

# Pastoral Counseling Services of The South Shore

A Division of The Institute for  
Spiritual Life and Psychotherapy



Fall Newsletter • 2018

## “MAY THE HORSE BE WITH YOU!”

By Leonard P. Dagesse

People who use horses in equine-assisted therapy often use this statement as an encouragement, recognizing the power of a relationship with a horse to promote growth and healing. I wish I had coined that clever expression! But one doesn't have to be clever or brilliant to work with or be with horses. What it takes is to be honest and present to what is going on “in the now.”

In an equine-assisted therapy session, a trained therapist who knows the horses chooses one that is appropriate for the client. The person and the horse are introduced, perhaps with a fence between them, with some simple petting. Then the horse can be brought out for some gentle brushing. The level of the client's comfortability with the horse is monitored closely, as is the horse's response to that person. The goal is for the two to begin to form a trusting relationship.

Equine-assisted therapy can involve riding a horse, but recently there has been a movement toward using horses from the ground, that is, while standing next to them. Horses can help with a broad range of issues like ADHD, autism, depression, social anxiety, and others. As one PTSD sufferer put it, getting close with a horse caused her to feel “okay in my own skin.” Horses generally accept all who come near as long as they feel safe with them.

Through an interaction with a horse, we can take a look at what we have learned throughout our life and ask a simple question: Is my behavior working for me or against me? I once had a horse come up to me with a feed bowl in his mouth, and “upper cut” me, giving me a fat lip. It was an indication to me that I am too trusting in my relationships and sometimes that doesn't work for me! The basic premise of doing equine work is that whatever traits or skills a person brings to all their human relationships, they will display in working with the horse as well.

The goal of any therapy is change for the better - in mood, attitude, behavior, and the like. What is necessary for change to



occur? As Tim Hayes, author and equine workshop leader, writes, “If you don't know that you, your attitude, or your behavior is the problem, then you need someone or something to show that to you. To change, you must see it, and accept it with a hundred percent certainty, without feeling judged, criticized or shamed. Amazingly, this occurs when one interacts with a horse.”

There are a number of places locally where this kind of therapy is done. For more information, google “equine-assisted therapy” or “riding therapy” or check out the resources listed below.

**Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH), [pathintl.org](http://pathintl.org)**

**Tim Hayes, *Riding Home*, St. Martin's Press**

**Wyatt Webb with Cindy Pearlman, *It's not About the Horse, It's About Overcoming Fear and Self-Doubt*, Hay House, Inc.**

**TED Talks on Youtube.com**

- *How Horses Heal, Transform and Empower*, Mindy Tatz Chernoff, Tedx Wilmington
- *Horses Help Humans Be Real, Honest & Present*, Liz Letson, Tedx Bemidji
- *Horse Wisdom for the Human World*, Tracy Weber, Tedx SVSU

**Local: Polly Kornblith, Ed.M., PATH TRI, PATH ESMHL, Horse SenseAbility at Wildstar Farm, 16 Nason Hill Lane, Sherborn, MA 01770, 617-504-5299, [pk@HorseSenseAbility.org](mailto:pk@HorseSenseAbility.org), [www.HorseSenseAbility.org](http://www.HorseSenseAbility.org).**

*Leonard Dagesse is a student in the Marriage and Family Therapy Master's program at Eastern Nazarene College, Quincy, and is an intern for Pastoral Counseling Services of the South Shore.*

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## I AM NOT BROKEN

By M.G.

As a teenager, I volunteered at a barn assisting physically disabled children to participate in a horseback riding program. I learned that horseback riding rhythmically moves the rider's body in a manner similar to a human gait. As a

result, the children often improved their flexibility, balance and muscle strength.

Consequently, I sought therapeutic riding five years ago after suffering a stroke. At the time, I had completed a local

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*The Institute for Spiritual Life and Psychotherapy (ISLP) is a 501C3 non-profit corporation committed to the integration of spirituality and psychology. We offer activities and programs designed to promote emotional and spiritual growth and wellbeing. Our largest endeavor is Pastoral Counseling Services of the South Shore (PCSSS) where our licensed therapists and post-graduate and Master's level interns provide professional counseling therapy for individuals, couples, families and groups. We also offer consultation and spiritual direction. Find us at 781-826-0011 or at [islpma.org](http://islpma.org).*

*I Am Not Broken, cont.*

post-stroke physical therapy program but continued to experience lingering post-stroke symptoms.

I began riding at Wild Hearts Therapeutic Equestrian Program with the goal of improving balance, motor function, posture, gait, and muscle symmetry. The program director, Julie, "my" horse Kippy, and I spent my riding sessions exercising various muscles to achieve these goals. My neurologist and I were pleased when I returned for my six-month follow up appointment post-stroke symptom free.



However, to me, an unexpected yet advantageous consequence of therapeutic riding was the significant improvement in the relentless PTSD symptoms, depression, and suicidality I had suffered for years. In these five years, the barn has become my sanctuary in a chaotic and often painful world. Kippy never judges, gossips, or lies. When I look into his eyes I find a piece of my soul, a part I never thought I would find.

My relationship with Kippy has enlightened me regarding honesty and authenticity since he knows no other way of being. He has repeatedly demonstrated collaboration over dominance. Kippy has taught me to embrace the unknown rather than fear it. More importantly, through our shared trauma history, Kippy has revealed the scars we bear are the marks of battles we have endured and conquered. We are true survivors! When I'm with Kippy, I'm a better version of myself. There is nothing wrong with me. I am not shy. I am not weak. I am not empty. I am not worthless. When I'm interacting with and/or riding Kippy, no matter how many times I may fall, I have no scars. I am not broken. I am safe. I am understood. I am unconditionally loved. I am my authentic self.

*M.G. is a therapy client at Pastoral Counseling Services of the South Shore.*



**+** *A Warm Welcome* **+**

**to The Reverend Kevin H. Sparrow  
who has been chosen as the new Rector of  
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Hanover,  
where our main office is located.**

**Rev. Sparrow begins his ministry in October.  
He has studied and worked internationally  
and around this country and brings  
many gifts to his new position.**

**All of us at PCSSS look forward to  
getting to know you, Rector Sparrow!**

## WE'RE ALWAYS LEARNING

In keeping with our commitment to providing the highest quality of services, ISLP/PCSSS regularly holds Continuing Education Seminars on a variety of significant, timely topics for our staff and other mental health providers.

"Microaggressions", our September 29, 2018 event, looked at the destructive consequences of small acts or statements on individuals and groups, especially within the mental health setting. We examined the inadvertent biases and stereotypes that can negatively impact those with whom we interact, and how to attain greater cultural competency in relation to race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic standing, and the like. This training was presented by Brad Thome LMHC NBCC, Director of the Brickley Center at Eastern Nazarene College, and Lauren Thorne, BS.

In May, we explored the life-long ramifications of "Imaginary Friendship" from a psycho-spiritual perspective. In this training, our own Dr. Jace Langone looked at imaginary friendship as a normative childhood experience that could potentially evince spiritual, mystical qualities.

On January 26th, 2019, "Spiritual-Integration with Trauma Work in Psychotherapy" will examine how a traumatic event can lead to both positive and negative repercussions in a survivor's spiritual life and perceptions. Looking at pathways to healing through spiritual integration, this workshop will be led by Dr. John McDargh, retired professor of psychology and theology, Boston College Department of Theology. It will be held at our Hanover location.

"Clinical Uses of the Enneagram" will be our topic on April 6, 2019. The Enneagram personality assessment tool aids in self-awareness, self-understanding, and self-development. This workshop will explore clinical uses of the Enneagram for spiritual growth. The April 6 workshop will be led by Deb Bellevue, Director of Spiritual Care at The Well Center for Hope and Healing, Bridgewater, MA.

## Counseling and Business Office Locations

*Pastoral Counseling Services of the South Shore is a dynamic entity with many varied and "moving" parts. Our eighteen therapists and interns see clients in the following locations:*

- **St. Andrew's Episcopal Church**  
17 Church Street, Hanover  
Business Office: 781-826-0011  
Belinda McGuire (Billing Manager)  
Lois Nutley (Office Manager)  
Three counseling offices

- **Church Hill United Methodist Church**  
11 Church Street, Norwell
- **First Evangelical Lutheran Church (FELC)**  
900 Main Street, Brockton
- **First Baptist Church of Hanson**  
214 Main Street, Hanson
- **Christ Church Episcopal (in Thrift Shoppe, 2nd Floor)**  
6 Lothrop Street, Plymouth, MA

***We are grateful for the covenantal relationships we have with our host churches.***