

# Emotional physical and mental benefit of horseback riding essay



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- Overall sense of wellbeing: Horseback riding is a great combination of cardiovascular and muscle-strengthening exercise. As we have discussed in previous articles, regular exercise imparts various psychological benefits.
- Increased self-confidence: The idea of being able to control an animal much larger than ourselves improves our self-confidence. Adding a new skill to our repertoire also increases our sense of self worth.
- Decreased stress: When you engage in horseback riding, you need to focus on the nuances of the entire ritual and process.

This helps take your mind off mundane worries, which in turn relieves stress.

- Improved focus: For me, the most eye-opening aspects of horseback riding are the subtle details that are involved in every step of the process, from preparing the horse for the ride all the way to dismounting the horse. All of this not only requires significant focus but also helps cultivate better focus.
- Improved self-discipline: The art of horse care and horseback riding is a great example of inter-species communication. Every nuance of our behavior affects the horse's behavior.

Therefore, in order to be a good rider, you must cultivate the self-discipline to modulate your own behavior e. g. : smooth breathing, overall calmness, etc.

- Improved patience: Horseback riding requires learning a whole new set of skills which takes time. And getting to understand the psychology of horses is a process too. So, by riding horses regularly, we can learn to be more patient which is a desirable quality.
- A sense of freedom and elation: I can tell you from my own experience that being able to ride a horse, a much bigger and powerful creature, gives me a sense of elation and freedom.

I know of many people who have had the same experience. • A sense of teamwork, responsibility and social networking: Working with a group of people (e. g. : trainers, fellow riders, etc. ) towards the same goal teaches us the value of teamwork and responsibility. This is especially important for children. Additionally, children enjoy the opportunity to develop a healthier social network which is less likely to lead them to troubles. • Development of respect for animals: I believe every human should show respect for our fellow animals.

Horseback riding definitely makes us aware of the amazing abilities and sensibilities of horses thus creating a renewed respect for animals. • Improved risk-taking abilities: Since riding is clearly a risk sport, the process of becoming an accomplished rider teaches us how to manage potential risks judiciously. • Therapeutic riding: Horseback riding has been used since the 50? s, with much success, in helping physically disabled people to improve their physical and emotional health. This is described as therapeutic riding. Emotionally disabled people are also known to benefit from therapeutic riding.

For example, autistic children are known to focus better and even utter their first spoken words while on the back of a horse. • Safety comes first: Please be careful in choosing a training farm and/or a trainer. Attention to the safety of people and animals is paramount; and wearing a helmet is a must.

(<http://medinagazette.northcoastnow.com/2010/07/21/the-psychology-of-horseback-riding/>) Psychological Benefits \* General sense of well-being.

Exercise in the fresh air of a ranch, away from hospitals, doctors office, therapy rooms, or home help to promote a sense of well-being. Improved  
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self-confidence Confidence is gained by mastering a skill normally performed by able-bodied people. The ability to control an animal much larger and stronger than oneself is a great confidence builder. Participating in events such as shows and play days add to the sense of achievement. \* Increased interest in the outside world. For those confined by a disability, the world tends to shrink in size. Riding increases interest in what is happening around the rider, as the rider explores the world from the back of a horse. Even exercising becomes interesting when done on horseback. Increased interest in one's own life. The excitement of riding and the experiences involved stimulate the rider, encouraging the rider to speak and communicate about it. \* Improved risk-taking abilities. Riding is a risk sport. The rider learns to master fears through the act of staying on the horse, as well as attempting new skills and positions on the horse. \* Development of patience. Since the horse has a mind of its own, the rider learns patience as he or she attempts to perform skills on the horse when the horse is not cooperating.

Repetition of basic riding principles also helps to develop patience. \*

Emotional control and self-discipline. The rider quickly learns that an out-of-control rider means an out-of-control horse. Shouting, crying, and emotional outbursts upset the horse, which in turn frightens the rider. Riders learn to control these emotions and appropriately express them. \* Sense of normality. By being able to master a skill considered difficult by the able population, the rider experiences him/herself as being normal. \* Expansion of the locus of control.

The rider begins to view him/herself as having control over his/her world as control over a powerful animal increases. (<http://www.strides.org/psycho.https://assignbuster.com/emotional-physical-and-mental-benefit-of-horseback-riding-essay/>)

html) \* Friendship. Although riding can be a solitary activity, it is normally performed in groups. Riders share a common love of horses and a common experience of riding — a good foundation on which to build a friendship. \* Development of respect and love for animals. Horses require a great deal of care and attention. Riders find themselves bonding with the animals. They develop an interest in them and learn to care for them.

They learn to put the needs of the horse first. \* Increased experiences. The variety of experiences involved in riding are endless. From tacking and grooming to trail riding, from going to horse shows to learning the parts of a horse, the rider is constantly experiencing and growing. The horse also provides the rider with the ability to go places otherwise inaccessible due to the disability. \* Enjoyment. There is no doubt about it, riding a horse is fun. Riders experience excitement and pleasure every time they come for a lesson. (<http://www.strides.org/social.html>) Physical Benefits \* Improved balance.

As the horse moves, the rider is constantly thrown off-balance, requiring that the rider's muscles contract and relax in an attempt to rebalance. This exercise reaches deep muscles not accessible in conventional physical therapy. The three-dimensional rhythmical movement of the horse is similar to the motion of walking, teaching rhythmical patterns to the muscles of the legs and trunk. By placing the rider in different positions on the horse (therapeutic vaulting), we can work different sets of muscles. Stopping and starting the horse, changing speed and changing direction increase the benefits. Strengthened muscles. Muscles are strengthened by the increased use involved in riding. Even though riding is exercise, it is perceived as <https://assignbuster.com/emotional-physical-and-mental-benefit-of-horseback-riding-essay/>

enjoyment, and therefore the rider has increased tolerance and motivation to lengthen the period of exercise. \* Improved coordination, faster reflexes, and better motor planning. Riding a horse requires a great deal of coordination in order to get the desired response from the horse. Since the horse provides instant feedback to every action by the rider, it is easy to know when you have given the correct cue.

Repetition of patterned movements required in controlling a horse quickens the reflexes and aids in motor planning. \* Stretching of tight or spastic muscles. Sitting on a horse requires stretching of the adductor muscles of the thighs. This is accomplished by pre-stretching prior to mounting the horse, and starting the rider off on a narrow horse, gradually working to wider and wider horses. Gravity helps to stretch the muscles in front of the leg as the rider sits on the horse without stirrups. Riding with stirrups with heels level or down helps to stretch the heel cords and calf muscles.

Stomach and back muscles are stretched as the rider is encouraged to maintain an upright posture against the movement of the horse. Arm and hand muscles are stretched as part of routine exercises on the horse and by the act of holding and using the reins. \* Decreased spasticity. Spasticity is reduced by the rhythmic motion of the horse. The warmth of the horse may aid in relaxation, especially of the legs. Sitting astride a horse helps to break up extensor spasms of the lower limbs. Holding the reins helps to break flexor spasm patterns of the upper limbs.

Many of the developmental vaulting positions are also designed to break up or reduce spasticity. Fatigue also helps to decrease spasticity by producing

relaxation. \* Increased range of motion of the joints. As spasticity is reduced, range of motion increases. Range of motion is also improved by the act of mounting and dismounting, tacking up, grooming, and exercises during lessons. \* Reduction of abnormal movement patterns. If spasticity is reduced and range of motion increased, it follows that abnormal movements will be inhibited.

Relaxation techniques while riding also help to inhibit abnormal movement. \* Improved respiration and circulation. Although riding is not normally considered a cardiovascular exercise, trotting and cantering do increase both respiration and circulation. \* Improved appetite and digestion. Like all forms of exercise, riding stimulates the appetite. The digestive tract is also stimulated, increasing the efficiency of digestion. \* Sensory integration. Riding stimulates the tactile senses both through touch and environmental stimuli.

The vestibular system is also stimulated by the movement of the horse, changes in direction and speed. The olfactory system responds to the many smells involved in a stable and ranch environment. Vision is used in control of the horse. The many sounds of a ranch help to involve the auditory system. All of these senses work together and are integrated in the act of riding. In addition, proprioceptors ( receptors that give information from our muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints) are activated, resulting in improved proprioception. (<http://www.strides.org/physical.html>)