

A Mixed Methods Study of Telepathic Interspecies Communication with Therapeutic Riding Horses and Their Recovering Wounded Veteran Partners

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ABSTRACT

Telepathic parapsychology research is a subject of much debate. This small pilot study explored the proposition that telepathic communication between humans and therapy equines may be possible with a human utilizing contemplative/meditative techniques to shift consciousness. The human participants were 7 military veterans in retired or inactive status diagnosed with combat-related posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Each veteran was assigned to one therapy horse. The 12 equine participants all had the same guardians. The veterans signed an online consent to participate and submitted questions for their horses on the consent form. Both veterans and guardians were blind as to which of 2 telepathic animal communicators would be randomly assigned to the session by the principal researcher. Both animal communicators were physically located in another town from the horses when the sessions were conducted. The answers to the veteran's questions, allegedly received telepathically from the horses, were documented and emailed to the principal researcher. The summary document from each session was shared with the veteran for their horse by the guardians, and all summaries were shared with the guardians. During an in-person or telephone interview with the principal researcher, the veterans offered qualitative comments and used Likert scales to rate the usefulness of the information received from 1 (not at all useful) to 6 (extremely useful). The average overall usefulness rating as judged by the veterans was 4.9. The guardians also submitted Likert ratings and qualitative comments on the usefulness of the information received; the guardian ratings average was 5.75. These findings contribute to the body of equine therapy studies as well as the wealth of literature that supports the human-animal bond. Further research is needed to explore additional nuances of this category of consciousness and healing research.

Key Words: equine therapy, PTSD, animal therapy, animal communication, telepathy

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Introduction

This research utilized meditative/contemplative techniques to shift consciousness to allegedly

enable telepathic communication with therapeutic riding horses. This was a phenomenological mixed methods study that used quantitative data with numerical rating values on the usefulness of the information allegedly received telepathically from the therapeutic riding horses, as judged by the wounded veteran with whom the horse was working, and the horse's guardian. Qualitative data are also analyzed as the comments from the veterans and the guardians. Information from the animal communication session was documented

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and sent to the principal researcher. It was then shared with the veterans and guardians for rating and comments as to the usefulness of the information allegedly received by telepathic communication.

The research questions were:

- What questions do the veterans have for their partner horses?
- What information is allegedly received telepathically from the horse related to its veteran's questions?
- What is the usefulness of this information as judged by a rating scale completed by the veteran?
- What questions do the guardians have for their horses?
- What information is allegedly received telepathically from the horse related to the guardian's questions?
- What is the usefulness of this information as judged by a rating scale completed by the guardians?

Telepathy Research

For more than 100 years, intuitional research has supported the existence of cognitive *knowing* from beyond the physical senses. Additional quantum physics research has indicated a quantum field at the subatomic level of connectedness that Schrödinger described as "entanglement" (Erickson, 2011). During these years, groups of scientists have investigated telepathy with significant results significantly above chance expectation (Pratt *et al.*, 1966; Hyman, 1985; Radin, 1997). More than 90 academics and scientists have cosigned a letter that calls for more support of honest, open research of parapsychological topics and the mysteries of human consciousness (Cardeña, 2014).

In February 2014, another group of 100 notable scientists called for an open study of consciousness by signing the "Manifesto for a Post-Materialist Science" (Beauregard *et al.*, 2014). The manifesto also has been subsequently signed by more than 170 scientists, philosophers, MDs and Ph.D.s. This document includes the support of:

Studies of the so-called "psi phenomena" [which] indicate that we can sometimes receive meaningful information without

the use of ordinary senses, and in ways that transcend the habitual space and time constraints. Furthermore, psi research demonstrates that we can mentally influence—at a distance—physical devices and living organisms (including other human beings). Psi research also shows that distant minds may behave in ways that are non-locally correlated, i.e. the correlations between distant minds are hypothesized to be unmediated (they are not linked to any known energetic signal), unmitigated (they do not degrade with increasing distance), and immediate (they appear to be simultaneous). These events are so common that they cannot be viewed as anomalous nor as exceptions to natural laws, but as indications of the need for a broader explanatory framework that cannot be predicated exclusively on materialism (Beauregard *et al.*, 2014, p.1).

Parapsychology research has challenges that are commonly cited, including ambiguous definition of the subject matter (e.g., which topics should be classified as parapsychological; lack of replicability; unfalsifiability; unpredictability; methodological weaknesses; and the lack of a coherent theory (Alcock, 2010). Hyman (2010) argued that a major flaw in parapsychology research is persistent inconsistency. He stated that meta-analysis, frequently cited by parapsychologists to bolster their stance, is an exploratory rather than a confirmatory procedure and "parapsychologists who try to justify the replicability of psi results with meta-analysis are using a retrospective notion" (p. 44). Replication is further challenged by the decline effect (Bierman, 2001) in which experiments that begin with positive effect sizes will, when replicated, often show a steady decline over time. In the case against psi, Stokes (2015) observes that "many skeptics reject psi based on the fact that psi phenomena are inconsistent with the findings of modern science. . . no satisfactory, well-tested theory of psi has been developed, although many have been proposed" (p. 43).

In support of animal consciousness research, in July 2012, a prominent international group of cognitive neuroscientists, neuropharmacologists, neurophysiologists, neuroanatomists and computational neuroscientists signed and published The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness (Low,



2012), which supports the theory that the absence of a neocortex does not appear to preclude an organism from experiencing affective states; nonhuman animals have the neuroanatomical, neurochemical, and neurophysiological substrates of conscious states along with the capacity to exhibit internal behaviors.

Animal telepathy was first written about by William J. Long (1919), a minister and naturalist of the early 20th century. Animal psi research started in the 1950s and continued through the mid-1970s (Osis, 1952; Osis and Foster, 1953; Duval and Montredon, 1968) and was approached again by Sheldrake (Sheldrake and Smart, 2000; Sheldrake and Morgana, 2003). Erickson (2013) continued the animal telepathy research with a dissertation on domestic dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*).

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a soul wound. In the civil war, PTSD was called *soldier's heart*. A *soul wound* was described by Tick (2011) as follows:

A soul wound means that all the functions ever attributed to the soul are distorted, damaged, lost and confused by the horrible wounding of war. The way we think, the way we feel, the way we act, the way we love, the way we participate in employment, whether or not we can participate in society, our moral sensibility, and our aesthetics are all profoundly distorted and disturbed by the experience of war. PTSD is a cry of the soul trapped in the underworld. It is a frozen [trauma]-consciousness that makes the whole world look like a war zone. The self shrinks, barely staying alive and struggling to tolerate daily life, while the world looks like it is exploding around us. If we need to use the acronym PTSD, let's call it post-terror soul distress (p. 23).

PTSD is estimated to affect 14% of deployed military personnel and nearly 44% of deployed individuals who have experienced mild traumatic brain injury and a high level of combat. Apart from the enormous psychological suffering, the cost to society is significant, ranging from \$4.0 to \$6.2 billion in 2 years (Rosenthal *et al.*, 2011).

The trauma may be compounded by “the harsh personal judgment and self-rebuke of the sufferer (which) exacerbates the condition. Dysfunctional moods lead to negative self-talk, which increases symptoms, which initiates the cycle anew” (Paulson and Krippner, 2007, p. 3).

Combat-related PTSD of military veterans varies by service area:

- Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF): About 11-20 out of every 100 veterans (or between 11-20%) who served in OIF or OEF have PTSD in a given year.
- Gulf War (Desert Storm): About 12 out of every 100 Gulf War veterans (or 12%) have PTSD in a given year.
- Vietnam War: About 15 out of every 100 Vietnam veterans (or 15%) were diagnosed with PTSD at the time of the most recent study in the late 1980s by the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS). It is estimated that about 30 out of every 100 (or 30%) of Vietnam veterans have had PTSD in their lifetime (Gradus, 2016).

Animal-Assisted Therapy

There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man.

Attributed to Lord Palmerston, 19th-century British statesman.

The use of companion animals in medical settings dates back more than 150 years. Florence Nightingale recognized that animals provide a level of social support in the care of the ill and suggested that “a small pet animal is often an excellent companion for the sick, for long chronic cases especially” (Nightingale, 1969, p. 102). Although media attention is always positively generated for animal-assisted interventions, Kruger and Serpell (2006) suggested that they are “best described as a category of promising complementary practices that are still struggling to demonstrate their efficacy and validity” (p. 21).

Animal-assisted interventions involving domestic equines (*Equus ferus caballus*) generally fall under the jurisdiction of a number of agencies. Among them are the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA); its subsection, the Equine Facilitated



Mental Health Association (EFMHA); and its affiliate partner, the American Hippotherapy Association (AHA; Kruger and Serpell, 2006). Another national organization dedicated to equine therapy is the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH), which was formed in 1969. PATH programs support 62,000 child and adults, including nearly 4,000 veterans and active-duty military personnel, by contributing to their healing of the physical, cognitive, and emotional challenges of their experiences (PATH International, 2016).

Multiple human-animal bond research projects have supported therapeutic equine-facilitated psychotherapy (EFP) and hippotherapy purposes (Strauss, 1991; Engel, 1997; Bizub and Davidson, 2003; Haylock and Cantril, 2006; Kaiser *et al.*, 2006). EFP research for mental health has produced positive results (Klontz *et al.*, 2007; Cantin and Marshall-Lucette, 2011; Lee and Makela, 2015). Horses are patient, cooperative, receptive to people, and have demonstrated a positive impact on quality of life for people with disabilities (Garrity and Stallones, 1998). Equine therapy has been used with positive results with children and adolescents for psychological and behavior issues (Trotter *et al.*, 2008), for recovery from trauma (Yorke *et al.*, 2008), for children who have experienced intrafamily violence (Schultz *et al.*, 2007), and designed specifically with vaulting as psychotherapy with at-risk children (Vidrine *et al.*, 2002). Equine hippotherapy was used with five children with spastic cerebral palsy. "All five children showed a significant decrease in energy expenditure during walking and a significant increase in scores on walking, running, and jumping" (McGibbon *et al.*, 1998, p. 754).

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) has been a treatment for combat veterans diagnosed with PTSD since approximately 2002 (Masters, 2010). Research has shown successful remediation of PTSD symptoms in both veterans and spouses with EAP and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) modalities (Hutchinson, 2009; Church and Brooks, 2014; McLean, 2015). Why do horses succeed when doctors and medications fail? "A soldier with PTSD is in a state of hyper-vigilance. They're always looking around the corner. A horse is the same way. It's a herd animal, a prey animal, always on the lookout for danger. They can relate to each other" (Bell, 2015, p. 57).

In Canada, the Can Praxis organization has been operating since 2013 with support and pilot funding from the Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), which pledged \$25,000 (Russell, 2013). The program focus is on veterans with PTSD as well as operational stress injury (OSI). Two self-reporting measurement instruments are currently being validated to assess the benefits of the program: 1) Horses Relieving Operational Stress through Experiential Relationships (HOLSTER) Scale, and 2) Benefitting from Experiential Learning Together (BELT) scale (Duncan *et al.*, 2014). Can Praxis is a unique equine-assisted learning (EAL) program, in which both veterans and spouses/partners participate fully in the learning process and training of self-mediation. Three full-day sessions teach mediation, negotiation, communication, and conciliation skills to promote repairing and rebuilding their personal relationships in an equine-assisted environment (Can Praxis, 2016). "If veterans don't learn how to communicate again, they die" (R. Duncan, personal communication, February 20, 2016).

Study Design

Twelve horses, seven veterans, two horse guardians, two animal communicators, and the principal researcher were involved in the research. Five of the horses were not assigned veterans at the time of the study, but information was obtained from them related to the standard questions and the guardian's questions. All 12 horses had the same guardians, Debbi Fisher and Bob Woelk, and were permanently stabled on their property at Rainier Acres Ranch in Yelm, Washington, USA.

Every veteran's participation was completely free and voluntary, all participating veterans signed an Informed Consent to Participate. Veterans must have been in retired or inactive service status, and most had been in an equine therapy for more than a year. Each veteran was matched to a therapeutic horse by Ms. Fisher based on her professional assessment of the veteran's needs and her knowledge of the therapeutic skills of the horses. Seven horses each had one veteran assigned.

The Informed Consent was completed online by the veterans. The form required the veteran's first and last names, their years of military service, their length of time involved

with a therapeutic riding program, their horse's name, and the questions they had for their horse. When submitted, the form was received by email by the principal researcher. The guardian and veteran had no contact with either of the animal communicators; both were blind as to which of the two communicators would be assigned to which horse, as well as when the session would take place.

Methods

The principal researcher and both animal communicators agreed to abide by the Code of Ethics for Interspecies Communicators (Smith, 1990). The principal researcher randomly assigned one of the two communicators, Dr. Buckner or Ms. Ashley, to each veteran/horse team, and sent the assigned communicator the horse's name, a photograph of the horse, the standard questions, the guardian's questions, the name of the veteran, and the veteran's questions by email.

The assigned communicator conducted the session within two weeks of their receipt of the information, at a convenient date and time of their choosing, located in a different town from the horses. No one else was involved with the session. Each telepathic communication session followed a standard process described below.

First, each animal communicator introduced herself and explained the purpose of the session. Each horse was asked if it wished to participate in the research. No horse refused to participate.

- Each horse was then asked the following standard questions:
 - (1) Please tell me about your therapy with the veterans: What do you do at your job?
 - (2) What do you like, and dislike, about your job?
 - (3) What advice would help a new therapy horse to understand or do its job better?
 - (4) What advice would help veterans to understand their horses better—what should they know about you?
 - (5) A standard question from the guardian: Is there any mouth pain that you have?
- The veteran's specific questions were then asked of their horse.

- The guardian's specific questions were then asked for each horse.

The communicators furnished the information allegedly received from the horse to the principal investigator in a typed document sent by email. The principal investigator shared the information with the guardians first, then the guardians shared with the veteran. The principal researcher followed up with each individual veteran during a face-to-face or telephone interview. The interview concluded the participation of the veteran.

During the interviews, the veterans were asked for qualitative comments as well as a quantitative rating on the usefulness of the information received from their horse, on a Likert scale of 1 to 6:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all Useful		Slightly Useful	Moderately Useful		Extremely Useful

The guardians also furnished to the principal researcher both quantitative ratings and qualitative comments regarding each communication session independent of the veteran's interviews.

Findings

All information allegedly received by the animal communicators during a session was considered confidential to that veterans' relationship to the horse and was not shared with any other veteran. All veterans and horses have been given pseudonyms to maintain their confidentiality.

The veteran participant's backgrounds are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Veteran participants military background and experience with a therapeutic riding program, in alphabetical order.

Veteran Name	Veteran's Military Service (Years)	Veteran's Time in Therapeutic Riding Program (Months)
Alex	10	60
Barbara	21	18
Celeste	4	19
Daniel	8.5	17
James	20	24
Marcy	4	2
Sebastian	20	2



Horse participants are detailed in Table 2, in alphabetical order.

Table 2. Horse participant's name, breed, gender, age, years in veteran's therapy, and photograph






Horse	Photograph
<p>Name: Acorn</p> <p>Breed/Gender: Thoroughbred/gelding</p> <p>Age: 26</p> <p>Years in Veteran's Therapy: 6</p>	
<p>Name: Benson</p> <p>Breed/Gender: Missouri Fox Trotter/gelding</p> <p>Age: 6</p> <p>Years in Veteran's Therapy: 4</p>	
<p>Name: Cartier</p> <p>Breed/Gender: Quarter Horse/mare</p> <p>Age: 15</p> <p>Years in Veteran's Therapy: 3</p>	
<p>Name: Chance</p> <p>Breed/Gender: Missouri Fox Trotter/mare</p> <p>Age: 24</p> <p>Years in Veteran's Therapy: 6</p>	
<p>Name: Clyde</p> <p>Breed/Gender: Hungarian Warmblood/gelding</p> <p>Age: 7</p> <p>Years in Veteran's Therapy: 2</p>	

Table 2. Horse participant's name, breed, gender, age, years in veteran's therapy, and photograph

Horse	Photograph
Name: Frank Breed/Gender: Frederiksborg Danish Warmblood/gelding Age: 9 Years in Veteran's Therapy: 6	
Name: General Breed/Gender: Quarter Horse/gelding Age: 7 Years in Veteran's Therapy: 3	
Name: Hercules Breed/Gender: Quarter Horse/gelding Age: 5 Years in Veteran's Therapy: 0	
Name: Red Star Breed/Gender: Appaloosa/gelding Age: 23 Years in Veteran's Therapy: 6	
Name: Tiberius Breed/Gender: Missouri Fox Trotter/gelding Age: 10 Years in Veteran's Therapy: 6	

Table 2. Horse participant’s name, breed, gender, age, years in veteran’s therapy, and photograph



Horse	Photograph
Name: Venus Breed/Gender: American Paint Horse/gelding Age: 12 Years in Veteran’s Therapy: 6	
White Lightening Breed/Gender: Quarter Horse/filly Age: Yearling Years in Veteran’s Therapy: 1	

Table 3. The veterans’ usefulness ratings of the information received are shown.

Veterans’ Rating Summary		
Veteran Name	Horse Name	Overall Usefulness Rating of Animal Communication Information on 1 (low) to 6 (high) Scale
Alex	White Lightening	5
Barbara	General	5.5
Celeste	Frank	6
Daniel	Chance	5
James	Tiberius	5
Marcy	Red Star	Unknown
Sebastian	Benson	3
Average Rating:		4.9

Table 4. The guardians’ overall usefulness ratings are shown.

Guardian’s Rating Summary	
Horse Name	Overall Usefulness Rating
Acorn	6
Benson	6
Cartier	6
Chance	5
Clyde	6
Frank	6
General	6
Hercules	4
Red Star	6
Tiberius	6
Venus	6
White Lightening	6
Average Rating:	5.75

Standard Questions

As outlined above, all 12 horses were asked a standard list of five questions by the animal communicator assigned to the horse. The alleged responses received by the animal communicator are summarized below. Animal communicators may receive words, impressions, images, feelings, or emotions from the animal during the session.

The human is an interpreter and processes the information received into human language. Neither of the communicators had any prior exposure or communication with any of the horses in this study. Because of the restriction of paper length for publication, all horses' responses are not included but are available from the principal researcher upon request.

Q1: Please tell me about your therapy with the veterans: What do you do at your job?	
Horse	Response
Acorn	I'm their rock. I'm here to help them trust again. I'm here to let them remember how to be calm, like I am.
Benson	I provide them a safe place to learn about themselves. I reflect their emotions and their moods. At the same time, I am more stable than they are.
Chance	I provide a center, a stable base and support for Daniel and anyone like Daniel. I listen, encourage him, let him know "that's life," show him a little fun and the thrills we have as horses. I'm here to bring him into my world, the world of "moving thru life," instead of staying stuck in life.
Frank	Well, I stand around a lot. I walk very calmly. I don't really like to work too hard. I allow a wide variety of people to groom me and saddle me and lead me.
General	My job is to help them feel better about themselves and about how they are in the world. It's actually a really easy job. I just be myself.
Red Star	We ride, we bond over grooming, we have emotional connections when the person needs a friend, I'm a friend to her. It seems humans may not have humans for this role sometimes, not like horses. We have our herd. I just do what I do best, repetition and rhythm and knowing. I have an ability to be knowing and it gives humans confidence, for some reason. I function like a column, a strong post in Marcy's life.

Q2: What do you like, and dislike, about your job?	
Horse	Response
Acorn	I like having [time] to create a relationship with someone. There's nothing I dislike, this is a good job and I'm good at it.
Benson	Working with all kinds of people, building relationships. I like that I am a valued part of the team, I am honored for my contribution. I am allowed to be who I am as I am. I take that responsibility very seriously. I know I have a job to do, that means I need to pay attention and not wander off or eat grass. I like having a job. I can (work in cooperation) with a young girl just learning to ride, or a veteran who thinks he's pretty tough, or an older woman who is slightly afraid of horses. I can do that work with any of them, that is my talent. I don't dislike anything, I enjoy working with everyone.
Chance	I like that I can count on our relationship. Daniel doesn't come and go for months at a time. Our job together and our friendship is dependable, reliable. We make progress; I can feel my influence is helping, because his energy is changing and that's because of me. I love that. I look forward to our work together!
Clyde	I like more experienced riders, because there are more interesting things to do. I dislike beginners, because you end up doing the same things over and over again.
General	What I like about the therapy work is I get to meet different people, even if the different people can be a little frustrating sometimes because they don't quite know what they're doing. I like people in general, they have their quirks, but they're okay.
Tiberius	Well, I'll tell you, I don't like nervous nellies. I don't like anxious warriors. I like people who are confident, who want to work with me, not who want to make me do things. It's not about making the horse do things. It's about teamwork. It's about cooperation. It's about riders' signals and desires and staying focused on what we're doing. Lots of these [veterans] couldn't do that [stay focused].
White Lighting	I like that I'm the one Alex comes to see each time, that I'm always his choice of all the horses. I like the variety in my day, that we have something to do when he comes. I dislike when Alex is hard, like a wall, like a cold rock. Then I feel like I'm just waiting, like I should go away from him—like he would prefer me to be gone. So I just try to stay sort of invisible until he needs to go. It's confusing to me why he chooses to visit me when he wishes I were gone, but I can wait and just join my horse friends later.



Q3: What advice would help a new therapy horse to understand or do its job better?	
Horse	Response
Acorn	Be tolerant of (the veteran's) mistakes. Most are beginners, so a horse needs tolerance.
Benson	It's most important for the horse to be who they are and for the humans to appreciate the horse for who the horse is. We each have our own personality. Sometimes the horse will be hard to handle with an adult and will be easily led by a child. Sometimes the only way you know is by trying the horse out.
Cartier	Have patience. You're training them really, to rely on your calmness, solidness, stable nature.
Clyde	We are the teachers, we need to recognize they are here to learn from us.
General	It's important for a starting therapy horse to know that there's a sequence and that there is a mission. This job calls for a lot of patience. A lot of standing still. A lot of taking unclear direction. Therapy horses need to understand the greater concept. Usually a horse is learning and practicing what the rider wants to do with a horse. But a therapy horse is letting the person getting the therapy have the experience working with a large animal that they are unfamiliar with and learning new skills. Give the veteran an opportunity to learn. So in my work with veterans, it is important to reflect to the veteran what they are giving off. If they lead I will follow. If they are calm, I will be calm. If they don't give me clear directions, then I can't follow and then I'm frustrated and they're frustrated. And the person has to let go of their frustration and think of what they are doing and give clear direction.
Red Star	If the horse was already kind, wise, able to bond and support the veteran, it could just use all those skills over time to explore each friendship with its humans.
Tiberius	Understand that there are all sorts of people out there. Some you're going to like; some not so much. It doesn't make any difference. A good therapy horse will always have a job. I'm good at what I do. The new therapy horse should realize he has a job to do and he should do it well.
Venus	Understand how important you are to the veteran. Recognize how we bring a stable, calm presence to them.

Q4: What advice would help veterans to understand their horses better? What should they know about you?

Horse	Response
Acorn	Understand the herd and how we trust and support each other. They need to learn to trust again.
Benson	Each horse is unique and has a unique reaction to each unique human. Horses are hard-wired in certain ways. So a veteran who loves horses but is anxious, gives a horse a mixed message. Anyone who is going to work with a horse should have some information prior to doing so about how horses are. People have a lot of conceptions from stories they've read or seen. Most of these are not realistic at all. And let the person know that horses are very subtle. The person doesn't need to know everything. They just need to know that there is no reason to be afraid; there is no reason to be puffed up and controlling. If they could just be more genuine, and honest, I'm glad to help them. They don't have to be anything other than what they are. If they are honest with how they feel, that's good. I do want them to know I'm not like a dog. I'm not like a cat. I'm not like a wolf. I am like a horse: a unique sentient being with feelings, attitudes, idiosyncrasies. I am what I am. I appreciate it if they accept me as I am. I am a team member with them. I have been taught to respond to certain commands. If they do nothing, I drift along.
Chance	Veterans should let the horses do the talking. Follow our lead. You need us, so listen, relax, and we can gently show you what you needed to know all your life. Just wait, be patient, and we'll show you what you need to know. We are good at this and proud of it.
Clyde	They need to trust me, we know what we're doing, we've done it many many times before.
Frank	They need to realize this is our job. I don't get all emotionally entangled with the people who ride me and who work with me. I think understanding horses in general is very important. It's important to know that we're not dogs. And we're not cougars. Horses are a distinct group. We have our own rules, are own code of conduct, our own social structure. Sometimes it's hard for people who haven't been around horses to understand. They have no understanding of our body language and what it means. They give us confusing signals. Or they are overly affectionate. We're not always sure where they're coming from.
General	They should know that this is my job and that I will do it to the best of my ability. But I will not do their job. Their job is to learn how to work with me. I like them to be happy working with me. When they brush me and groom me I want them to enjoy it. When they enjoy it, I enjoy it. It's not just about brushing, it's about being together. Feeling each other's energy. Enjoying each other's energy. Brushing and grooming and getting prepared for the saddle is an act of communication. Communication starts with their hand on my shoulder. They should know to help understand their horse better, they should know that the horse is waiting to understand them. So they should talk to



	us. They should put their hand on us. And they should smile when they see us. We like to be told we're doing a good job. After all, we're not at a typewriter or a desk. We are living, breathing, participating beings doing a job that we are drafted into doing and we're doing our best. We like to be acknowledged.
Hercules	They should work to really understand their horse: likes, dislikes, where they're coming from.
Red Star	Humans nearly always have so much to adjust to about us. We are of a different race, species, mind, soul and origins. We have been balanced and centered for so long, and are so used to that reality. The veterans are just the opposite: splintered, hyper, tired and full of fear. We understand fear, because we are herd animals, prey animals. So I would suggest to new therapy vets that they soak us up. That they walk and stand and sit within our aura, as softly as possible, to feel the ancient strength and steadiness of a horse. Sort of use our energy as nutrition for a while, without even trying. We can take them within and "let them drink" from our energy, and they can just relax. It can feel like medicine: we are medicine, if you want it.
Tiberius	They should know I'm a professional. I know what I'm doing. I have done it a thousand times. I have much more experience than they do. The handlers [guardians] know that and respect that. But the veterans have all these different ideas that are pretty confusing. I think letting them know something about horses would be good.
Venus	Understand it comes a little at a time, learning and growing, and we appreciate them working at it like we do.
White Lightning	I would say to Alex: When you come, you are rigid and hard like a rock. You should come to see me more often, at different times. In the morning we are all warm and happy with our food, happy to face the day and maybe you would feel like us, if you felt this. In the evening we are glad to come back in and get our dinner; if you could be a part of that, to feel our calm and happy herd-energy, maybe you would know the feeling of belonging. Maybe you could just come and sit, breathe and <i>be</i> , without a list of things you must do with me. Feel how <i>we</i> feel. If you could feel it, maybe you could take that feeling with you, and bring it back for next time. Would you like to be a horse? It's wonderful! We can show you. I can show you.

Q5: What mouth pain do you have?

All dental examinations were completed by Dr. Heather Wenzell, DVM, of Spinnaker Farm Equine Therapy, Lacey, WA, during the month of December, 2015.

Horse: Acorn

Communicator's Notes: Bottom left, far back. He tries not to set it off when eating.

Veterinarian's Exam: Dental exam and float 12/2/2015. Findings sensitivity to floating upper right molars, M2 and M3. A bit longer crown than surrounding teeth. M2 is starting to loosen. No pocket to clean. Reduced crown a little and other buccal points. Left maxillary M3 worn down to gum line so makes left side of his mouth out of balance. Reduced buccal and lingual points and slight mandibular molar steps/ramps incisors reduced, slight slant. Post float lateral excursion left and right = great.

Guardian Comments: Animal communication was found to be correct in what Acorn had to say about his mouth pain. Acorn is an older horse at 26 and has very little teeth left at this stage of his life. A horse's teeth continue to grow their entire life, in Acorn's case, he had an overzealous veterinarian in the past that filed down his teeth too much, thus the reason for the lack of normal growth in his teeth. He cannot eat hay or grass anymore due to his not being able to chew it up properly for nutrition. He is on a beet pulp and grain diet to sustain him at this point in his life. I have been aware of his back left molar and was very impressed that the animal communicator got that information from Acorn.

Horse: Cartier

Communicator's Notes: Back bottom left, and also top right, midway between front center to back.

Veterinarian's Exam: Dental exam 12/7/2015. Buccal and lingual points of both arcades, caudal ramps starting again, slightly worse on right. Slight bilateral wear with rostral hooks, 106/206 reduced incisors right maxillary rough edges, lateral hooks reduced. Post float lateral excursion left and right = good.

Guardian Comments: Even though Cartier had her teeth done 6 months ago, and the usual time a horse goes between float exams is a year, she did need to have work done again. By hearing from the animal communicator about this now, she has saved Cartier six months of pain by informing me that she needed to have her teeth done now.



Horse: General	
Communicator's Notes:	Communicator received a picture of the bit being put in and it hurting his teeth. It hurts sometimes if it bumps back against the back teeth. Response from General: "That's why I struggle a little bit with a bridle. It doesn't happen every time; just sometimes. If I chew on my left side, it does sort of make a sharp stab, sort of like stepping on a nail, but in my tooth. Does this make it hard for me to eat? I'm a pretty determined eater. Debbi will laugh at that."
Veterinarian's Exam:	Dental exam and float 12/7/2015. Buccal and lingual points sharp on both arcades. Rostral hooks 106/206, slight sensitivity to palpation; may explain bit sensitivity plus buccal and lingual points. Left maxillary wolf tooth remnant very small, not worth extracting due to small size, likely not causing a problem. Incisors okay. Canines okay. Post float lateral excursion left and right = good.
Guardian Comments:	Dental exam confirmed the need for treatment.

Horse: Red Star	
Communicator's Notes:	Pain in the front; mostly lower, a little hard to distinguish between upper and lower. Maybe both.
Veterinarian's Exam:	Dental exam and float 12/2/2015. Owner says he has been having trouble eating, can't get mouth all the way shut. Exam showed bilateral wear left and right with excessive crown in a few places reduced. Maxillary premolars wear with not much reserve crown. Right M2 step reduced (maxillary) small caudal hooks, 311/411 reduced. Incisors are in occlusion now and lateral excursion left and right = good.
Guardian Comments:	Animal communication was found to be correct in what Red Star shared regarding his teeth.

Horse: Tiberius	
Communicator's Notes:	Response from Tiberius: "Yeah, now and again. Sort of towards the back. Not all the time. Just now and again it flares up, then goes away. It's not a big deal."
Veterinarian's Exam:	Dental exam 12/7/2015. Dental exam and float, buccal and lingual points of both arcades. Caudal hooks 311/411 with slight bilateral wear reduced. Post float lateral excursion left and right = good. Reduced lateral maxillary hooks on incisors and removed tartar from mandibular canines.
Guardian Comments:	Tiberius did need some work on his teeth, mouth pain confirmed.

Horse: Venus	
Communicator's Notes:	Upper right in back. More of a swollen gum, like something lodged between a tooth and gum. It doesn't hurt to eat.
Veterinarian's Exam:	Dental exam 12/2/2015. Sensitivity to floating upper right premolars/molars due to sharp buccal points from excessive transverse ridges as well as a piece of wood chip shaving between cheek and teeth. Reduced bilateral and lingual points and both excessive transverse ridges. Slight overbite and ventral curvature on incisors reduced. Post float lateral excursion left and right = good.
Guardian Comments:	Both I and the veterinarian were in absolute amazement when she pulled the wood chip out of Venus' mouth!

The following horses responded that they were not experiencing any dental pain, which was confirmed by their dental exams:

Horse	Horse Response	Dental Exam Date 12/2/2015 Results
Benson	Nope, I'm good.	No dental work needed
Chance	"No teeth pain, but sometimes the bit bothers me." The communicator asked whether it was rider's use of the bit? She said yes, sometimes.	No dental work needed
Clyde	"No, nothing at all right now."	No dental work needed
Frank	"No, no. My teeth are good. Everything is okay."	No dental work needed
Hercules	"Nope, I'm good."	No dental work needed
White Lightning	"No, I'm fine."	No dental work needed

Veteran's Questions:

As outlined above, seven horses were assigned to veterans, and six veteran interviews were completed. All veterans submitted their questions for their horses. The responses allegedly received by the animal communicator are summarized below. Because of the paper length restriction for

publication, all questions or responses are not included. Guardians also submitted questions for each of the 12 horses, but because of the restriction of paper length for publication, this information is not included. The complete data set is available from the principal researcher upon request.

Veteran: Sebastian Questions	Horse: Benson Horse's Response
What is your favorite treat, carrots or apples?	Yes, I like fresh vegetables
Who is your best friend?	Human? That would be Debby, I've known her the longest. Horse? A bay mare.

Veteran's Rating: 3

Veteran's Comments:

- These comments kind of sounded like him. I'm very skeptical, but I don't know. It would be super cool if you can do this.
- The answers were very much like Benson's personality; so plausible he would answer like this. He's quite a personality.
- I found the information more interesting than useful, but it will be interesting to see what happens next with our friendship.

Guardian's Rating: 6

Guardian's Comments:

- I remembered later that I do know the horse Benson mentioned; her name is Liberty or Libby, a bay rescue mare that worked in our therapy program for a year back in 2010 and 2011. She now lives up the road from here, within whinnying distance.

Veteran: Daniel Questions	Horse: Chance Horses' Response
Do you enjoy our time together? Or time with veteran riders?	Yes, I always look forward to it. I love that it's ongoing, consistent, dependable.
How does my (or the rider's) anxiety affect you?	I expect your anxiety; I know it comes with the package. It's the purpose for our help and contribution, so since I first learned about this work, I automatically accept and take your anxiety as matter-of-fact. If one of our



	herd had this kind of injury, we all would support him or her: it's part of our culture. My job is to help, so any problem you have is part of my job, and I love my job.
What can we do to make the time together more enjoyable?	I love grooming, petting, brushing, standing together. I like the quiet, when you are feeling my warm calm, enjoying my scent and my solid, massive strength. I know that helps you and I wish we had more time in the quiet of grooming and strong stillness. The longer we do that and you absorb me, the better.
How does my anger affect you?	Anger is like a rake, as opposed to a brush. It feels sharp, like laying down on rocks instead of a bed of straw. I prefer straw. I just live with and carry your load of anger until I feel you dropping it, little by little. I know you intend to drop it off, and you feel better when you shed it. Some days it takes longer than others. I have come to just have patience, until you let it go. You prefer straw, too, I know. You like the difference.
What do you fear?	I fear being forced to jump a fence, or being herded into a corner with no exit. I fear getting tangled up/caught in fencing or rails.
Who is the current alpha of the herd?	There are several males, but I try not to get into politics. I would piss someone off if I named names. There are some big egos involved.
When I am afraid, do you feel afraid?	No. I would neither be a good therapy friend nor a good horse if I did that. We are not in situations I need to fear. We practice things that are artificial, not situations where our lives are in peril. If I took you to a raging river, or we were in a severe forest storm, even then I would protect you. That would be my job. But during our work, we are never in danger so I don't get scared.
If you are in pain, where, when, and how bad is it?	If I get twinges somewhere from repetition or stress/pressure on a body part, and I don't want to go on, I will change gait or act up and let you know. Sometimes I'll need to rest it, and I'll show I'm not ready to resume. Trust me, I'll tell you. I won't injure myself; I'll show you I need to stop.
Does the weight of the rider make a difference in pain or enjoyment?	It's just the weight distribution, mainly. I can carry a good deal of weight, if it's centered and balanced.

Veteran's Rating: 5

Veteran's Comments:

- I feel like Chance and I have a real connection. I've ridden other horses and not felt this deep of a relationship. I feel this relationship is something we both really enjoy doing; I'm really committed to her.
- Her age makes me aware she's not quite as nimble as the younger horses. Her grooming sessions are a collaborating effort together.
- I noticed she would be less comfortable around some horses and more comfortable with other horses.
- She has helped me to understand assertiveness versus aggression. I learned that when I got nervous or anxious, I had to calm myself, steady myself to relax her. I realized my anxiety did affect her; when I was anxious she wouldn't respond as well to me. It did take time, if I'm unconsciously tense, she will pick up on it and reflect it back to me. They're pretty good mirrors.
- At the beginning of a session, I may be uncomfortable, but by the end I am more comfortable. By the end of every session, I felt a lot smoother. She's helped me learn how to be at peace.
- [This information] is useful. I'm skeptical of the info but I do find it useful. It really sounded like her and our relationship. Even her weight/balance comments sound like her.

Guardian's Rating: 5

Guardian's Comments:

- Chance is a seasoned therapeutic riding horse with much wisdom for the Veteran and well as myself in sharing insight on how I can better prepare the Veterans for working with the horses and how much the horses can help them.



- Because of her advanced age of 24, I have been concerned about her continuing in riding with the veterans, but the information that she shared has put me at ease, knowing that I need to balance riders, so within her weight limit they can still ride her.
- Novice riders often do not know how to use the reins properly, thus we always start the horses off in bit-less bridles at the start, but often move them to a snaffle bit for trail riding. Because Chance is so good all of the time, this piece of news about bits causing problems for her with some of the veterans, I will make the call that she be ridden by veterans all of the time with bit-less bridles in the future.

Veteran: Celeste Questions	Horse: Frank Horses' Response
What makes you happy?	Well, eating makes me happy, of course. And she knows I like treats. I do like to go outside the pastures on the trails. We don't do that very often, but I really enjoy it.
Celeste wants you to know that she loves you and appreciates all the calm and peace you provide her. She would like to know how she can show you that she appreciates you.	I have to admit I do like an "atta boy" and a "good job" and a "thank you." She's really generous with the <i>thank yous</i> . I like that. I like it when the rider shows some appreciation and recognizes that I'm working. I like to be brushed too. That always feels good. It helps me truly relax.
Celeste wants to know what you would like her to know about you.	That's an interesting question. I would like all people to understand horses and know more about them and to treat them with respect and honor them for their work. For Celeste in particular, I want you [Celeste] to know that I will work with you as long as you want to continue working. With you it is more than just my job. You and I have a personal relationship. I can see that you are learning and I am willing to be your teacher. I'm a good teacher because I'm not always easy. But that gives you experience and allows you to make adjustments. You have a very big heart, which I respect.
Celeste also wants you to know that you have helped her get through some of the most challenging times in her life and have allowed her to thrive in specific areas of her life. She says thank you; she loves you.	That's very nice of her. What a lovely thought. I didn't know she felt that way. I'm glad I made a difference in her life. I never thought of that actually. That a therapy horse like me could make such a difference in another person's life. Some of the horses are really into the therapy thing. Me, not so much. It's gratifying to know that even with my attitude that Celeste found a benefit. That's wonderful. I might have to reconsider. Maybe that's what therapy horses should be told when they start—about what a difference they can make in another person's life.
She'd like to know why you're so cranky a lot of the time.	I get an upset stomach. It's something that doesn't sit well—maybe one of the supplements. It's hard to say because everything comes together. But something isn't quite right.

Veteran's Rating: 6

Veteran's Comments:

- This information is so accurate it was humorous.
- He really does love to eat, that's my boy! Dead-on answers!
- His stomach is hurting him, he nips me when I tighten the girth if I pull too tight. So I don't tighten it much at first. Sometimes I have to tighten it 2 or 3 times.

Guardian's Rating: 6

Guardian's Comments:

- Frank's tummy issue was a surprise to me. I had him on medications [at his previous location] for his tummy, but when I brought him home I did not realize he was still having issues, since they had not given him anything for months before he came home (their neglect). I immediately put him back on his medication, and have noticed a huge difference in him. THANK YOU!!!! From both me and Frank for letting me know. This horse LOVES to eat.



Veteran: Barbara Questions	Horse: General Horses' Response
Do you like Barbara?	Well, of course I like her, she's a lovely person. She really cares about me and wants what's best for me. She really looks forward to seeing me and I look forward to seeing her. I know she's a very caring person, but it's hard for her to show that part of her. It's easier for her to show it with an animal. I understand that. It can be hard to show people that you (horses) like them because we're not supposed to nuzzle, we're not supposed to get too close. But a lot of people have trouble interpreting horses' feelings. She could watch my ears. My ears would tell her. Yes, yes, please let her know I like her. I think she's wonderful.
Do you like it when she comes to work with you?	Of course I do! She has a very different way of being with me than Debbi does. It's funny. Barbara is fun to work with, because she doesn't know everything. I think I have some things to teach her. We have a time of learning together. She wants to be in charge and be the leader and she's also afraid of being too harsh and hurting my mouth.
Do you want to try anything new?	How about some new trails? That would be good. I like variety. It's okay with me if sometimes we do this and sometimes that, but really trails are the most interesting. I like time to eat some of the stuff along the way. I like to sniff the air. I like to see who else is out there. You know I can see a long, long way and I like to look around. I like to experience the rhythm of walking across a plain, of walking through the forest, of drinking from a stream. That would be lovely.
Why do you always speed up near the gates?	I would like to go faster. I know she doesn't want me to overall, but couldn't we ride around a little faster? I'm anticipating. We go fast for barrels. It's dull to do everything so slow.
She also wants to know if you're having a good time when you ride together.	It's something different to do; it's interesting. I'm never quite sure what we'll be doing. I don't like the standing around. That's not much fun, but she knows that and I'm sure that's why she has me stand is because maybe I'm not doing what she would like me to do. But I understand there's some frustration when you're learning and we're both learning. We're learning how to work together; we're learning this, we're learning that and that's okay I don't need it to be all fun all the time. Nobody has fun all the time. I like the brushing, I like the grooming, that's good. I like that she likes me. I like our relationship. I like her. Yeah, I have a good time when she comes out.

Veteran's Rating: 5.5

Veteran's Comments:

- When I first started, I wasn't sure about the brushing and grooming, I didn't feel like I knew what I was doing. Now we really enjoy it. We are bonding.
- His comment about not nuzzling is funny, because he does get in my face.
- He's right, he teaches me all the time. And he's also right that I'm afraid I'll hurt his mouth.
- About the gates, I worry about being able to stop, or at least his stopping if I say to stop.
- On his comment about standing around, he's right, that's absolutely right. I know I have to be clear about directions to him.

Guardian's Rating: 6

Guardian's Comments:

- I love that General knows that I think he is such a ROCK star at being a therapy horse. He is a young horse, but really knows his job. He is very intuitive to the needs of his Veterans, and his interpretation of Barbara and where she has started from and where she is now is 100% right on target.
- The information that General shared was by far at the top of useful information for me in teaching new horses to become therapy horses and also preparing the veterans to work with the horses—such a wise horse in a young body!



Veteran: Marcy Questions	Horse: Red Star Horses' Response
How does your back feel? Am I too heavy? Am I holding you back?	My back is fine; you aren't too heavy for me. I'll let you know if you become too heavy. You never hold me back.
Are you happy? What can I do to help with that?	I am happy. I am proud and satisfied, safe and comfortable. I couldn't ask for more. I shouldn't! I have a job, great owners in Debbi and Bob, and a herd I love. Your respect and love are all I need from you.
Do you prefer fruit or carrots?	Of course I LOVE fruit. Both are great, but I could go for some fruit ANY time!
Is my anxiety too much for you? What can I do better?	The question is: Is your anxiety too much for YOU. I am here to soothe that; I am separate from you. Don't worry about me. I am a column, your pillar. Do your work; soak up my calm, be in the nutrition of my strength, and let your anxiety become a thing of your past.
Are we a good match?	Yes. I love you.
I know you have been around a while what do I need to learn to live?	Some of us need many life journeys to find a smooth path. Yours has been extra rocky this time around. If you can spend the rest of this life soothing and smoothing it, finding the passes in the mountains, the peaceful streams in the valley, you will have joy as the basis to build on next time. You will recognize joy. Keep building happy and shining chapters in your life, to balance out the terrible ones. There is so much happiness around the corner.
Communicator's Note:	<i>In this reading, as I began and several times throughout, I kept getting the name "Rhubarb" instead of Red Star. Maybe that rings a bell for someone?</i>

Veteran's Rating: Unknown
Veteran's Comments: Unknown

Guardian's Rating: 6
Guardian's Comments:

- It is very helpful to see the horse's response to the five questions. I have gained a great insight on how I can prepare not only the veteran, but the horse for the work that they help us out with. Red Star is that column, strong, and stable for the entire herd of horses, as well as myself in the work that we do here. I really appreciate how much he appreciates the hard work that we do here in their care and acknowledges it.
- The last remark on his communication has to do with "rhubarb"—Red Star loves to stand down by the garden fence when we are weeding the garden. Bob gives him the cutoff tops of the rhubarb over the fence, which tells me that this is one of his favorite treats! Thank you!

Veteran: James Questions	Horse: Tiberius Horses' Response
Why are you so anxious/nervous away from the herd when you're on the back 40 in the forested area?	You have to realize I'm usually never out of sight of another horse. Horses are herd animals. Safety is in the herd. All my life I've always been able to see another horse wherever I looked. Or I could hear one. I know you like to go out there and I'm willing to go, I just don't enjoy it so much. I like to know where I am. When we're out there and I get worried, I'm wondering does he know where he is? Are we going to go this way forever? When are we going to turn around and go home?
Why do you like James so well or do you really like him at all?	I do like him; of course, I like him. I like having one rider. One person I can get to know and have a relationship with. That feels good to me. And James is getting better and better working with me and I hope that I'm getting better and better working with him. You know it's not as easy as they say. One person's pull on the reins is different from another person's. No matter how they try and teach everybody to do it alike, everybody does it a little differently. So I like getting used to a rider.
James says it seems like the	It's not about the carrot, okay? You know, just like some people like horses



two of you have a really strong bond, but he wonders what it is that makes it so. It feels good for him, but he wonders if it is something you feel as well or if it's something as simple as him giving you carrots at the end of the day.	better than other people, some horses like people better. And I like him. I feel good when I'm with him. James and I know what we're doing together, he doesn't have a lot of expectations. What we do together is okay with him and it's okay with me. I like that. He's not pushing me to do something I don't want to do or making me do the same old thing over and over and over and over again.
What is your favorite color?	That's a weird question. I guess my favorite color is green because that's the color of grass and I like to eat grass. I like blue too. That's about the sky. Why does he want to know my favorite color?
Do you enjoy learning new things with James?	Yeah, I do I like to try new things. I may be a little hesitant at first. A lot of times that's because I don't know what we're trying to do. James, you can help a lot if you would just, in your mind, do a visual of the whole thing that you want from beginning to end. You got that? Just show it to me. Show me what it's all going to look like. And then when we're doing it, show it to me step by step. Okay? That way I know the whole scenario before I start.
Should you continue doing new things together?	Absolutely. I can learn new things. I can go new places. I'm not a wimp. I am a strong, muscular, capable horse and don't you forget it. That's important to me. I don't want to be some namby-pamby pampered puss. I want to be strong, valuable, admired, respected. Those are the things that are important to me.
Do you feel his depression or know that he suffers from depression?	That's a strange word. Depressed. Sad. Sad for a long long long time. Does he have enough food to eat? Does he have friends? Does he have a place to live? I'm his friend. I'm not sure why he's so sad. I don't experience sadness when he's here. What I feel is that he looks forward to seeing me. I can feel him thinking about me when he's miles away. I know he's looking forward to coming to see me. And when he gets here, he's always glad to see me, he's always glad to put his hands on me, then saddle me up and get going. When he is in the saddle and we're out and about, sometimes he thinks of big things, but that's alright. He can think about what he wants to think about. I think about what I think about. No, I don't feel his depression or that he suffers from it. I don't quite understand the concept. Sorry.

Veteran Rating: 5

Veteran's Comments:

- This was a pretty good assessment of how he is. His comment about my liking horses better than people, seems like that's true. I like Tiberius a heck of a lot.
- Tiberius does want to know what comes next; he is more accepting of something when he knows it's coming.
- I'll start using a green halter, if that's his favorite color. That's why I wanted to know.
- This information seemed very good at interpreting Tiberius's way of thinking. I'll use the idea of telling/thinking to him about what we're going to do and communicating with him about what my intent is.

Author's Note: How horses see color is well researched (Pick *et al.*, 1994; Smith and Goldman, 1999; Carroll *et al.*, 2001; Hanggi *et al.*, 2007; Ahmadinejad *et al.*, 2008; Roth *et al.*, 2008; Jacobs 2010). Horses have two types of cones in their retinas, so have more limited color perception than humans and respond to blue and green, but not red. "The horses behave more or less like red-green color-deficient people" (Meszoly, 2003, p. 4).

Guardian's Rating: 6

Guardian's Comments:

- Boy, do I ever see a horse's personality come out like this. This is so the Tiberius that I see every day. He is by far one of the most beautiful horses here on the place, but a loner and can be a bully



to the other horses. By hearing what he has to say, tells me that I really need to have a very clear picture in my mind to portray to him so that he understands what I want of him.

- Tiberius’s relationship with James was also confirmed by this communication. He does not have any bond with either Bob and I even though we do ride him. It will make it easier to sell him to James when the time comes, to know that they really do enjoy one another’s company.

Veteran: Alex Questions	Horse: White Lightening Horses’ Response
Why am I a loser?	I think you are angry and you feel prickly to others, but you are not finished yet. Sometimes you form a wall around you, and others can only turn away from the blunt face of it. If you make yourself round and softer, make yourself easier to bump up against and stand with, you can bend/blend with us. If you don’t put yourself in a sharp, cold or stone-hard case, we can nuzzle you, feel you and breathe into you. Do you ever watch us, how horses do these things? We nuzzle, massage, sniff, breathe in and out and place our bodies not only next to but within the shape of each other. It makes us trust and know one another deeply. Maybe you can try this. Lean into a horse. Wrap around us with your torso like we do (not so much your hands and arms, but with your body and heart.) It’s not possible for a “wall” to do this! You’ll see.
Do you want a loser (aka Alex) to work with you?	Sure. You can change from what you think is the wrong way to be. Every new day gives you more time to try.
Why don’t you like the clippers on your bridle path?	Those clippers make my whole head feel like a rattlesnake is exploding in my ears—I can’t wait to get away from it. It cannot possibly be good! My head and hearing are too sensitive for such a scary roar. I can put up with a lot of things, but that’s not necessary, in my opinion.
Do you like me?	Yes, and I’ll like you even more when you get to know us, copy us, be like us, and become a member of our barnyard. I’ll be your guide; I’ll show you. I’ll teach you to be one of us, if you like.

Veteran Rating: 5

Veteran Comments:

- This was pretty accurate and useful information. What helped the most was her comment about my feeling cold and hard to her sometimes. Now I am consciously aware of my emotions when I’m with her and try to spend more time with her when I’m at the ranch.

Guardian’s Rating: 6

Guardian Comments:

- Such a wise filly for one so young in understanding her veteran. It also was a good reminder for me to make sure all the horses know up-front the job that I expect from them in working with the veteran. She did not realize that it was a job.
- White Lightening had wonderful advice for Alex, and Alex had some very hard questions for her. She is a very positive upbeat horse. This filly has a very bright future ahead of her, and I am very happy to have her as part of our herd.

Guardian’s Questions:

As outlined above, each horse was asked questions furnished by the guardians. Because of the restriction of paper length for publication, this information is not included but is available from the principal researcher upon request.



Guardian Summary Comments:

I am so *happy* with the results that I have seen and also for what an impact animal communication has been for this herd, and how much they benefited from it, as well as myself learning how better to prepare the horses and the veterans for equine therapy work.

In conclusion, this pilot program in animal (horse) communication was highly successful from a guardian's standpoint as well as for the veterans and the information that we were able to confirm or deny from the questions given to the horses by the animal communicators. The accuracy of the answers was extremely high, and also the medical benefits that were confirmed by a veterinarian who substantiated that what the horse communicated to the animal communicator was 100% accurate on who needed dental work and who did not.

Being that I live here with the horses 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, I know these horses very well and was even able to see the personalities of these horses in the answers given by the animal communicators. I only saw one answer that was totally wrong out of all of the questions, with Chance. I also did not have a clue that Frank was having tummy troubles again; I just thought he was being cranky, and once I put him back on his medications, his attitude changed immediately.

Horses do not show pain in a way that most of us see or realize. In my opinion, the use of an animal communicator has saved all the horses in my herd unnecessary pain in their daily lives, and we all thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your amazing skills in animal communication to make this herd of horses much happier and also understood.

As the training director for Hope for Heroes Equine Therapy Consulting, LLC, I have influence on many people and centers across the nation. I intend to make sure that animal communication be taken just as seriously as a farrier or veterinarian in meeting the needs of our wonderful partners, our horses. (Fisher, personal communication, December 11, 2015)

Discussion

Trauma recovery can be a long, psychologically painful journey to physical, mental, and emotional health. Human relationships are often irreparably damaged along the recovery path. Veterans who suffer in silence and do not have family or friends who help them seek therapy are the most vulnerable and have a 41% to 61% higher risk of suicide relative to the US general population (Kang, *et al.*, 2015). Duncan (2016) further observes, "100% of our referrals are from a veteran's spouse or partner. A veteran has never asked directly to attend the Can Praxis program."

Equine-assisted therapy, or equine-assisted learning programs specifically designed for PTSD and OSI, however, are helping wounded soldiers rise up from that terrifying dark place and into the light of health and healing. "Horses are super perceptive of the mental, social, and spiritual parts of people; they have a way of seeing into the soul and seeing where people are struggling. Horses are always 100% on—nobody can fool them" (Thompson, 2014, para. 7).

Max Planck, a German theoretical physicist and winner of the 1918 Nobel Prize in Physics for his quantum theory work observed scientific change, such as parapsychological research, is very challenging:

An important scientific innovation rarely makes its way rapidly winning over and converting its opponents; it rarely happens that Saul becomes Paul. What does happen is that its opponents gradually die out and that the growing generation is familiarized with the idea from the beginning. (Planck, 1936, p. 1)

Limitations of the Study & Directions for Future Research

Parapsychological research has significant challenges and limitations. As in all qualitative research, a limitation exists regarding participant bias and the truthfulness of the information received, as in this study from the veterans and guardians regarding their comments on the horse's responses. If the veterans or guardians felt positively about telepathic animal communication from their own seemingly



telepathic experiences with their horses, perhaps they would feel an obligation to respond with high ratings and positive commentary.

As described earlier, a communicator may intuitively receive a variety of impressions during a telepathic session; words, images, feelings, emotions, even sounds, tastes, or feel physiological pain. A further limitation is the interpretation of this information by the communicator into human written language for the purpose of documentation. Another limitation was the small sample size, and the loss of one veteran participant for their final rating and comments.

Perhaps the results could even be explained by so-called 'cold reading' methods. This is a collection of techniques used by psychics, fortune-tellers, mentalists, or mediums to imply that the reader seems to know much more than they actually do. The reader uses analysis of body language, age, clothing, hairstyle, gender, race or ethnicity to contribute to high-probability guesses by quickly recognizing signals as to the accuracy of their guesses. In this study both communicators were complete strangers to the horses, and were physically located in a different town from the horse during the session, but did receive the horse's name, breed, age, photograph (as shown above), veteran's name, veteran's questions, and guardian's questions prior to the session, which could have influenced the impressions received from the horse.

This was a small pilot that will contribute to a larger, more structured research effort to further determine the efficacy of telepathic animal communication contributing to equine therapy healing for veterans. Suggested future research design components to more effectively measure the value of animal communication for veterans could include:

- Larger sample size of veteran participants, possibly 30 to 40 veterans.
- Larger sample size of therapy horse participants across multiple therapy facilities with multiple guardians, including therapy horses who are assigned to multiple veterans at the same time.
- Utilizing the typical veteran's equine therapy program of eight to ten weeks.
- Applying a control group of veterans who are new to equine therapy and do not participate in the animal communication, versus a veteran's group new to equine therapy who do participate in the animal communication.
- Utilizing structured measurement instruments, such as the HOLSTER and BELT scales (Duncan *et al.*, 2014), or the Trauma Symptom Inventory (Briere, 2016).
- Before-and-after interview of all veterans, both control and non-controlled groups for qualitative data, as well as using the above instruments for quantitative data.

The findings of this research pilot appear to support the proposition that telepathic animal communication may offer an additional component to a veteran's healing process; five of the six responding veterans (83%) rated the communications results as exceedingly or extremely useful to their relationship with their horse. It allegedly enables the veteran to ask questions of, and to learn directly from their horse, about how they can improve and build the relationship together. The findings offer insight into the nuances and characteristics of their equine partner, as well as their wise and loving advice with specifics on how to continue their healing. Further research is recommended with a larger number of veteran participants and more structured instruments for analysis of animal communication benefits.

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