

RCIF Abstract Sample

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Project Stride: An Equine-Assisted Intervention to Reduce Symptoms of Social Anxiety in Young Women (Abstract title, Calibri bold 14 font)

There is an emerging literature supporting the use of equine-assisted activities in the treatment of mental health concerns such as attention deficit disorder, abuse issues, depression, post-traumatic stress disorders, and others. The effects of equine-assisted activities to reduce signs and symptoms of social anxiety, a common disorder among youth and young adults, have yet to be experimentally demonstrated. We developed a brief intervention that combines equine-assisted activities and cognitive behavioral strategies aimed at reducing symptoms of social anxiety by increasing trust in self and others, recognizing one's skills and talents, expressing feelings and emotions appropriately, and building and sustaining positive relationships. The intervention consisted of 3 modules each composed of 2 sessions for a total of 6 sessions. We conducted a small randomized control trial to pilot test the feasibility and acceptability of the intervention and explore whether there is preliminary evidence that the intervention reduced signs and symptoms of social anxiety. We recruited 12 women between the ages of 18 and 19 and randomly assigned them to the experimental intervention or to a delayed treatment control group. Participants completed the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale at baseline, upon completing the intervention, and 4 to 5 weeks post intervention. Those in the control condition were offered an abridged version of the intervention after the final assessment. Participants in the intervention group reported significantly less signs and symptoms of social anxiety at the two follow-up periods than those in the control group. These findings support conducting a fully powered randomized control trial to test the efficacy of the intervention.

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