

English Abstracts

■ Willing to work? Riding therapy with horses trained by positive reinforcement

Lisa Tometten

A scientifically accepted theory about the teaching of new behaviors to horses is the learning by consequences (operant conditioning; e.g. Hendriksen/Elmgreen/Ladewig 2011; Innes/McBride 2008; Telatin et al. 2016). Negative reinforcement is widely used in practice but there seems to be a lack of concepts for the use of positive reinforcement in riding therapy. This study aims to relate education with mindfulness as well as understanding the effect of riding therapy with horses trained by positive reinforcement on people's emotional

state. Results show an increase of calmness and activation as well as a decrease of helplessness and negative emotions. The idea presented in this study seems to be appropriate for its use in riding therapy. No comparison with negative reinforcement can be made. Limitations, ideas for future research and practical implications will be discussed.

Key words: Riding therapy, positive reinforcement, learning theory, horse training, mindfulness, emotions

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