

# THE WAR HORSE PROJECT

Hope And Healing After Trauma



[www.hopereinstherapy.com](http://www.hopereinstherapy.com)

# About: THE WAR HORSE PROJECT



- Supports CF Members & First Responders affected by trauma
- Is a journey of self discovery where participants are challenged to explore who they are
- Acknowledges that our existence in a family, community, and a unit relies on our ability to repair, maintain and grow healthy relationships
- Uses the nature of the horse to reveal the skills needed to overcome challenges
- Uses the natural rhythm of the horse to rebuild the capacity to regulate internal states
- ***Takes the focus off being a matter with the brain, rather a matter of the heart***
- All in the safety of a non-judgemental environment

***PTSD is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.***



# Soldier's Heart.....

- **80** different terms exist for what is now called post traumatic stress disorder by the medical community.
- **Soldier's Heart** is a term used during the American Civil War to explain some of the symptoms common to many soldiers who suffer following often heart-wrenching situations.
- **War Horse Project's** ultimate goal is to invite people to a more complete understanding of who they are – **Soldier's Heart** being but one part of that story.





# Why?

Many families in the military community face great pain as they watch their loved ones relive their deeply distressing experiences.



# How important is this kind of therapy?





Bonding with a horse and experiencing full acceptance without judgment creates a powerful catalyst to once again re-connect with other people



# How does Equine Therapy work?



The horse, being a prey animal by nature, assesses its environment and provides immediate feedback to what is happening.





**Horses response to stressors.....Fight, Flight, or Freeze**

Soldier's response to stressors.....Fight, Flight, or Freeze



Carefully planned activities give participants the opportunity to explore what's happening within themselves and receive feedback immediately.







Horses do not offer unconditional anything until a balanced relationship is built.



# Topics for discussion.....

## Relationships



## Communication



## Boundaries

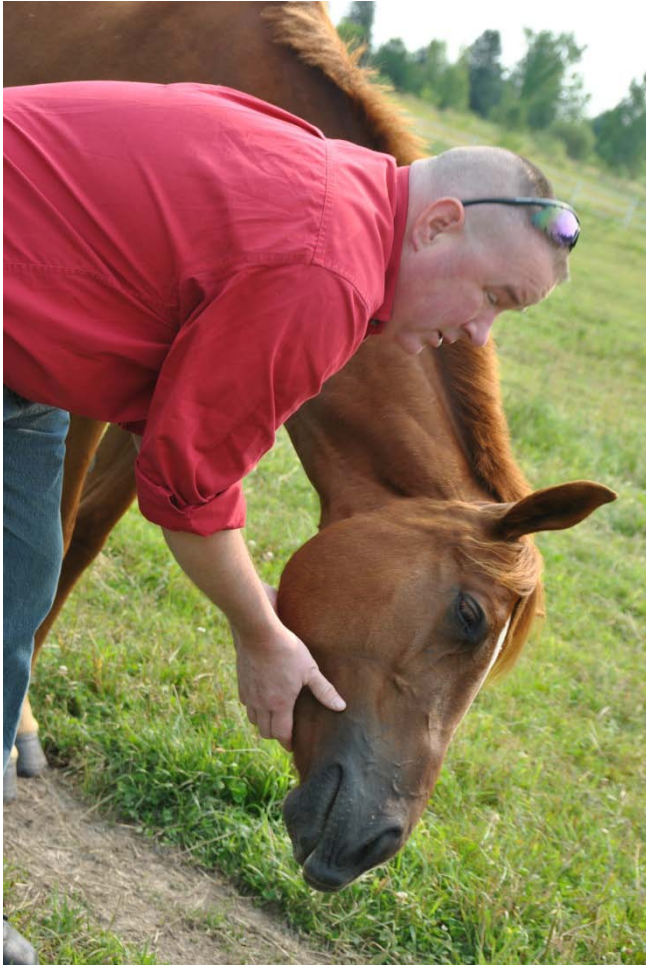


## Response to stress





Leading & Following



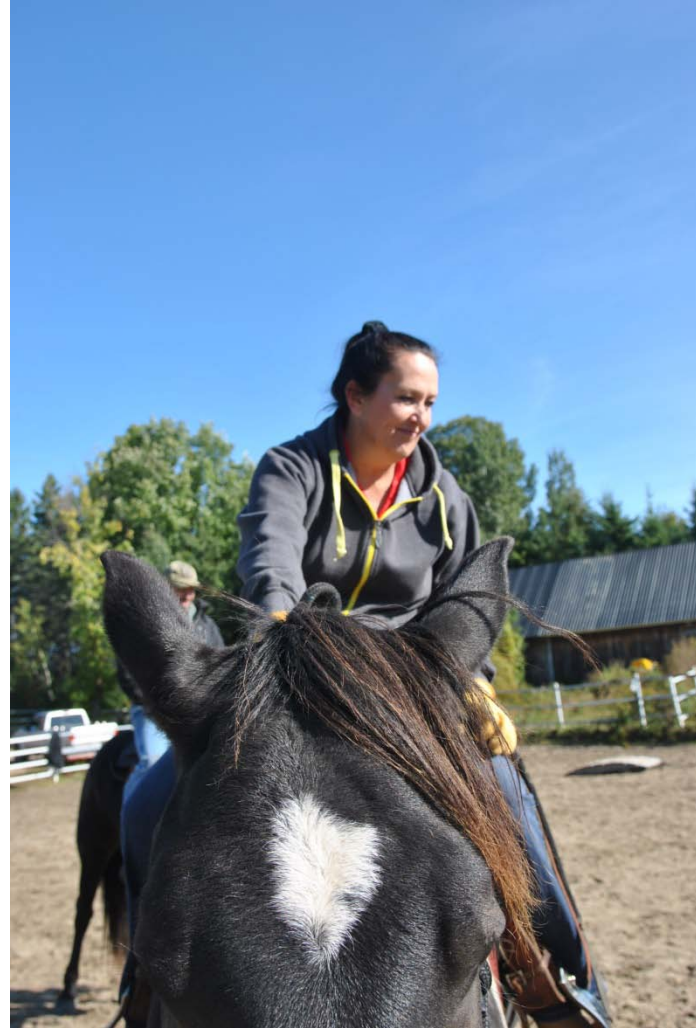
Grief & Loss



Guilt & Shame



Forgiveness





# Rhythmic Riding.....

At week 9, the riding component is added to the program.





Rhythmic, patterned, repetitive movement to help clients learn to self-regulate, and to allow them to further recognize relationship patterns.













# So, why is this program important?



- It is a great adjunct therapy to the more traditional methods of treating Soldier's Heart.
- The medical model for treatment does not typically address the "who you are", or find meaning in the things they have experienced.

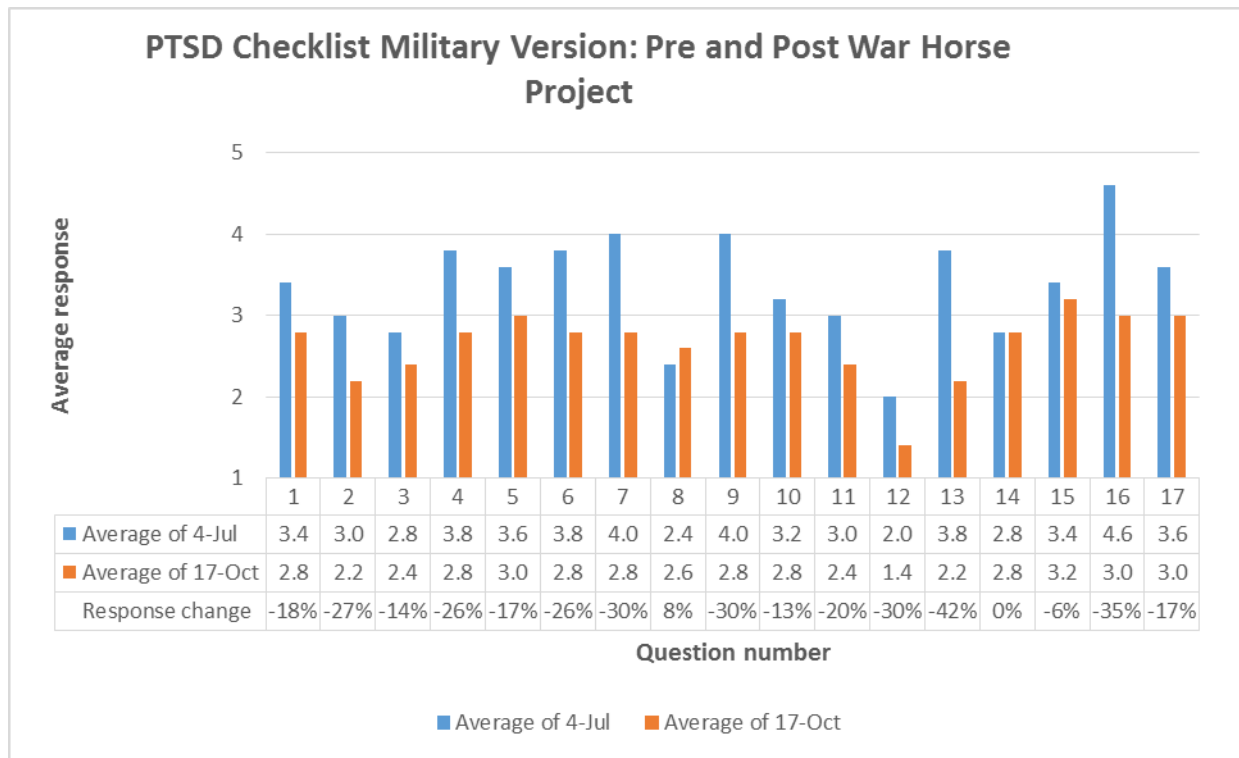
# Expected Outcomes.....



- A decrease in the intensity of the symptoms of Soldier's Heart
- Bring purpose to the heart-rending situations
- Improved ability to engage in meaningful relationships
- Rediscover the things that are meaningful in their lives
- Make significant bonds with others who have similar struggles, and maintain the much needed comradery so vital to a soldier
- Begin to examine the question "who am I"?



# Actual outcomes from WHP 1 -from a medical model approach.



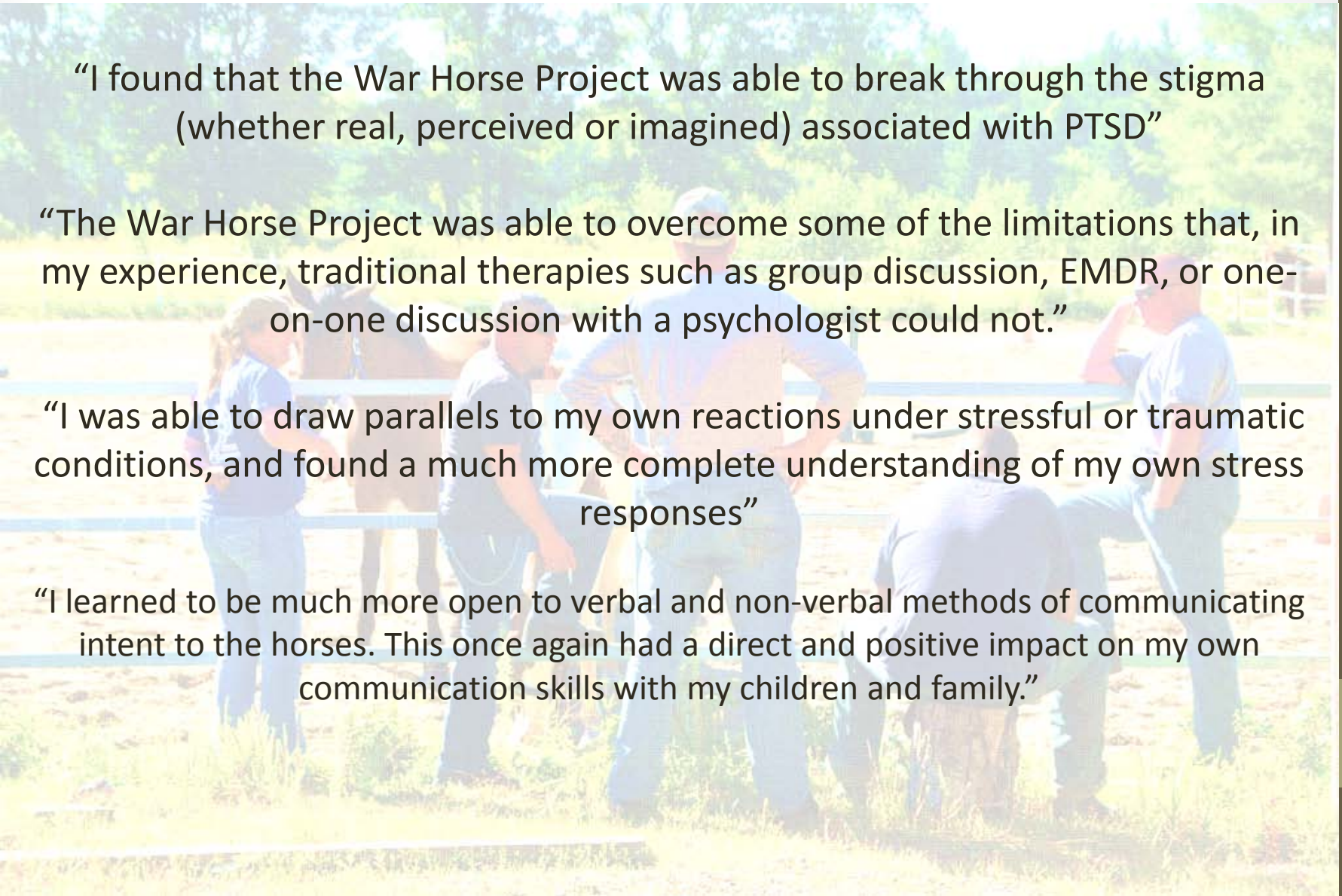
# What do our participants say?

“I found that the War Horse Project was able to break through the stigma (whether real, perceived or imagined) associated with PTSD”

“The War Horse Project was able to overcome some of the limitations that, in my experience, traditional therapies such as group discussion, EMDR, or one-on-one discussion with a psychologist could not.”

“I was able to draw parallels to my own reactions under stressful or traumatic conditions, and found a much more complete understanding of my own stress responses”

“I learned to be much more open to verbal and non-verbal methods of communicating intent to the horses. This once again had a direct and positive impact on my own communication skills with my children and family.”

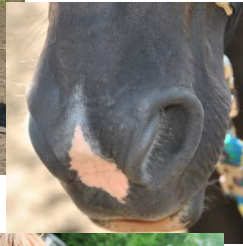




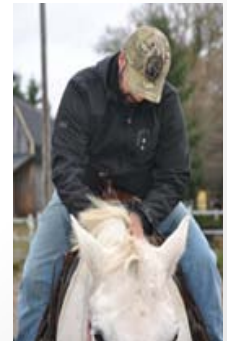
“I believe that this program has the ability to change, & more importantly save the lives of soldiers. Keep up the fight & carry on! Chimo!” GR



"I cannot say enough positive things of this program.  
It was incredible!" L.S.









# What do we hope to accomplish?



**Quite simply..... to change lives!**



# The future of The War Horse Project



**This project will become a regular, ongoing program. Presently we serve the Petawawa area. As this program becomes well established, we would like to extend our model to other communities that would benefit from this approach.**

The War Horse Project is supported in 2015  
by a generous \$25,000 grant from:







The War Horse Project  
challenges soldiers  
to explore  
and make sense  
of their experiences  
in new ways  
–to bring purpose  
to the events they  
cannot change,  
and perhaps  
redefine normal .

