**Between Magic and the Mirror: the danger of deification or objectification when working with horses in Equine Assisted Services**

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy is growing in both prevalence and popularity and the efficacy of partnering humans with horses as part of their healing work is increasingly supported by research being done in the field. Among the many challenges facing this field is a lack of agreement about how horses actually support the healing work of their human clients and what role they play, or should play, in the transformative changes that occur. In order to protect both the humans and horses involved in EAP sessions, a clear understanding of the principles governing the psychology and physiology of each species and how these affect relational interactions is essential. While horses are amazing creatures with many wonderful qualities that make them natural partners in healing work, when their presence in session is described as "magical" we detract from the proven scientific evidence continually emerging from ongoing research in the field and make it more difficult to attract funding sources for further research as well insurance reimbursement for practitioners -- insurance companies reimburse for evidence based practices rather than magic! Similarly, labeling horses as mirrors reduces them to a one dimensional object rather than the living, breathing sentient being they truly are; animals that respond to, rather than reflect the humans they interact with.

Kathleen Choe is a Licensed Professional Counselor/Supervisor with a private practice in Austin, Texas. She is certified in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy through the EMDR International Association and in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy through the Natural Lifemanship Institute and enjoys combining these powerful specialties to serve people recovering from trauma, catastrophic loss, and toxic stress.

 HHRF Presentation "Between Magic and the Mirror" Research Citations

 Kathleen Choe, LPC-S

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