

How are horses helping to heal humans?

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Georgie

And I'm Georgie. Neil, have you ever ridden a horse?

Neil

Yes, I have. I can't say that I enjoyed it much. I was a bit scared to be honest. How about you?

Georgie

I used to ride horses a lot actually. My favourite thing was to ride a horse through the countryside. I love horses. They're so majestic and lovely. The relationship between humans and horses has been close throughout history, but recently this has gone beyond riding horses for fun or using them for work. Equine Assisted Services, sometimes called horse therapy, is a health trend where caring and interacting with horses is used to heal physical and mental illness. Here's Datshiane Navanayaga, presenter of BBC World Service programme The Conversation, to explain:

Datshiane Navanayaga

Equine Assisted Services is now an **umbrella term** which encompasses a whole range of treatments, involving activities and interactions with horses to promote better human wellbeing.

Neil

Equine Assisted Services is an **umbrella term** – a term for a large number of different things which all belong to a single common category. So, horse therapy includes many activities, from feeling the horse's movement, which can help children with muscle disorders like cerebral palsy, to simply **grooming** the horse,

which can help calm anxiety. **Grooming** a horse means cleaning and brushing the horse's coat of hair.

Georgie

Various animals can be used in therapy, but horses are particularly suitable as they're very sensitive to human emotions. Being in contact with them affects the limbic area of the brain, dealing with stress. In this episode, we'll hear more about the horses helping people work through mental, emotional and physical challenges. And, as usual, we'll learn some useful new vocabulary.

Neil

And remember, you'll find all the words and phrases from this episode on our website, bbclearningenglish.com

Georgie

But now I have a question for you, Neil. We've heard some of the special qualities horses possess, but which of the following about horses is also true? Is it:

- a) horses always sleep standing up,
- b) horses can make over 100 sounds, or
- c) horses have almost 360-degree vision?

Neil

Well, I'm sure I've seen a horse lying down so... I don't know about its vision though, so I'm going to say b) a horse can make over 100 sounds.

Georgie

OK. Well, we'll find out the answer later in the programme. Horse therapist Claudia Nicholson first felt the healing power of horses as a child. She now runs her own centre for Equine Assisted Learning in the south of England, where she spoke with BBC World Service programme The Conversation.

Claudia Nicholson

I would spend **hours on end** sitting in a stable with my pony. I was going through **puberty**, my parents had separated, I had a lot of unanswered questions, and I would feel met and safe and held with the connection of the pony.

Neil

As a child, Claudia spent **hours on end** with her pony. Phrases like **days** or **hours on end** mean days or hours doing something continuously, without stopping.

Georgie

Spending time with her pony helped Claudia through **puberty** – the stage of life when a child grows into an adult because of changes in their body which allow them to have children.

Neil

It was her teenage experiences that led Claudia to start her own horse therapy centre. She works a lot with teenage girls and children **in care**. A child **in care** is a child who's being looked after by the local authorities because they cannot be cared for by their parents or family. Here, Claudia talks more about her work with children and horses to BBC World Service's The Conversation:

Claudia Nicholson

It will take maybe a few sessions for a **relationship of trust** to be formed, and it's quite extraordinary to see a child that's experienced a lot of trauma, especially in these children **in care**. They can be brushing the pony's body. They might want to have a cry which they've been holding on to. The horse regulates them.

Georgie

Many of the children Claudia works with suffer trauma. It takes time for them to build a **bond of trust** with their horse. The phrase **bond of trust** is a strong feeling of reliance and confidence between two people.

Neil

Horses really are special animals. They sense human feelings like fear or sadness through breath, heart rate and movement, and respond with gentleness and calm. This makes them perfect animal therapists. And that's not all! Right, Georgie? Let's find out the answer to your question.

Georgie

Yes, Neil. Well, I asked you which sentence about horses was true, and you said that horses can make over 100 sounds... Sadly, that was the wrong answer. The correct answer was c) horses have near 360-degree vision, which is surprising.

Neil

Wow. That's amazing!

Georgie

OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **umbrella term** – a term used to describe many different things which all belong to a single common category.

Neil

Grooming an animal, like a horse or a dog, means brushing and cleaning its coat of hair.

Georgie

If you do something for **hours on end**, you do it continuously, without stopping.

Neil

Puberty is the stage of life when a child grows into an adult because of changes in their body which allow them to have children.

Georgie

A child who is **in care** is being looked after by the local authorities because they cannot be cared for by their parents.

Neil

And finally, a **bond of trust** is a strong feeling of reliance and confidence between two people. Once again, our six minutes are up, but remember you'll find a quiz and worksheet for this episode over on our website, bbclearningenglish.com. See you there soon, but for now it's goodbye!

Georgie

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY

umbrella term

term used to describe a large number of different things which all belong to a single common category

grooming

brushing and cleaning the coat of hair of a horse, dog or other animal

hours/days on end

for hours/days continuously, without stopping

puberty

stage of life when a child grows into an adult because of changes in their body which allow them to have children

(child) in care

(child) who is looked after by the local authorities because they cannot be cared for by their parents or family; also known as a 'looked after child'

bond of trust

strong feeling of reliance and confidence between two people