



## Therapeutic Horseback Riding

Horseback riding is an excellent way to have lots of fun in the outdoors and it also provides great opportunities for individuals to build special bonds with horses – one of the earth's most majestic creatures. Individuals with disabilities may think that they cannot learn how to horseback ride; however, this is simply not true. Persons with disabilities can enrol in therapeutic horseback riding lessons. Therapeutic horseback riding teaches individuals equestrian skills and horsemanship values. Overall, one of the primary goals of therapeutic riding is to enable individuals with disabilities to ride as independently as possible. There are lots of benefits to therapeutic riding. For example, according to United Cerebral Palsy,

([http://www.ucp.org/ucp\\_channel.doc.cfm/1/15/11383/11383-11383/2833](http://www.ucp.org/ucp_channel.doc.cfm/1/15/11383/11383-11383/2833)), therapeutic horseback riding enables individuals with disabilities to enjoy the physical benefits of riding, as well as the socio-emotional benefits of developing relationships with their horses. Some of the socio-emotional benefits include improved self-confidence, improved risk-taking abilities, development of patience, increased self-control, and the expansion of locus of control.

In order to maximize the positive benefits of riding, make sure to also keep in mind important safety tips. First, always wear a helmet. Too many individuals with traumatic brain injuries reinjure themselves by failing to wear protective headgear. Second, remember to also wear the appropriate attire. This means wear closed-toe running shoes or hiking boots, full-length pants, and sleeved shirts. And finally, actively listen to the instructors. They are the ones with the necessary experience and knowledge required to facilitate safe riding. And be sure to have FUN.

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