

PBJ Connections Policy Information-Healing Connections

Purpose: The purpose of *Healing Connections* is to provide an intensive, 4-day program to address trauma, primarily trauma that occurred in childhood. The program is designed to take a group of people through a set of novel experiences while providing opportunity for deep processing, and providing information on how to move forward when we have experienced adverse childhood experiences. The program is open to anyone over the age of 23 that identifies as female or non-binary.

The purpose of *Healing Connections* is also to provide a program for trauma survivors that operates outside of the constraints of the medical model and health insurance. We will be seeking feedback from participants on their experience in the program. We will be doing a pre-screening interview to determine the best group of participants. We will then be doing post-assessment interviews and screenings at the conclusion of the experience, 3 months post-experience, 6-month, and 12-month post experience. This data will help us improve and fund the program.

It is anticipated that participants will remain connected after the experience and PBJ Connections will assist in facilitating that process by providing means for communication through messaging groups, alumni gatherings, and monthly communication. PBJ Connections will also remain available for participants to continue processing as needed after the 4-day intensive. Other resources will be made available to participants for additional support at the conclusion of the program. This may include referrals for mental health treatment, access to mentors and support groups, and additional resources depending on need.

Description of Program: *Healing Connections* will take place primarily on two privately owned horse farms in Western Licking County (Johnstown and Pataskala). There will be a significant amount of psychoeducation on trauma and shame, as well as a series of novel experiences both with and without horses. There will be no horseback riding. Though activities may be physical in nature, physical limitations will not prevent someone from participating fully in the experiences. The experiences primarily take place outside on horse farms in environments that are not climate controlled so participants will be exposed to the elements. Participants will also be provided food, water, and other beverages for the 4-day experience. We have a limited storage capacity for participants that want to bring personal food items that require refrigeration.

Healing Connections is designed to be a “closed container”, meaning that we will be asking participants to participate fully in the experience for the entire 4 days of the program. Transportation will be provided during the 4-day experience to and from housing and participants will be asked to relinquish their cell phones during the program. You will be given the opportunity to give a loved one a phone number so they can access you in the case of an emergency. The program will be facilitated by licensed social workers and counselors, certified equine specialists, and trained peer support. The “container” is designed to be safe and confidential. *Healing Connections* is not considered a treatment-based program. No medical records will be kept, but mental health professionals may document portions of the experience for program evaluation purposes. Confidentiality will be adhered to. Mental health professionals involved in the program are there to provide professional support, lead you through experiences designed to promote change, provide education to participants about healing and trauma, and to support other staff. Mental health professionals are not providing mental health treatment during the experience, but the effects may be similar. If treatment is desired after the four-day program, participants will be provided access to mental health providers both within the PBJ Connections organization and elsewhere.

Other facilitators and volunteers will be present as well. They are all trained professionals and volunteers and are safe people. Equine specialists are there to help you have a safe and valuable experience with the horses. Peer supports are present to help guide you through your experience and help you process during the program.

Equine assisted psychotherapy and learning sessions take place at private equine facilities where other persons, not affiliated with PBJ Connections, may be present. Every effort is taken to ensure your privacy including informing other persons of the nature of our work and need for privacy, use of privacy signs, and mindful placement of sessions to create adequate space between your session and others at the facility. There is a risk that persons not affiliated with PBJ Connections may see you or overhear conversations despite these efforts being taken. Your facilitators will be diligently aware of where other persons are at these equine facilities, but please inform your treatment team if you ever feel uncomfortable in a given space.

EAGALA model equine assisted psychotherapy and learning is a model of therapy/learning that includes a team of a licensed mental health professional, a trained equine specialist, following a code of ethics, and is solution-oriented in nature. This model is experiential in nature. You will be exposed to the venue of a barn environment and have direct interaction with equines. You will need to sign additional liability consent forms explaining that horses are large, potentially dangerous animals and that the State of Ohio recognizes you are taking on this additional risk by signing a form titled “Liability Form”. PBJ Connections has been providing Eagala-model EAP for 18 years successfully.

Security/Surveillance cameras may be in use at the Equine Facilities where you may be having equine assisted psychotherapy sessions. PBJ Connections makes every effort to make sure your sessions are not viewed by outside parties. Please inform your treatment team if you are uncomfortable with camera usage and additional efforts will be taken to ensure your privacy. Camera usage is as follows:

- **PBJ Dressage:** Non-recording cameras are in use viewing the parking area, the barn aisle, and the last two stalls in the barn. Footage is only live and can only be viewed by persons logged on at that time. Footage is not streamed online and is on a closed system. The only access to the system is by horse care professionals affiliated with the facility.
- **Taco Bella Farm:** A recording camera is in use viewing the barn aisle and stalls. Footage is stored for five days on an internal system that is password protected and only accessible to the farm owners.

Additional Informed Consent:

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Program Participants: This program is provided to participants that are 23 years or older that identify as women or non-binary. These requirements are based on several factors including the expertise of the facilitators and to support the participants as a community.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: The facilitators have attempted to make this program inclusive to participants including in ability-status, race, economic status, gender-expression, sexual orientation and religious preference. Trauma does not discriminate and we want to reach out to anyone we believe could benefit from this program. While we do our best with the information we have at the time, we acknowledge that we can fall short due to gaps in our education, implicit bias and/or misunderstanding.

Phones: This program works best in a ‘closed container’ setting. This means we will provide overnight accommodations, food and all transportation after arrival for the four days of the intensive. Participants are asked to ‘unplug’ and turn in their phones for the duration of the intensive. This serves to eliminate distractions and focus connection towards the group. Our facilitators act as emergency contacts if a participant needs to be reached during the intensive. We understand this is a challenging request and we are not able to make any exceptions.

Schedule: Entire program is four days starting at 8:00 AM on Thursday and concluding at 5:00 PM on Sunday. Participants that arrive after 8:15 AM on the first day will be asked to re-apply to participate in the program at a later date. We are not able to make accommodations for arriving late or leaving early. We ask all participants to confirm that they are able to attend the entire intensive.

Rural Environment: The horse farm and office setting used in this program are located in a rural environment. This can come with sounds, smells and infrastructure that is unfamiliar to many people. This includes things like animal smells, the sound of gunshots in the distance and the use of porta potties. We do want participants to be aware that for most of the day we will only have access to porta potties as a restroom. The facilities are cleaned regularly and used by a small number of people.

Daily Activities: Each day breakfast is served at 7:30 AM and we start the programming at 8:30 AM. There are breaks for meals. Programming often wraps up by 10:00 PM. These times may be adjusted to accommodate schedule changes or the amount of time it takes to complete an activity. Some activities take place outside or in a horse farm environment. We ask that participants be prepared for seasonal weather. A suggested packing list will be provided prior to the program.

Overnight accommodation: The overnight accommodation for 2024 is located at a house on a campground in Granville. There will be other people staying on the campground and using shared facilities. The house we are staying in is private and you will not be required to use any of the shared facilities on the campground. You will have your own bed in a room shared with other participants for the three nights.

Cost: You will be asked to complete a scholarship form to pay what you are able to pay towards the cost of this program. Our generous donors make this program accessible to anyone that requires a scholarship to participate.

Substance Use: The use of alcohol, marijuana, and any illegal substances are prohibited at the properties used by PBJ Connections. This program is not effective for anyone who is currently under the influence of substances.

Contact Information:

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I have read and understand that I am participating in a trauma-intensive involving horses. I understand that though this is for my mental health, I am not receiving mental health treatment and that no third-party biller is involved. Nothing will be recorded in my official medical record.

Participant Printed Name

Signature

Date