

The Sensory Trail

High Hopes
Therapeutic Riding,
Inc.

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Overview of the Sensory Trail

- Founded over 20 years ago
- Woodland trail with twists, turns, inclines, sloping paths, and varied terrain
- Different obstacles to challenge the rider's auditory, visual, tactile, and olfactory abilities
- Natural environment that allows the rider to develop skills outside of the regularity of the arena

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The Goal of the Sensory Trail

- The goal of High Hope's Sensory Trail is to:
 - Challenge a multitude of rider modalities and senses, enriching the overall learning experience
 - Provide a safe learning environment in which riders can be exposed to nature and the outdoors in a controlled and monitored manner
 - Encourage learning in a fun and playful manner, in which riders may develop at their own pace
 - Allow riders to gain confidence and independence, in both their riding skills and in themselves

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The Noodles



- Serves to desensitize clients who react negatively to touch
- May be grabbed or touched to promote better grasp release
- Encourages the rider to push the 'noodles' out of the way, improving their protective extension ability
- May be used as a counting tool
- Allows the rider to expand their steering skills while maintaining proper positioning
- Stimulates a wide range of the rider's senses

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Musical Pipes



- Challenges balance, fine motor control, grasping ability and wrist strength to tap a specific target tube
- Requires the ability to remember and visually discriminate which sound was produced by which pipe
- Improves the rider's auditory discrimination ability between two different pipe sounds
- Promotes hand-eye coordination when attempting to tap a specific tube

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Railroad Crossing



- Teaches the basics of railroad crossing safety
- Demonstrates cause and effect when the rider manually flips the switch, which turns on the crossing signal bell
- Pulling on the rope when the signal stops will develop grasp release and fine motor control
- Half-seat position on the approach and crossing promotes balance and gross motor control of body movement
- Deeper footing between the rails changes the horse's movement and allows the rider to feel the difference

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Fairy House



- Bright colors will allow the rider to visually discriminate different portions of the house
- Decorations change with the season, which may stimulate rider and volunteer conversation about the house's inhabitants and activities
- Surrounding butterflies and flowers let the rider use their imagination and create story lines

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Tetherball



- Challenges hand-eye coordination in a game of catch
- Encourages protective extension when the rider reaches out and pushes the ball away
- Promotes better balance and maintenance of an upright position
- Speed control can be adjust to the rider's individual needs
- Requires that the rider adjusts their position accordingly to reach or 'catch' the ball as it approaches them

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Mailboxes



- Challenge visual discrimination with objects varying in size, shape, texture, and function
- Better fine motor control by squeezing or manipulating these items
- Encourage a tactile defensive rider by 'feeling' for their prize in a bucket of textured beans
- Elicit verbal responses and excitement in searching for prizes, expanding a rider's speech and language
- Support body and spatial awareness while promoting fun and play

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Basketball



- Improves hand-eye coordination and spatial awareness in distance judgments
- Promotes tactile and visual discrimination by different ball weights, sizes, textures, etc.
- Better a rider's balance by reaching to retrieve the ball and encourages strength of grasp
- Bi-lateral coordination is encouraged by using the non-dominant hand
- Experience improvements in self-control when the rider makes the shot

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The Bridge



- Challenge coordination and balance while mimicking a natural trail obstacle
- Requires half-seat, which builds the rider's body strength
- Allows for auditory discrimination from the change of hooves on trail to a wooden surface
- Addresses gravitational insecurity in a controlled environment

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Along the Trail

- Riders may see large, attention-drawing rock rabbits, brightly colored birds and butterflies along the sides of the trail routes.
- If a rider is lucky, they may have the pleasure of viewing a woodland creature in its natural environment along the trail ride. Squirrels, bunnies, and even deer may be seen at any time!



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The Sensory Trail Promotes:

- Self-esteem and self-control
- Balance
- Body control and strength
- Hand-eye coordination
- General safety of rider and horse
- Auditory discrimination
- Fine and gross motor control
- Reduction in tactile defensiveness
- Speech and language development
- Body and spatial awareness
- Protective extension
- Bi-lateral coordination
- Grasp release
- Steering ability
- Postural control
- Railroad crossing safety
- Visual discrimination
- Coordination
- Multi-tasking ability
- Reduction in gravitational insecurity
- Cause and effect
- Memory
- Following instructions
- Imagination and creativity