

How can horses and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) transform human health?

Elizabeth Warson, PhD, LPC, NCC, ATR-BC, EMDR-3, EAP-level 2
and

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A presentation for the Human-Animal Interaction Webinar
Series

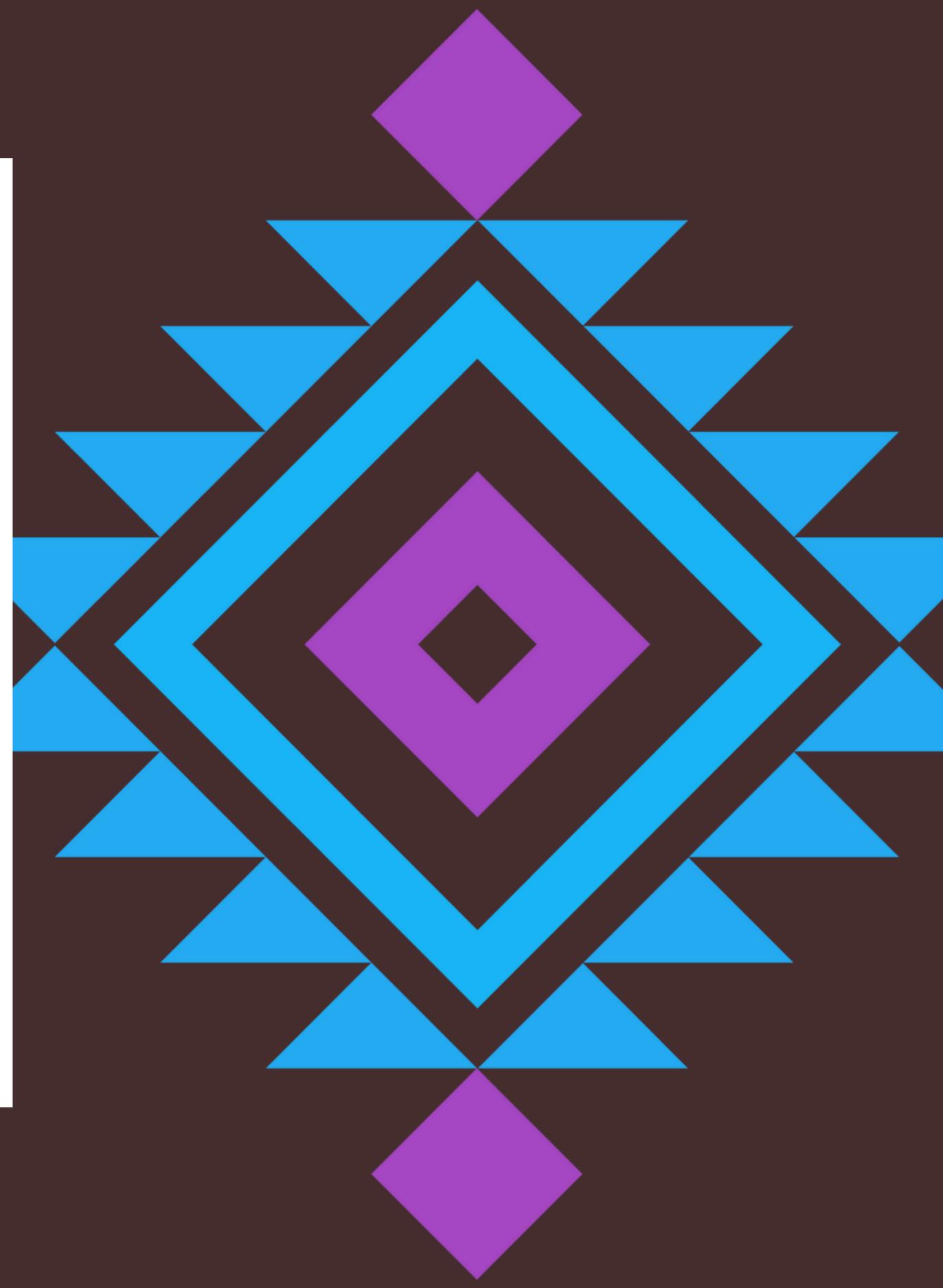
APA Division 17, Section 13

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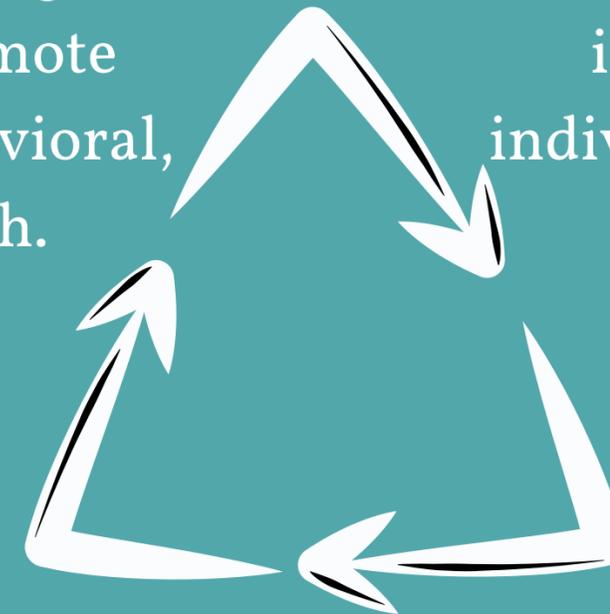
VISION

Practitioners

Guide others in ensuring the best outcome to promote physical, mental, behavioral, and spiritual health.

Researchers

Share effectiveness of interventions for individuals with specific conditions.



Caregivers

Provide insight into what they need for support.

Volunteers

Share why and how they contribute to creating safe environments.



PUBLISHED RESEARCH SCAN 1376 PUBLICATIONS

Removed equine assisted reproductive technologies papers

N = 1048

Databases searched: Agricola, CAB Abstracts, CINAHL, Embase, PubMed, SportsDiscus, WoS
References from 1940-May 2024

HORSE THERAPY*

EQUINE FACILITATED*

EQUINE ASSISTED*

GREY LITERATURE

Underserved Population*
(*articles may fall into several categories)

Mental Health Related*
(*articles can fall in several categories)

99 Disability
19 Rural

460 Mental Health
278 Psychotherapy
30 Counseling

9 Black or African American

111 Anxiety
62 Depression

4 Indigenous

0 EMDR with horses



The Partnership



Functional Impact

Child and Adolescent Needs & Strengths



- Outcome measure used widely in Behavioral Health, and Child Welfare care systems
- Beyond reduction of primary symptoms
- Considers both needs and strengths

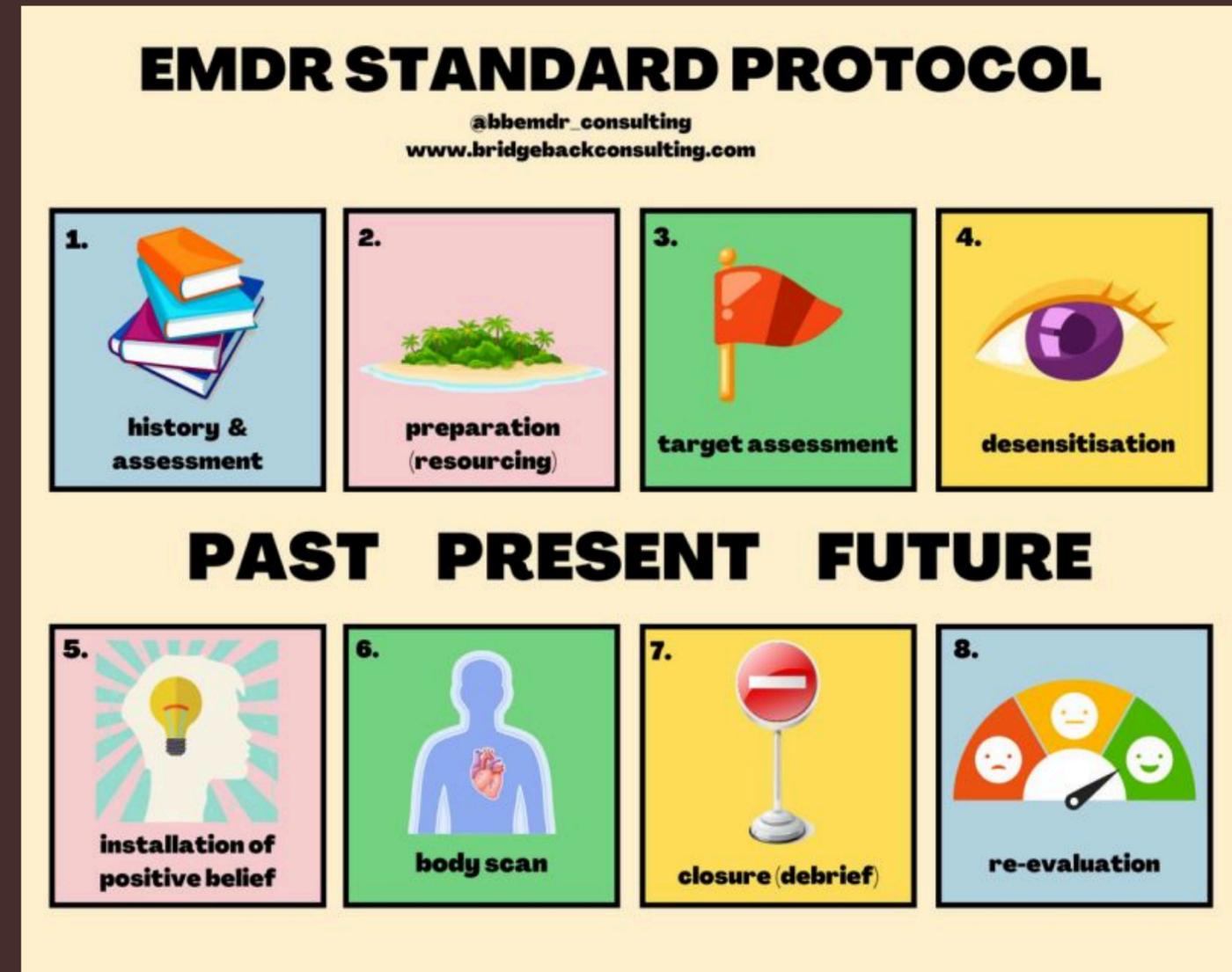
Domain	Items we are measuring	Scoring
Behavioral/Emotional Need	Depression Anxiety Oppositional Behavior (compliance with authority) Conduct	0 to 3, where scores of 2 or 3 mean action should be taken to reduce the need
Life Functioning Need	Family Social Functioning Developmental/Intellectual Decision Making School Behavior/Attendance/Achievement Activities of Daily Living Sleep	0 to 3, where scores of 2 or 3 mean action should be taken to reduce the need
Cultural Need	Language Tradition & Rituals Cultural Stress	0 to 3, where scores of 2 or 3 mean action should be taken to reduce the need
Strength	Family Interpersonal Educational Setting Talents/Interests Coping and Savoring Skills Spiritual/Religious Cultural Identity Community Life Resilience Use of Free Time Peer Influences	0 to 3, where scores of 2 or 3 mean action should be taken to build the strength

What is EMDR?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing

3-Pronged, 8-Phase Approach

EMDR is a structured therapy that encourages the patient to focus briefly on the trauma memory while simultaneously experiencing bilateral stimulation (typically eye movements), which is associated with a reduction in the vividness and emotion associated with the trauma memories (EMDRRIA, 2024).



Equine-Assisted EMDR

Created by Sarah Jenkins, MC, LPC

EquiLateral:

The Equine-Assisted EMDR Protocol™

EA-EMDR combines EAP and EMDR Therapy. Using an experiential approach, EMDR therapy integrates with equine-assisted interactions to become Equine-Assisted EMDR (EA-EMDR).



EA-EMDR Common Positions



EA-EMDR Phase 2: Calm/Safe Place--CASE 1



Case-study with a 56-year individual presenting with traumatic symptoms and a history of head trauma using the EA-EMDR (unmounted; unpublished data).

CASE 1: EA-EMDR Compared to EAP

The participant engaged in four therapy sessions using the following mixed sequence of approaches:

Session 1: EA-EMDR focused on resource skill building with an equine specialist and mental health professional

Sessions 2&3: standard EAP with a mental health professional

Session 4: EA-EMDR with an equine specialist and mental health professional



CASE 1: EA-EMDR Compared to EAP

Major Findings

- HR was reduced in both approaches
- EA-EMDR had a larger magnitude of reduction of 10 beats per minute, compared to EAP at 5 beats per minute.

Conclusions

- We can effectively offer EA-EMDR
- We have documented that EA-EMDR may be associated with feelings of calm and safe places better than EAP alone.



EA-EMDR Phase 2: Safe/Calm State

Case 2

8-year-old indigenous girl

- Diagnosed in January 2024 with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Initial **CANS** completed March, 2024
- Attended 3 out of 5 EA-EMDR sessions
- **Strengths Domain:** Demonstrated strengths in all items
- **Cultural Factors:** Although from a divorced biracial family she did not demonstrate actionable need
- **Behavioral/Emotional Needs:** Needs were demonstrated in items of impulsivity/hyperactivity, oppositional, and attachment difficulties, (psychosis and substance use: NA)



The Weld Trust Grant
(program evaluation--unpublished
data)

Case 2: Measure

The Positive Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF)



The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule SF

(PANAS SF; Watson et al., 1988)

Participant initials:

MH and ES initials:

Session date & number

EAP model:

Pre or Post (circle)

Positive score:

Negative score:

PANAS Questionnaire

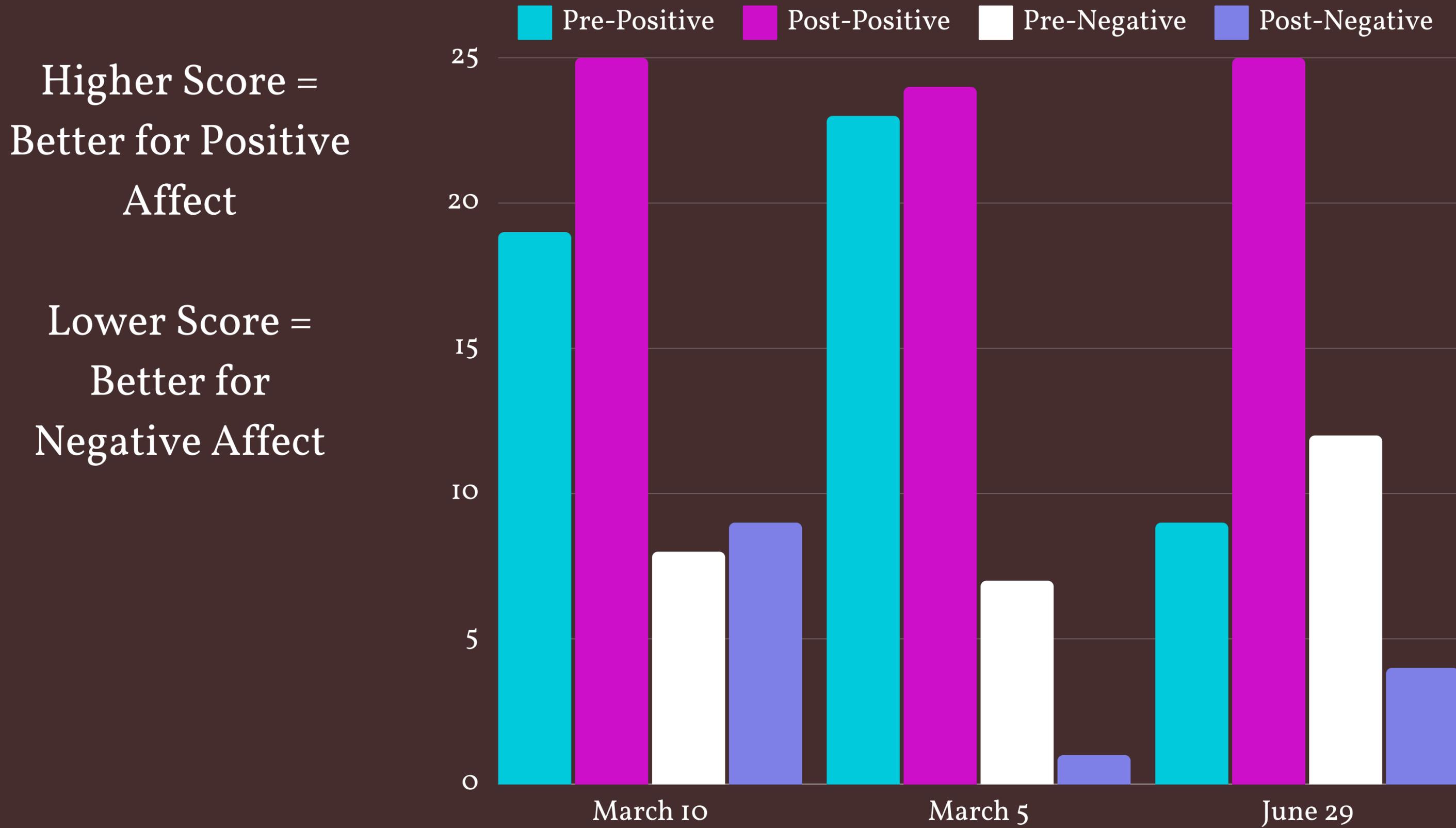
This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then list the number from the scale below next to each word. **Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment OR indicate the extent you have felt this way over the past week (circle the instructions you followed when taking this measure)**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Slightly or Not at All	A Little	Moderately	Quite a Bit	Extremely

_____ 1. Active	_____ 1. Hostile
_____ 2. Attentive	_____ 2. Ashamed
_____ 3. Alert	_____ 3. Upset
_____ 4. Determined	_____ 4. Afraid
_____ 5. Inspired	_____ 5. Nervous

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Case 2: Preliminary PANAS-SF Findings



Case 2: Observational Findings

Resourcing experiences that felt good

For example, laying on the horse bareback with direct contact feels good while facing the hind.

During the June session, she spontaneously started tapping after we removed the bareback pad, positioned her to face the hind face down.

Resourcing this "felt sense" enabled her to slow down, respond with less opposition, and breathe with the horse.

This type of mounted close contact appears to be a form of co-regulation with the horse.



CASE Study 3

20-year-old client (indigenous) who participated in EA-EMDR unmounted and moved to mounted.

Resourcing her dog (ESA) with BLS: standard tapping on horse and then bilateral movement.

She experienced an emotional release and was tearful for the majority of the session, which was significant as the person experiences dissociation and shut down frequently (cPTSD).

For her, phase 2 resourcing was helpful in pendulating and titrating "pent up emotions" with emotional connection with her dog (visualization) and physical connection on a horse (bareback pad)



Open Discussion

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