

Using Equine Stress Control Therapy in Trauma Situations by Barbara Wright

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Equine Stress Control Therapy (ESCT) was invented by Barbara Wright in 2003 when her Arabian gelding, Victoor, continued to startle and spook constantly even after many sessions of retraining with traditional methods. ESCT is the world's first equine psychotherapy and is ideally suited to treating horses in traumatic situations. In fact, it is based on human therapies that are commonly used in triage situations by therapists arriving on the scene of accidents and catastrophes. That it works on recently traumatized horses, as well as those suffering from abuse, injury or memory trauma for some time, underscores the fact that the fear cycle in humans and horses is very similar (as it is in all mammals).

Barbara writes, "When I received the human therapy and felt the incredibly efficient and fast transformation of my fears into simple events in my past, I was compelled to try eye movement therapy and bilateral body tapping therapy on Victoor, the spookiest horse I had ever met. He responded so well that I read and studied everything I could about all the available eye movement and body tapping therapy techniques, then transformed the human protocols for the horse's vision and physical form and ESCT was born. That it had never been tried on horses before (or any other mammal for that matter) was surprising to me."

She continues: "After the positive ESCT experience with Victoor, I worked with my mare, Tuesday and produced similar results. Then a field study of 16 spooky horses followed with 14 showing dramatic improvement in lowering of the automatic startle response. Bilateral brain integration therapy is the most widely used and probably also the most widely studied post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) therapy because it works so quickly on humans. That efficiency also garners the most criticism since conventional therapy takes months and years and gives very mixed results. *It seems that TALKING about one's issues only sets the problem deeper in memory whereas DISCHARGING the energy around an issue tends to dissipate the need to hang on to it.* Because ESCT deals directly with the horse's brain through the optic nerve and skeletal structure, sending interrupt signals to it while it re-lives and then re-thinks its traumatic experience in a controlled setting, reprocessing of the harmful memory happens quickly and the horse is liberated of its fear."

The mind is non-local, not bound by the restrictions of conventional space-time and this is so for the consciousness of horses as it is for humans. The non-locality of the mind is difficult for people to grasp, especially those who believe mind and consciousness to be a simple side-effect of the brain's functioning, an epiphenomenon of our hard-wired circuitry. But, at the most subtle level of the existence of the universe, more and more quantum research shows that all that is springs from consciousness that serves as the background, "the Field" to all that is. In other words, we live in a self-aware and conscious universe. Having said this, I ask you now to focus on a beach in the Bahamas with the waves washing on the shore. How did you get there? Instantly, bypassing complicated travel arrangements altogether. Faster than the speed of light? Horses have this ability and they do it by pulling up a slide to compare to any and all similar situations in their experience. If the slide informs them they spooked the last time, they will this time, too. Our job is to remove that slide, that neural network, and replace it with a beneficial one. They can return to their original fear within the situation and environment created by the ESCT therapist to re-establish as close a situation to the original as possible and then to process the emotions that come up by discharging the energy associated with those emotions. What is left in the horse's realm of experience is a new baseline of comfort stemming from having overcome the fear and having survived it. The new experience creates a new memory with a new positive energetic charge and the old memory is removed. A new neural memory network is laid down in the soft tissue of the horse's brain. At first, this is tenuous and delicate, but with a

few repetitions, it forms and stays.

In horses, unlike humans, we don't have the language overlay to deal with, nor do we have the human ego's attachments to neuroses that make it feel ALIVE and IMPORTANT. Neurosis is defined as the unwillingness or inability to make positive changes. How many people do you know who willingly work on their problems and let go of them to allow personal evolution? Not too many, I would guess. More likely you've watched the ego kill the body it inhabits just to maintain the status quo. Horses want to change and be whole. Being a healthy member of the herd is one of their biological imperatives so the push to healing is great. A partnership with a human is also considered a herd bond and the same push to healing and well-being in the horse applies in its relations with humans.

So, how does one apply ESCT in a trauma situation when there is a whirlwind of nervous activity going? First and foremost, the human needs to be centered and calm in this storm. This is where your self-control and calm breathing can do wonders to help the horse. He will take his cue from the environment and your behavior is part of that. So, stay calm before all else. If a vet is on-site, all the better. Every effort needs to be made to keep the horses comfortable. Those that have already been sedated are NOT candidates for ESCT as tranquilizers of any type will interfere with the ESCT process. Minimum requirements for the process to work are that the horse is able to stand and be handled with a halter and lead rope. It is best to work with an assistant in an emergency situation if at all possible. Having him in a quiet place away from the fracas is also recommended as working in a whirlwind situation is counter-productive.

First, make sure you can gently touch the horse and massage it at the withers to gain its confidence. Then begin tapping left/right on the withers to habituate him to the feeling of bilateral body tapping without going to his head first to create more stress. Once he seems comfortable with the withers being tapped, you can proceed to other parts of the body slowly and watch him as he relaxes. Good places to proceed are the top or bottom of the scapula, left/right, the points of the hip, left/right, all along the spinous processes from the withers down to the dock of the tail, left/right in a rocking horse motion and back again. These are fairly neutral positions and do not invade the face area. If the horse seems comfortable with working about the face, one can tap on the bony structures of the face, always left/right, symmetrically and very lightly. The complete protocol is described in the Book of Horse Healing Secrets and in the ESCT and Pulser videos and DVDs available through our web site at www.harmonyhorseworks.com. Note that there is a definite protocol involved in healing a horse with ESCT and simply starting to tap the horse will not produce the desired results.

Many vets are trained in animal disaster management techniques and adding ESCT to help horses in trauma situations is very effective. This is another welcome tool to help animals in need during tough situations. We recommend becoming completely familiar with the protocol and using it on many horses before heading out into a trauma situation. More than likely, your state's animal control network gives clinics in animal disaster relief. It is helpful to become familiar with their requirements, too.



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