consecutive week during a session. Lessons are held year round with short breaks between sessions. Reliable attendance is key, as we strive to build a team of horse, participant, horse leaders and sidewalkers. It is important to keep this team consistent throughout the entire class session. Wranglers are also asked to commit to a complete session to keep the handling of our horses and lesson flow consistent and safe. **All lesson volunteers are required to attend volunteer trainings specific to their volunteer position. Lesson volunteers must pass the Skills Assessment prior to volunteering as a Horse Handler, Lesson Sidewalker or Wrangler.** Current volunteers are asked to participate in continued volunteer education and training provided by Healing Reins.

Lesson Volunteer Positions:

Horse Leader: The horse leader's primary responsibility is the horse. A leader pays close attention to the horse and all that is happening around the horse before, during and after a lesson. A leader focuses on safety and maintains control of the horse while allowing the participant to execute aids and cues asked for by the instructor during a lesson.

Qualification and Responsibilities:

- Attendance at Healing Reins New Volunteer Orientation and Hands-on training
- Previous horse experience is necessary.
- Minimum age of 14
- Completion of skills assessment
- Commitment to attend class each week for the length of the session
- Adequate vision and hearing to ensure safety to horses and participants
- Walk/jog with the horse for duration of the lesson time
- Ability to read a horse and to calmly prevent/avoid unsafe situations
- Demonstrate Patience
- Ability to adapt to change
- If appropriate, assist wranglers in grooming and tacking up lesson horses. Get directions from Instructor for where horse should be located at start of lesson
- Primary responsibility is horse safety
- Listen and respond to instructor's directions
- Lead horse during lesson and maintain safe spacing between horses
- Help horse follow the participant's cues
- Remove tack and ensure horse is properly cared for after lesson

Sidewalker: The sidewalker's primary responsibility is the participant. A sidewalker walks or jogs along-side a participant and acts as the "bridge" between instructor and participant. Sidewalkers are there to assist when needed to help ensure participant safety and to encourage them to be as independent as possible!

Qualifications and Responsibilities:

- Attendance at Healing Reins New Volunteer Orientation and Hands-On training
- Completion of skills assessment
- Previous horse experience not required, but preferred
- Minimum age of 14
- Commitment to attend class each week for the length of the session

- Adequate vision and hearing to ensure safety of the participant
- Walk/jog alongside the horse for the duration of the lesson, occasionally on uneven surfaces
- Ability to hold your arms slightly raised and out to the side for up to 30 minutes thus providing support for the person if necessary
- Comfortable working in physical contact with horses and children/adults with disabilities and special needs
- Ability to adapt to change
- Display Patience
- Ability to perform emergency dismount of rider
- Meet and greet participants. Remain with your participant ensuring their safety at all times.
- Assist with helmets
- Assist the participant during the lesson, mounting and dismounting processes
- Act as a “bridge” between instructor and participant, but verbal communication is the sole responsibility of the Instructor. Do not speak to the participant for any reason during riding, unless specifically requested by the instructor. This will allow the participant to maintain focus.

Wrangler: Wranglers help the lessons run smoothly and on time by having horses in their stalls and groomed before lessons begin and help to properly tack all lesson horses prior to each lesson. Wranglers are also important in maintaining barn safety and cleanliness throughout the lesson activities.

Qualifications and Responsibilities:

- Previous horse experience is required
- Attendance at Healing Reins New Volunteer Orientation and Hands-On training
- Successful completion of HR wrangler training AND completion of skills assessment
- Commitment to attend class each week for the length of the session
- Understand horse safety and health concerns
- Ability to read a horse and to calmly prevent/avoid unsafe situations
- Lead horses to and from pastures
- Groom/bathe horses before and after lessons
- Follow posted tack sheets
- Clean and Organize tack
- Clean stalls
- Maintain general barn cleanliness
- Ability to adapt to change
- Help to maintain lesson horse log sheets

Special Event Volunteers

Commitment and requirements:

Special events are annual fundraisers and community outreach events for Healing Reins. Each event has its own specific needs and time commitments for volunteers. A Healing Reins New Volunteer Orientation is suggested but not required. A volunteer application or liability release form must be on file at HR.

Special Skills Volunteers

Commitment and requirements: Special skills volunteers fulfill ongoing needs in the structuring and organization of the association. HR New Volunteer Orientation is required. A volunteer application and liability release form must be on file at HR.

Skills needed:

Staff Assistants	Accounting	Web services
Fund Raising	IT	Facility Maintenance
Grant Writing	Data Entry	Carpentry
Videography	Newsletter	Social Services
Photography	PR/Marketing	Veterinary and Medical Professionals

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS:

Healing Reins Participants:

Healing Reins serves individuals ages 4 and up that have a physical, social, emotional or cognitive need. An assessment conducted by staff determines participant eligibility. Once accepted into the program, participants are paired with a horse and team of volunteers that is best suited for the rider, based on skill level determined during the assessment. Riders participate in a private lesson, a semi-private or group lesson of up to four riders, each week for the length of their session. Lesson activities include, but are not limited to, beginning and basic riding lessons through advanced riding lessons, exercises and stretching activities, therapeutic games, non-mounted activities, horsemanship and trail rides.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding:

Physical, it is the horse's movement which has a dynamic effect on the rider's body. The rider's pelvis and trunk are stimulated in a manner that closely resembles a normal walking gait of humans. This movement can be used to produce specific physical changes in the rider. The changes include; normalization of muscle tone and improvement in posture, balance, coordination and increased endurance.

Cognitive, the horse provides a strong motivator for participants. Riding lessons incorporate activities and games on horseback designed to help achieve specific goals such as following multistep directions, staying on task, color and number recognition, and reinforcing existing skills as well as learning new ones.

Sensory, the horse and the riding environment offer a wide variety of input to participants. Movement exploration on the horse combined with so many other sights, sounds and smells on encounters while riding, contribute to the overall sensory experience.

Emotionally, the success of overcoming fear and anxiety and the ability to achieve riding and other related skills help individuals, realize self worth and increase self-esteem. For those involved in various activities of therapeutic riding, the companion animal bonding and development of new skills are critical components to the success of the experience offered. Relationships develop between participants, volunteers, horses and staff is an integral part of the positive, emotional experience provided.

Socially, the therapeutic riding programs and their associated activities provide an excellent opportunity for participants to interact with their peers, volunteers and staff in an enjoyable environment.

Participant Safety:

Safety of the participant is a sidewalker's priority!

- Always observe the participant's physical condition
- Be alert for seizures
- Be aware of the participant's balance and position on the horse
- Communicate with other team members
- Communication with the instructor and team members is key!

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Human and Horse First Aid Kits

Both first aid for humans and horses can be found in the tack room at the volunteer check in station
Please do not treat a horse injury without the approval of a staff member.

FIRE EVACUATION PLAN

Dial 911 BMS - located at 8124 KY-268, Corydon, KY 42406

RH - located at 7088 Old Henderson-Corydon Rd, Henderson, KY 42420

ALL AREAS: **Walk to the nearest exit—DO NOT RUN!**

- Whoever detects the fire first should alert everyone by shouting "FIRE"
- Cover your nose and mouth to prevent smoke inhalation
- If the fire is confined to one area, the person closest to a fire extinguisher may attempt to extinguish while the evacuation plan is taking place.
- Students (escorted by volunteers), Volunteers, Families and Staff should assemble at:

FIRE CHECK IN LOCATION:

BMS - the main house, red brick and located at the front of the farm on main road 268

RH - the Small Barn across the driveway

- Staff should take a roll call as quickly as possible
- PEOPLE FIRST!
- Barn help and staff lead horses out of barn to:
BMS - outdoor arena, turn horse loose with halter on, leave tack and lead rope at gate
RH - Paddock behind little barn across the driveway, turn horse loose with halter on,
leave tack and lead rope at the gate
- Post person at driveway to assist emergency vehicles.

ARENA:

- The instructor is in charge
- Instructors will stop all classes and dismount students
- Students, horses and volunteers should exit through the nearest outside exit using caution as emergency vehicles may be approaching
- Horse handlers should take horses to:

BMS - the outdoor arena, leave halter on, but remove all other tack and leave at paddock gate along with lead rope. Turn horses loose.

RH - Paddock behind little barn across the driveway, leave halter on, but remove all other tack and leave at paddock gate along with with lead rope. Turn horses loose.

- Horse handlers proceed to fire check in location

TORNADO SAFETY PLAN

Be Alert to Signs of a Possible Tornado:

- Severe weather conditions: thunder, lightning and severe winds
- Coloration of the sky—gray orange hues with dark cloud formations
- High winds then stillness for about 2-3 minutes, then a roaring sound as if a train were approaching

TORNADO PROCEDURE:

- Instructors will stop all classes and dismount students
- Students will be escorted by volunteers to shelter area
- Quickly proceed to designated “Tornado Shelter” areas:
BMS - Main tack room located at the end of grooming bays, or bathrooms at lounge
RH - Main tack room located on main aisle of barn
- Leaders will untack horses and place in a stall
- Other horses inside facility will be placed in a stall , horses outside will remain outside
- Once everyone is inside facility, all doors will be closed to prevent injury from flying debris
- Family members, visitors, staff will go to designated storm shelter area

HUMAN INJURY

In case of human injury, the person in attendance who is trained in first aid and CPR (all instructors are trained) should immediately take charge.

- Remain calm
- Send someone to dial **911** if warranted
BMS - located at 8124 KY-268, Corydon, KY 42406 (270-957-0234)
RH - 7088 Old Henderson-Corydon Rd, Henderson, KY 42420 (270-827-9448)
- Stabilize the injured person; do not move them if possible
- Assess the injury—use primary/secondary survey following first aid procedures
- Staff person/Instructor will assign someone to remove the uninjured people from the area and to stay with them
- Volunteers may be asked to help the instructor complete an incident report while witnesses are still available, if possible.

UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR

EQUINE SENSES -It is critical to provide a safe environment in a therapeutic riding setting. Beginning a process of understanding the horse, senses, instincts, and implications is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks, and increasing positive relationships.

SMELL:

A horse's sense of smell is thought to be very acute and it allows him to recognize other horses and people. Smell also enables a horse to evaluate situations.

- Allow horses the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling.
- It is recommended that treats are not carried in your pocket since horses may desire to go after them.
- Volunteers are discouraged from eating or having food in the arena.

HEARING:

A horse's sense of hearing is also thought to be very acute. A horse may also combine their sense of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds. "Hearing and not seeing" is often the cause of fright/flight response. Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Ears that are laid back often communicate that they are upset and/or showing aggression towards another horse or person.

- Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet and calm voice for reassurance. Avoid shouting or using a loud voice. This can be frightening to a horse.
- Watch your horse's ears for increased communication. Stiffly pricked ears indicate interest. Drooping ears indicate relaxation, inattentiveness (easily startled), exhaustion, or illness. Flattened ears indicate anger, threat, or fear. Ears flicking back and forth indicate attentiveness or interest.

SIGHT:

A horse's eyes are set on either side of the head; there is good peripheral (lateral) vision, but poor frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering its head. A horse's visual memory is very accurate. Horses are thought to see quite well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes. There is still controversy on whether or not horses see color.

- A horse may notice if something in the arena or out on trail is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects. Introduce new props that the horse may be unfamiliar with.
- A horse has better peripheral vision; consider two blind spots: directly in front and directly behind. The best way to approach a horse is to its shoulder. It may startle him if you approach from behind or directly in front. A horse may be unable to see around the mouth area, which is a safety consideration when hand feeding.

TOUCH:

Touch is used as a communication between horses and between horses and people. Horses are sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person's hands or legs.

- Handlers should treat the horses gently but firmly.
- Each horse has sensitive areas, and it is important to be familiar with them (i.e. flank and belly areas).
- Watch rider leg position. Riders may need appropriate assistance to reduce a "clothespin" effect with their legs. Ask the instructor/therapist what is the best handling technique.
- Horses will often touch or paw at unfamiliar objects. For example, a horse may paw at a bridge or ground pole before crossing over it.

TASTE:

Taste is closely linked with the sense of smell and helps a horse to distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

- Taste is closely linked with smell and touch; therefore, a horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects and people. Be careful, as this could lead to possible biting.

SIXTH SENSE:

Horses do have a “sixth sense” when evaluating the disposition of those around him. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for their sensitive response to the rider. At times there may exist a personality conflict between handlers and horses. It is important to let the instructor/therapist know if you are having a difficult time relating or getting along with a particular horse.

THE HORSE’S LIFESTYLE:

In addition to understanding the horse’s sixth senses, we need to appreciate and increase our awareness of the horse’s lifestyle. This will assist us in responding appropriately to his reactions to situations.

FLIGHT AS A NATURAL INSTINCT: Horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

- At a sudden movement or noise, a horse might try to flee. Speak to the horse calmly.
- A frightened horse that is tied up or being held tightly might try to escape by pulling back. Relax your hold or untie him quickly and usually he’ll relax. Be sure not to stand directly behind the horse.
- If flight is not possible, the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear, especially in a tight area like the stall. A halter with a lead rope may assist with maintaining control while working around the horse in a stall.
- If a horse appears to be frightened or fearful, it may be helpful to allow a calm horse to go in front, or more experienced leader to lead.
- Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. A horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteer remains calm and talks to the horse in a soothing voice.

HERD ANIMAL: Horses like to stay together in a herd or group with one or two horses dominant, with a pecking order amongst the rest.

- Be aware that a horse may not like being alone. This is a consideration when horses are leaving the arena or a horse loses sight of others while out on a trail ride.
- Be aware that if the horse in front of a line is trotting or cantering, the horse that is following may attempt to trot or canter, too.
- If one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may also be affected.
- For safety, it is recommended to keep at least one horse’s length between horses when riding within a group to respect the horse’s space and pecking order.

Policy on Problematic Horse Behavior

Healing Reins volunteers, students and guests are prohibited from using physical punishment on program horses or on-trial horses for any reason. Such actions could cause a participant to become unbalanced or frightened. Please bring any such behavior issues to the attention of the Instructor immediately after the lesson so it may be logged and addressed by HR Trainers.