

Free equitherapy for veterans and those facing disabilities

by Jessica Headley

Thursday, February 28th 2019

Triple H Equitherapy with Veteran Bama Booth Photo Courtesy KABB, Jessica Headley, Mark Woodburn

It's an unconventional healing method. but it's helping many local veterans and others facing disabilities free of charge. Just ask Bama Booth who says she deals with anxiety, depression, and other symptoms of PTSD. She shares the pain of many veterans and is taking a leap of faith to heal. She's doing it with a thousand pound mammal.

The Director of the Program, Keisha Laughy, with Triple H Ranch explains, "We teach relationship building skills. The horse is the therapist."

It's a program called equitherapy, and it focuses on rebuilding communication and trust in a new environment. Just like with humans, with a horse, Keisha explains, "There has to be a level of trust for the relationship to work and to be healthy."

It's an eight week program Keisha guides along with professional counselors. It starts slowly—introducing veterans to the horses with the idea Keisha says of, "building this relationship with this giant animal that could hurt you if they choose to, they break down barriers."

The next step is grooming and then onto to trickier task.

Bama understands, "Horses don't like when people mess with their feet. We had to clean the horse's feet and brush them and all this stuff. And, I actually was able to pick up Jackson's feet and clean his feet. Just getting through that, knowing that I was anxious, made me feel like I was floating like I can do other things that might scare me.

Bama's also learned, "[If] something makes us upset or something makes me anxious, the horses sense that. We have to be in a position to be calm. We have to learn to harness that and to control it."

Once each veteran does the hard work and builds more trust in a relationship with a horse, participants tell us, it doesn't just translate into healthier personal and professional interactions but also into getting to ride a horse.

The South Texas VA took notice and offers free transportation to the program to veterans like Bama.

Richard Amparan helps The South Texas VA with the process and helps follow their care while in the program. He says, "It might be out of the box but the results are clearly shown with every veteran that's gone through here whether it be social engagement [or] maybe working on relationships with family members."

The hope is, Keisha explains, "It translates to if I can get this animal to work with me and to want to have this relationship with me, then I can certainly do things with my family again. I can certainly function. I can certainly go to work every day and manage some of the things that they couldn't manage before."

Triple H Equitherapy relies entirely on private donations and grants to fund its program for veterans, those facing disabilities, and beyond. If you would like to contribute or volunteer, you can learn more on its website by clicking [here](#).

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