

A Preliminary Analysis of Therapeutic Horseback Riding

By

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Abstract

We evaluated the effects of implementing therapeutic horseback riding procedures with three young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Three boys between the ages of two and a half and four years of age were evaluated using an ABAB single case design. Baseline data were collected prior to and after an initial treatment phase. An equine was present during baseline phases at the opposite end of an arena. During the baseline phase, the therapist engaged the participant play activities, which would later be applied when they were riding on a horse. During the treatment phase, the horse was introduced and the horse was prompted to move contingent on child behavior. The intervention contingencies resulted in a reduction of aberrant behaviors displayed by these children over time and an increase in social behavior was observed. For one child the presentation of the equine was introduced using desensitization procedures. The desensitization procedure allowed us to decrease avoidant behaviors displayed by this child and similar therapeutic effects to the other participants was obtained.

Keywords: Desensitization, Therapeutic Horseback Riding, single case research design, equine