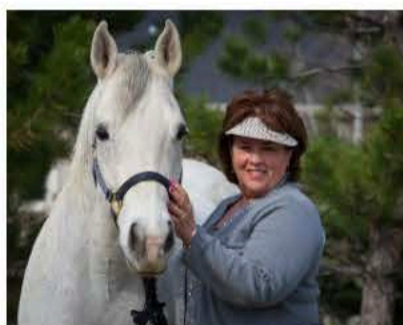


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## Science Tells All

A new survey reveals some amazing stats about the effects of equine-assisted therapy using the Equine Gestalt Coaching Method.

DALE LEATHERMAN · JUL 13, 2018



Melissa Pearce and Maverick

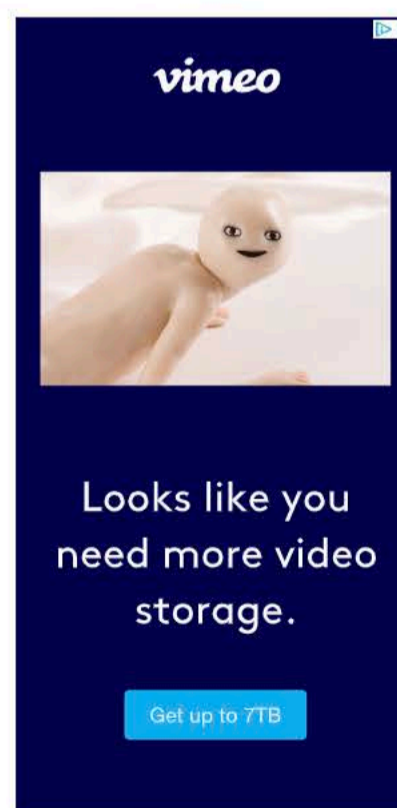
After more than 35 years of helping people in mental distress with her unique combination of gestalt and equine-assisted therapy, Melissa Pearce has hundreds of success stories. The accomplished horsewoman, psychotherapist and coach has always known that her Equine Gestalt Coaching Method (EGCM) is a life-changer--above and beyond traditional equine-assisted therapy. Now, at a point in her career when she's devoting much of her time to training other coaches, she has

received quantifiable proof of EGCM's efficacy--and from an unexpected source.

In 2017, her first year as a EGCM-certified coach, Jaclyn Manzione worked as an equine-assisted coach with Attention Homes in Boulder, Colorado, a non-profit facility for homeless youths aged 12 to 24. The young people all have a heartbreaking history of trauma, some having suffered homelessness, mental illness and substance abuse. Jaclyn was earnest and caring, but a greenhorn with no mental health background and no horse experience beyond her two years of EGCM training. Against the odds, she began working with the kids using the EGC method and saw encouraging results.



Jaclyn Manzione, a graduate of the EGCM Certification Program



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"There is a profound sense of hopelessness and helplessness among these adolescents," Jaclyn says. "They have all slept where no human should ever sleep. They have all experienced trauma. They are struggling with such low self-esteem and doubt about their futures. To help them get through to the other side and say, 'I have a future and it will be different,' has been indescribably rewarding."

One breakthrough comes to her mind because it involved an 18-year-old boy who, unlike most of the others, had a supportive family but still ended up living on the street.



"When we got to the round pen, Finn, a sweet Tennessee Walker, was waiting at the gate," says Jaclyn. "The boy wanted to pet her, but she kept pushing him away with her nose. When he was really frustrated, I asked him, 'Does this seem familiar to you?' He started crying. 'That's me,' he said. 'My dad used to come to me wanting a hug and I pushed him away. It feels awful. Until now I

never realized the effect that was having on him.' At that point Finn relented and approached him and was very affectionate."

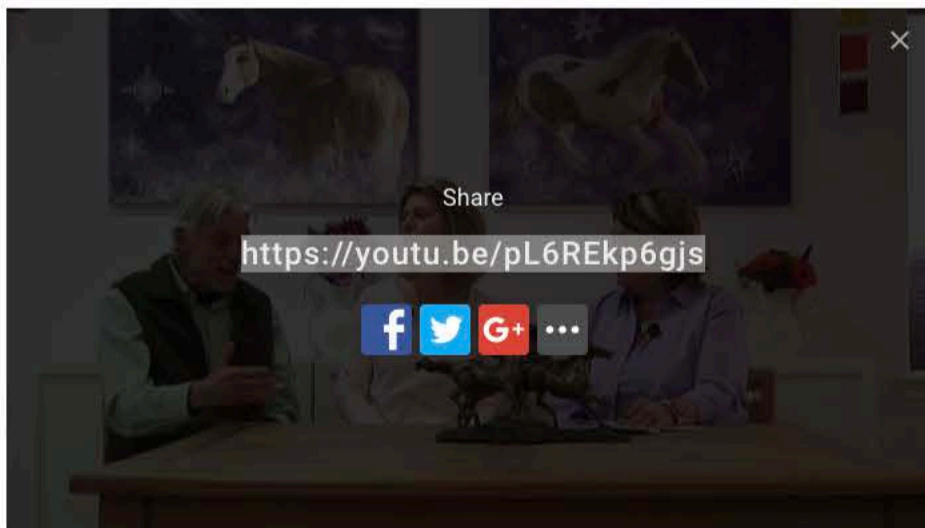
Jaclyn's husband, Tom Manzione, Ph.D., assisted as her "horse handler" and became intrigued by the transformations he was seeing. He asked permission to do a Likert Item survey of four questions to measure how the young people felt about themselves and their futures after participating in the EGCM program. Seventy-three of the anonymous surveys were picked at random. The answers proved to be overwhelmingly positive, verifying the emotional progress observed by the facility staff.

"Ours is the first scientific study to validate equine-assisted work," says Pearce, "and it was done to meet all of the American Psychology Association requirements. I have seven clinicians replicating the survey in seven different populations this year and am excited to see the results.

"The study totally validates my life's work," she continues, "not just that horses are helping people but that all of the variables in the EGC method make a difference. It takes a lot of training, which is why clinicians are with me two years to learn how to do it."

"I can't put in words what it means to have Jaclyn succeed so brilliantly," she says. "My main value in life is to make a difference, and when I can teach someone else to do it, that's exciting—the ripple effect of a stone thrown into the pond."

Pearce is presenting the study, "Quantifying Outcomes of the Equine Gestalt Coaching Method," at Equine Affaire and other conferences this year. As a pioneer in the industry of equine-assisted therapy and coaching, Pearce is eager to share these remarkable scientific results and the undeniable power that horses have to heal!



To learn more about the Equine Gestalt Coaching Method and Melisa Pearce's books, seminars, retreats and upcoming appearances, go to [touchedbyahorse.com](http://touchedbyahorse.com) or email her at [melisa@touchedbyahorse.com](mailto:melisa@touchedbyahorse.com).



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