

Emotional Self-Awareness: Utilization to Impact Health Care Communication

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The research study was intended to highlight different methods of learning, teaching and implementing emotional self-awareness, and evaluate the impact on health care communication.

Awareness of personal emotions and feelings is essential to therapeutic communication and vital in the field of health care. The research study focused on:

- The evaluation of participant experiences while engaged in an emotional self-awareness activity
- Becoming self-aware in the process of understanding oneself
- Improving emotional awareness
- Developing improved patient outcomes

Background

Research has found that having the ability to recognize one's own emotional self-awareness is crucial for positive outcomes in all health care provider relationships, leading to greater competency.

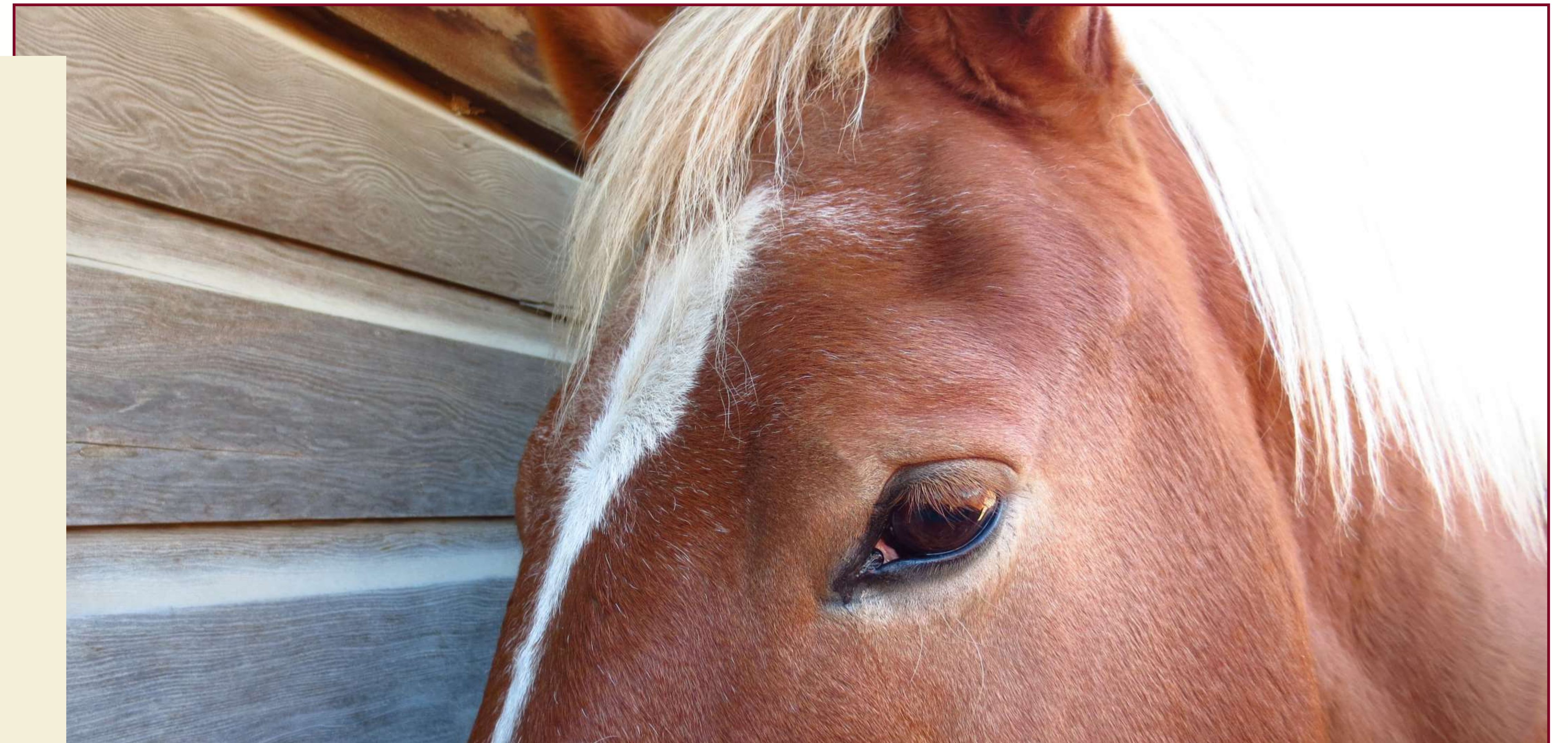
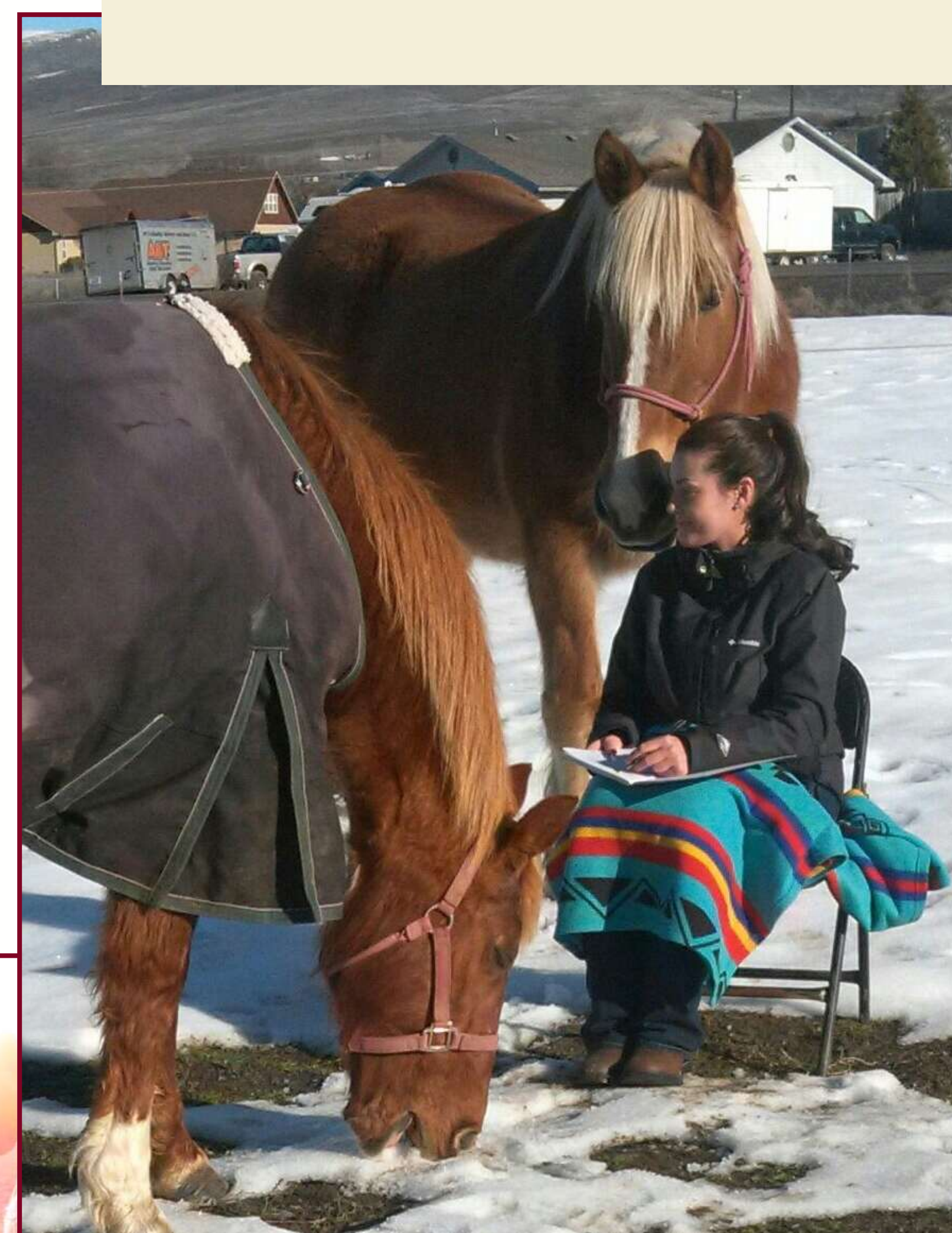
Purpose

This study was designed with the aim of creating an environment to assess emotional self-awareness through Equine Assisted Learning. Additionally, this research generated an opportunity for emotional self-awareness that can improve non-verbal communication skills for health care providers.



Why Horses As Research Partners

- Horses mirror human body emotions
- Horses are honest, which makes them especially powerful messengers
- They respond 'in the moment' to what is happening with an individual
- The size of the horse can also impact how and what a human reaction is perceived in different situations
- Horses are social animals with defined roles within their herd and like humans, they have their own distinct personalities
- Horses do not separate how they feel from how they act



Spirit of Hope, Equine Center for Life & Learning in Selah, WA.

Method

This research involved participant observation of horse behavior in a designated area. Participants engaged in reflective journaling while focusing on how their emotions might affect their encounters with others in the health care setting. Pre and post experience surveys were completed utilizing the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS).

References

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Results

There was a statistically significant difference on two different measurement tools, the one-way ANOVA Test ($P=0.035$) and Tukey's post-hoc test ($p=0.027$), which revealed that the individual's sense of emotional self-awareness was considerably higher between pre and 3 months post. While there was no significant difference between the baseline (pre) and immediate post surveys, after 3 months the individuals involved were dramatically more aware of their own thoughts, feelings and emotions as they worked within their scope of practice.

Future Research

Results of this study may be utilized to further research and/or policy change targeting the issue of emotional self-awareness, communication, leadership, stress management, and equine therapy.

IRB#14156-001 – This study has been reviewed and approved for human subject participation by WSU Institutional Review Board.

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