



Established
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Riding Ring to Collaborative Practice: The Healing Powers of Equine-Assisted Therapy

When I was first introduced to equine-assisted therapy, I jumped at the chance to learn how it can support families in the collaborative practice. The collaborative practice includes professionals, such as a coach, financial neutral, psychologist, and lawyers, whose interests are aligned to help families achieve the best outcome. The families retain control over decisions rather than handing the family's future over to a courtroom. We believe in a "Gentle Divorce" as described in our latest article published in the [Hong Kong Collaborative Practice Group \(HKCPG\) newsletter](#).

[Dr. Melanie Bryan](#), a clinical psychologist, couples & family therapist and collaborative practitioner, related a story from her a traumatized teenage client, who Dr. Melanie helped to rebalance her emotions and relationships via horse-back riding. I believe having a psychologist who employs evidence-informed methods, such as equine-assisted therapy, can support parents in managing their emotions and making balanced decisions for the family. "My goal is to protect, foster and maintain harmony between family members," Dr. Melanie.

What is Equine-Assisted Therapy?

Equine-assisted therapy is a guided, experiential form of therapy that utilizes horses as a therapeutic tool. In the case of traumatized children, it helps them by providing a calm, nonjudgmental setting where a horse's gentle feedback and guided activities build confidence, trust, and communication—turning overwhelming feelings into coping skills.

What are the Benefits of Equine-Assisted Therapy?

In my research, I discovered that equine-assisted therapy offers a whole-child, whole-family approach that complements the empathy and structure of Collaborative Practice. For example, sessions are hands-on and engaging, which keeps children invested in learning skills they can generalize to transitions and routines. Physically, barn-based activities such as grooming, leading, and guiding a horse through simple obstacles improve coordination, balance, and motor skills. Mentally and emotionally, the horse's natural "mirroring" helps children and adults recognize their feelings and communication styles.





Within this calm, non-judgmental feedback loop, children can build self-esteem, process trauma, and rebuild trust. The arena provides a safe environment for exploring complex feelings without shame; calming the child to directly shape parenting plans, de-escalate conflict, and help families retain control of decisions while keeping children's needs at the center of the discussion when making hard decisions. Horses, being highly sensitive to human emotions, help them recognize behavioural patterns and relational dynamics.

Where Can I Learn More About Equine-Assisted Therapy?

In Hong Kong, the [Riding for the Disabled Association of Hong Kong](#) (RDA Hong Kong) is a non-profit organization founded in 1975 and supported by the Hong Kong Jockey Club. They are dedicated to providing therapeutic riding lessons to individuals with physical and mental disabilities. They provide free riding lessons to children and adults with disabilities, aiming to offer therapeutic benefits through interaction with horses.

[Camino Recovery](#), located in Spain, also offers Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP). The program helps individuals recovering from trauma, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. The clients engage in ground-based activities that foster emotional awareness and empathy.

At [Cooley Family Office](#), we actively source creative solutions to help families through difficult times. Collaborative practice and equine-assisted therapy are a few examples. As always, our mission is to protect love and wealth across generations.



Warmest wishes,
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Cooley Family Office

The mission of Pacific Hawk is to protect love and wealth across generations.

Pacific Hawk was founded in 1997 by Ann Cooley. Pacific Hawk maintains long-term relationships with clients by offering bespoke investment and wealth protection solutions, including Pacific Hawk Global Fund OFC, investment advisory, family/business mediation, and collaboration services. With Ann's unique qualifications as a JD, CFP, Family Mediator, and Collaborative Practice negotiator, she has helped families in New York, London, and Hong Kong including the Rothschild, Rockefeller, and Cadbury families.

Please visit our website www.pacifichawk.com or [LinkedIn](#)

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