

Health, Healing & Hope with Horses

Helping people grow and change since 1993

Calendar Events:

- ♦ **Who am I?**
Therapeutic group for adolescent girls
Thursdays,
Sept. 20—Oct. 25
3:00-4:00 p.m.
- ♦ **Mother's Morning Meeting**
Coffee & doughnuts
Wednesdays,
Sept. 26—Oct. 31
9:30 - 10:30 a.m.
- ♦ **1-2-3-Magic Parenting Program**
Wednesdays,
Nov. 1—Nov. 29
7:00 - 8:00 p.m.
- ♦ **Children of Divorce Group**
To Be Announced



Blazing New Trails



The Strain Family Equestrian Center owned by Christina Strain LCSW/LICSW

Christina Strain, LCSW (CT)/LICSW (MA) has been a certified special education teacher since 1993 and a psychiatric social worker since 1999, working with children, adults and families. She has extensive skills and experience working with individuals and families with the following life experiences:

- ♦ Anxiety Disorders
- ♦ Depression
- ♦ Behavior Disorders
- ♦ Adjustment Disorders
- ♦ Sexual/Physical Abuse
- ♦ Family Intervention
- ♦ Divorce Issues
- ♦ Learning Disorders

Through Christina's work both as a special education teacher and a psychiatric social worker, she has discovered the positive effects and innovative techniques of involving animals as partners within the therapeutic setting. Animals provide the individual an opportunity to experience and develop many positive skills. These interactions incorporate the power of the

animal, the clinical skills of the therapist, and the challenges, dreams and hopes of the individual working with the animal. This partnership provides an opportunity to promote psychosocial healing and growth through: increased self-esteem, increased self-confidence, improved impulse control, improved verbal/nonverbal communication skills, trust, empathy, mutual respect, responsibility and enhancing psychological development, growth and education.

In 1998, Christina and her husband established The Strain Family Equestrian Center in Southwick, MA., teaching traditional horseback riding lessons, boarding and the training of horses. Over the years, Christina began to involve animals in her clinical work. The natural setting of the barn provides a relaxing and comfortable therapeutic experience for many people. With her many horses, her cat, Harley, and dog, Kaley, clients engage on a dynamic, individualized treatment intervention, whether working with one or all of her animals at some point in their therapeutic journey.

Taking the Lead

When we think of therapeutic horseback riding, we often envision physically challenged individuals riding. However, the many benefits achieved through these equine partnerships have evolved to incorporate horses for individuals with emotional and mental health needs.

Therapeutic riding organizations such as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA), have developed programs to integrate horses with individuals who have no physical limitations. One such therapeutic program is known as Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy, (EFP). EFP is an experiential treatment approach, which incorporates horses in an individual's clinical treatment.

Therapeutic interventions may include, but are not limited to, mounted and un-mounted activities such as grooming, leading, riding and horse behavior. What makes EFP unique from other forms of therapeutic riding programs is that it is facilitated by a licensed, credentialed mental health professional working with, or who also is, a certified riding instructor.

Christina is credentialed as a LCSW/LICSW and also a licensed riding instructor. Through Christina's program, individuals will experience and develop the following: goal setting,

sensory stimulation and integration, patience,

frustration tolerance, strategies in solving problems, internal rewards, memory skills and attention.

Working with horses allows for individuals to reveal their true selves in a non-threatening environment, allowing them to put away all pretenses and facades and to begin to establish trust and respect for the horse and themselves. This partnership creates a sense of achievement and pride within individuals who often feel isolated and insecure in other areas of their life. The bond that develops between horse and rider inspires a sense of teamwork, responsibility, communication, caring and joy.

Research studies have found that "interacting with horses requires development of communication skills such as being clear and unambiguous. This may be seen as a skill related to social competence and control." (Traeen, Wang., Journal of Equine Veterinary Science, Oct. 2006). Sir Winston Churchill once observed that "The outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man." Sir Winston's famous remark was a huge understatement. The benefits of riding or working with horses on the ground can extend from developmentally disabled adults to autism sufferers, at-risk youths and psychotherapy patients. Those who are willing to explore this alternative approach will truly reap the benefits.

For more information, please visit our website: www.healthhealhope.com

Known Physical Benefits:

- ◆ Balance
- ◆ Coordination
- ◆ Visual/spatial orientation
- ◆ Muscle strength
- ◆ Gross motor
- ◆ Sensory integration/stimulation



Sara learns how to effectively communicate with Ace.

Psychological/Emotional Benefits :

- ◆ Gain a sense of empowerment
- ◆ Improved interpersonal relationships
- ◆ Increased concentration
- ◆ Reduce stress/anxiety
- ◆ Increased self-control
- ◆ Develop positive problem solving skills
- ◆ Increased sequencing/ organization skills

Family Downtime



Family fun that everyone enjoys and finds relaxing!

Shut the world out: Try a Friday Night Party, during which you can do marathons of activities at home—watching movies back-to-back, buckets of popcorn in hand; playing child-friendly board games; having family slumber parties in the living room. Anything goes as long as it's inexpensive and you're focusing on each other and being happy.

Mess with meals: Just as children find comfort in routines, they also take special delight in seeing those routines turned on their heads. So one way to change the family routine is to tweak something you do every day; eat. Everybody gets to eat whatever they want, no questions asked (junk food is allowed). The only rule is that everyone has to pick from what's already in the refrigerator (or from takeout menus, if the cupboard is bare); that way, no one has to make grocery-store runs or pick up dinner. Relax! One night will be neither harmful nor habit-forming, just a much-needed cooking break for you and something memorable your family did together.

Expand your hobby: Our tendency as parents is to send children off to do their own thing when we're busy with ours. But by co-opting their enthusiasm you can create family time out of something you love. In the end, you'll have all done something you enjoyed, and the end product will be a fitting tribute to your time together.

Just play: Bowling. Touch football. Kickball. They're all sports activities that children and the child in us can have fun with starting at very young ages. You'll get your hearts pumping and collapsing together in exhaustion afterwards can be a nice time for a quiet family chat (or nap). *Have fun together!*

Mother's Morning Meeting Time For YOU!

See website for more information about our groups

Mom's come and enjoy some time to yourself and relax in a barn setting with other Mom's. This is a time to talk about issues that Mom's deal with on a daily basis.

Topics of Focus:

- ♦ Juggling marriage, family and keeping your sanity
- ♦ Parenting-questions and concerns
- ♦ How to cope with stress positively and effectively
- ♦ Relaxation techniques
- ♦ Personal interests

You deserve this opportunity to rejuvenate and do some thing good for your mind and spirit! Meetings held on Wednesdays starting September 26th at 9:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m. Meetings held for four weeks. Coffee & doughnuts provided! Call (860) 539-5369 to sign-up.

www.healthhealhope.com

Solving Family Conflicts

"It's my turn for the shower!" "No, it's my turn!" When your children can't figure out how to resolve their conflicts peacefully, share this step-by-step plan. You'll not only solve the problem at hand, you'll also teach your children a way to work out future disputes.

1. **Call a meeting.** Pick a calm time and place to sit down together, such as in the dining room after dinner.
2. **State the problem.** Quietly describe the problem in a way that doesn't place blame. "I've heard Amanda and Sean arguing about who will use the shower first on school mornings."
3. **Listen to everyone.** Let both children tell their versions of the story, using polite language. Sharing viewpoints will help each person see the other one's side.
4. **Find a solution.** Ask each child to suggest solutions. Help find one that everyone can agree on. Maybe they can alternate getting up 10 minutes earlier to shower first, or one of them could shower at bedtime instead of in the morning.

Adapted from www.reonline.com

Raising Good Sports

You can teach your child to be a good sport by being one yourself. When you attend a game, clap and cheer for players who try hard, even if they're on the other team. You'll help your youngster learn to be gracious to everyone in the game.

Adapted from www.reonline.com



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18 Vining Hill Road
Southwick, MA 01077

Our mission is to provide children & adults with a fun and rewarding therapeutic experience through the many benefits of interacting with horses.

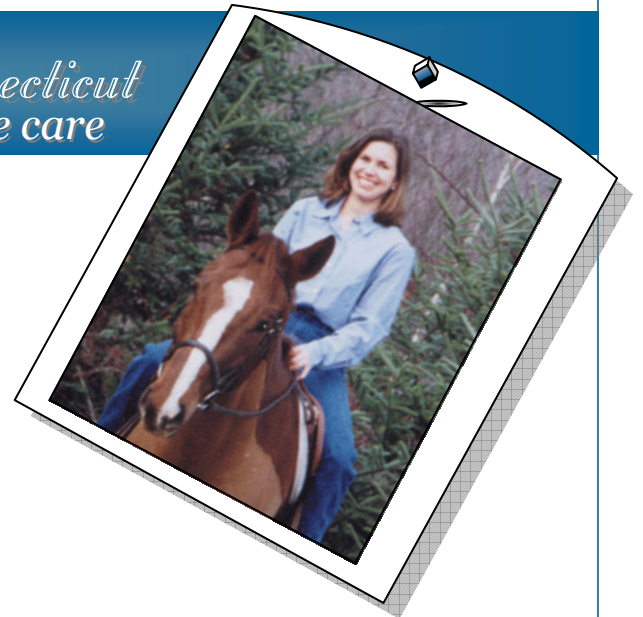
*Serving Massachusetts & Connecticut
with competent and compassionate care*

Massachusetts

Christina M. Strain, LICSW
18 Vining Hill Road
Southwick, MA 01077
Phone: (860) 539-5369
Email: cstrain@healthhealhope.com
Website: www.healthhealhope.com

Connecticut

Christina M. Strain, LCSW
133 Hartford Avenue - *Office only*
P.O. Box 795
Granby, CT 06035
Phone: (860) 539-5369



♦ *Please call Christina for information
and to schedule an appointment.*

Visit us on the web:

♦ healthhealhope.com ♦ ridewithconfidence.com ♦ strainfamilyequestrian.com