



Equestrian Balancing Therapy

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There are many therapies that are used to treat clients on a couch, and many therapies that are used for horses in the stable, but Equestrian Balancing Therapy is unique, in working with the horse and rider combination as a single unit. It is used on both the horse and the rider whilst the rider is mounted.

What is Equestrian Balancing Therapy (EBT) ?

Equestrian Balancing Therapy (EBT) is a unique new therapy using specific techniques on the mounted rider and also on the mounted horse, to help the combination towards a mutually harmonious, balanced and improved way of going. EBT helps the combination to find improved balance, freedom and communication. The rider gains suppleness and becomes able to give very light controlled subtle aids. EBT helps the horse to become more balanced, supple and relaxed enabling the horse to respond instantly and willingly to the requests of the rider.

How is EBT used?

EBT is a gentle yet powerful hands-on method of balancing both the mounted horse and the mounted rider, by helping both their mutual body's energy and body's structure to find their optimum point of balance physically and mentally.

By using gentle finger pressures and held stretches, it invites the release of excess tension accumulated in the deep structures of the body. The specific quality of touch enables physical structure and energy to be engaged simultaneously in a way that creates a harmonious relationship between them and provides a still point around which the combination of horse and rider together, can feel and recognise their mutual optimum balance. The combination can reorganise, giving an opportunity to let go of excess tension, stiffness and pain, and experience a new level of harmony.

How did EBT start?

After working all my life teaching riders of all levels and training horses at all levels, I became increasingly aware that most riders were trying their best to ride as well as they could, but often their body would not adapt to the position required. I was constantly looking for ways to help them. Because of severe health problems in my family, I started to learn about and train in a number of

alternative therapies and eventually I discovered Zero Balancing.

Zero Balancing is a wonderful therapy started by Dr. Fritz Smith M.D. (a doctor, osteopath, master of acupuncture and expert in many other therapies). He devised Zero Balancing to help the client (on the couch) to improve their mind/body/spirit balance by working on the skeleton to release any held trauma, stress or pain. I loved this work and trained to become a ZB practitioner.

After my first Zero Balancing workshop I started to apply the ZB principles to formulate a system of helping riders to organise and harmonise themselves better, both physically and mentally to deal with the stresses put on them by riding a horse. As my work progressed I realised that the horse also needed help to rebalance to work with the rider effectively and started adapting the same ZB principles to help the horse, with great effect.

I realised that the techniques I was using, combining ZB with elements of my other training for alternative therapies (especially Reiki and equine cranio sacral therapy) had now evolved into a therapy in its own right, and deserved its own name - Equestrian Balancing Therapy.

Injuries to horse and/or- how do they affect our performance?

Many riders have injuries at some stage, in their time with horses, and most tend to ride before the pain and discomfort from that injury has completely disappeared. If a rider is riding with any pain, restriction or stiffness, the horse will feel the resulting restriction and asymmetry caused, as a result of the riders resulting imbalance.

The horse's reaction will be to adjust its length of stride and balance accordingly, preventing his ability to perform at his full potential, if this situation persists for any length of time the horse's performance will continue to suffer and can even result in pain, lameness and major resistances.

If the horse does not carry itself in an even and balanced manner (again possibly through injury, incorrect training, inadequate fitness for the work being asked, or ill fitting tack and/or equipment) again the imbalance will transfer to the rider causing the rider to ride in an imbalanced way to accommodate the horse's asymmetry.

Many riders who 'force' themselves into a 'correct' position and this results in excess tension and stiffness, in their own bodies which will prevent them from being able to ride to their full potential, and prevent the horse from working fluently, with freedom and expression. Also horses that are 'forced' into an outline, or into work that it does not understand, or is not fit enough to perform, will show stiffness and resistance, evasions and sometimes worse.



How EBT helps

- 1 EBT helps the rider's body to relax restrictions, and held tensions to help them to adopt a correct position with the maximum ease.
- 2 As EBT helps the rider's body to adjust whilst on the horse, it feels more natural to the rider to use the correct muscles to achieve and maintain a correct position.
- 3 EBT helps the rider to physically follow and flow with the horse's movement, by helping the rider to become physically and mentally more relaxed and balanced in their own position, so they no longer have to 'force' a position.
- 4 EBT also helps the rider to become more aware, responsive and sympathetic to the horses' flow of energy both physically and mentally.
- 5 EBT is used on the horse to help the horse to adjust its balance and way of going with the rider sitting on him, so that the horse is guided to intuitively understand the best way of efficiently carrying the rider and responding to the rider's requests with ease and efficiency.
- 6 Many horses work with restrictions resulting from the rider's excess tension. EBT can help improve the horse by releasing the rider's excess tension.
- 7 We often see problems such as, the horse is short in his/her stride, uneven or unlevel in their length of stride, stiff to one side, tense through the back and neck, mentally stressed, eg shying, rushing, bucking etc. EBT can help.
- 8 Frequently problems are caused by an imbalance in the way the horse and rider work together. As a result of this excess tension the rider tires quickly, and then the rider uses incorrect muscle groups to adapt to try to keep on working. This results in strain and/or pain in their body.

Who can be helped with EBT?

Any rider and horse can benefit from EBT. Riders from beginners to professionals have felt great benefit from EBT sessions. Horses of any age, stage of training, breed or discipline can benefit from EBT. Disabled riders, including those with conditions such as multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, downs syndrome, back injuries, head injuries etc have also found great benefit from EBT. EBT has also been used with clients (including non-riders) on a mechanical horse with great results.

What happens in a typical EBT session?

EBT is used through clothes and boots. It is directed towards the skeleton of either horse or rider in a non-intrusive way. EBT establishes a clear interface between the therapist and the rider in which the boundaries of touch and communication are distinct and non-intrusive.

An EBT session takes an hour. The rider is asked about any problems they have encountered then asked to walk and trot on each rein to allow an initial assessment.

The rider is asked to halt and gentle pressures and stretches are used from the waist down to the feet, the rider is then asked to walk the horse to integrate the work then a reassessment is made. The rider is brought in again, the horse is then treated normally from the saddle back through the quarters. The combination is asked to walk again in a specified way, to help the horse to integrate the changes.

The same work is then carried out on the rider's upper body, followed by integration, then the front of the horse.

Once the combination is working in a balanced way, they are given work to help them to adapt to the improved way of going and to consolidate the work, so that they can maintain and build on the progress achieved.

Every session is different and is uniquely adapted to each combination of horse and rider.

For more information on EBT visit www.equinetherapyservices.co.uk