

3/8/2025

## **Participant Handout: Course Outline - Getting The Most Out of Your Surroundings**

### **Abstract:**

This presentation delves into harnessing the full potential of our diverse surroundings, specifically within ranch settings, to enhance therapeutic outcomes. We will explore the concepts of therapeutic riding and therapy incorporating equines, examining the definitions, similarities, and distinctions. Emphasizing a holistic approach, the discussion will cover innovative ways to utilize natural elements across seasons and engage all five senses to achieve comprehensive rehabilitation, psychological, social, speech and language, educational, and vocational objectives. Attendees will gain practical insights and examples on integrating environmental resources into their practices, fostering improved health and well-being for participants through immersive, nature-based experiences.

**Course Overview:** This course explores how to maximize the therapeutic potential of your environment to enhance outcomes in therapeutic riding. Participants will learn strategies to utilize natural and built surroundings effectively, with a focus on sensory engagement, creative adaptations, and practical applications tailored to individual therapeutic goals.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. Understand the role of the environment in therapeutic outcomes.
2. Explore sensory-based strategies to engage participants.
3. Develop practical activities using natural and built surroundings.
4. Gain tools to overcome challenges in varied environments.
5. Foster creative thinking to utilize surroundings in therapy sessions.

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## **1: Key Concepts**

### **Therapeutic Riding vs. Hippotherapy:**

- **Therapeutic Riding:** Focuses on skill development and recreation. Suitable for individuals seeking physical, emotional, or social benefits.
- **Hippotherapy:** Clinical therapy using the movement of the horse as a treatment strategy. Delivered by licensed professionals OTs, PTs, or SLPs.
- **Similarities:** Both utilize the horse and surrounding environment for benefit.
- **Differences:** Goals, techniques, and personnel differ.

### **The Role of Nature:**

- Enhances sensory engagement through all five senses.
  - Encourages spontaneous interactions and emotional regulation.
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## 2: Sensory Engagement Activities

### Using the Five Senses:

1. **Taste:** Incorporate safe ranch produce or themed snacks.
2. **Touch:** Groom animals, feel different textures like hay, saddles, or leaves.
3. **Smell:** Identify smells like fresh hay, horses, or flowers.
4. **Sight:** Observe seasonal changes, colors, and animal behavior.
5. **Hearing:** Focus on sounds of animals, wind, or crunching leaves.

### Activity Examples:

- **Obstacle Course:** Create a sensory-themed course using natural elements.
  - **Scavenger Hunt:** Encourage participants to find and identify items using sensory descriptions.
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## 3: Tools and Resources

### AAC Tools:

- **Visual Schedules:** Simplify the structure of activities.
- **Communication Boards:** Enable choice-making and expression.
- **Speech-Generating Devices:** Support nonverbal communication.

### Practical Tips:

- Ensure tools are accessible and integrated seamlessly.
- Train staff and families on usage.

### Creative Use of Surroundings:

- Leverage trails, barns, and outdoor spaces creatively.
  - Incorporate environmental features into therapy goals (e.g., carrying items, grooming horses).
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## 4: Practical Applications and Goals

### Rehabilitation Goals:

- Improve balance, endurance, and motor coordination.

### Psychological and Social Goals:

- Build self-confidence, emotional regulation, and teamwork.

**Speech and Language Goals:**

- Foster communication, problem-solving, and articulation.

**Educational Goals:**

- Teach life cycles, environmental awareness, and nutritional knowledge.

**Vocational Skills:**

- Develop task sequencing, responsibility, and job-readiness.

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**Contact Information:** Nature's Edge Therapy Center, Inc.  
2523 14 ¾ Ave. Rice Lake, WI 54868  
Phone & Fax: 715-859-6670  
[www.naturesedgetherapycenter.org](http://www.naturesedgetherapycenter.org)