

Ann Marie Sexauer
Equine Embrace: Touch and the
Therapeutic Encounter in Equine
Facilitated Psychotherapy from the
Perspective of the Clinician

Abstract

This study was undertaken to examine touch between human and equine in the therapeutic context from the perspective of the clinician conducting an equine facilitated psychotherapy session. Thirteen practitioners, twelve from the mental health field and one life coach, participated in a single semi-structured in-depth interview. The practitioners were questioned on their views of touch between themselves and their clients, and between horse and client. They were also asked if their touch practices changed with the presence of an animal, as well as what outcome they saw due to clients touching the horse, and in which situations. The findings showed that the majority of practitioners found they touched their clients with more frequency in the presence of animals, and that touch allowed the client to attach to the animal and thus work more safely from a secure base on a variety of therapeutic goals.