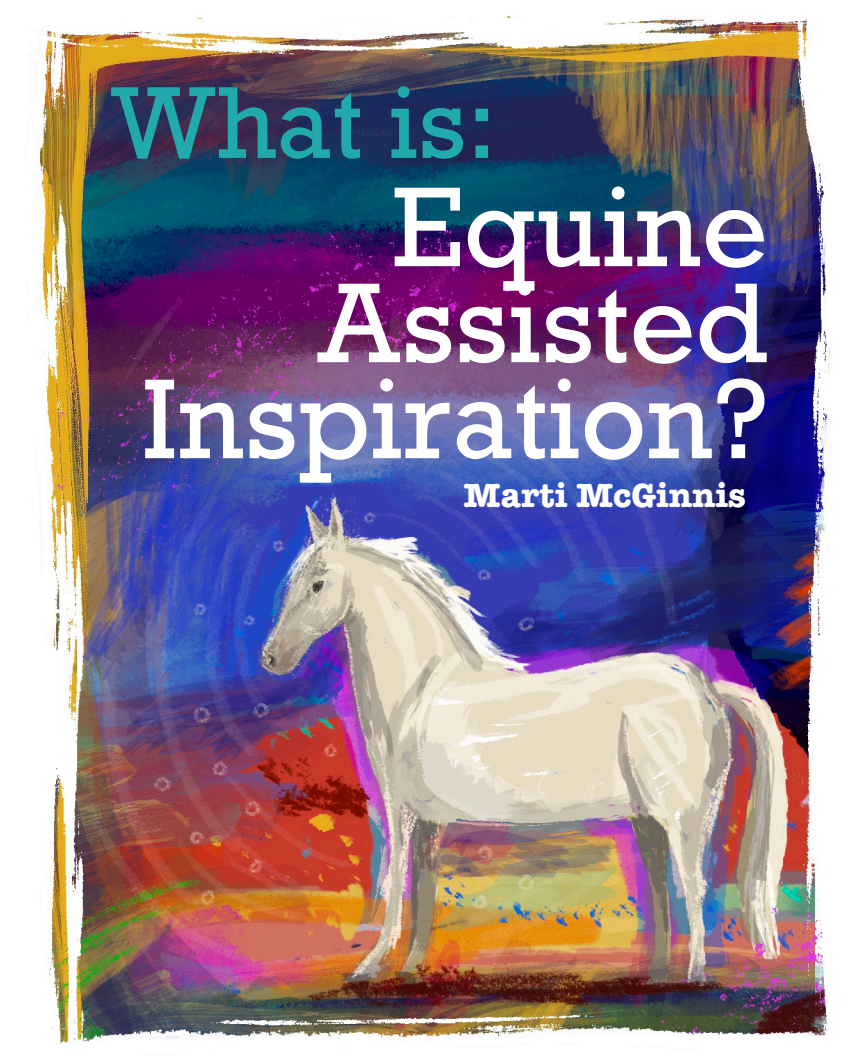
What is: Equine Assisted Inspiration?

Marti McGinnis

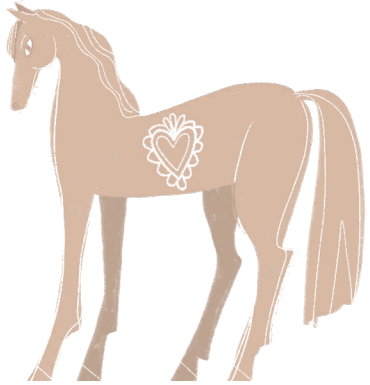


What if...?

What if spending time with a horse could open the door to something unexpected?

What if we could slow down, pay attention, explore our responses, and discover something about ourselves without being told what we're supposed to find?

What if the experience itself was enough to begin?



So, what is EAI?

Equine Assisted Inspiration is an experiential approach to personal exploration, learning, and creative discovery through meaningful encounters with horses.

It brings together observation, interaction, movement, reflection, somatic awareness, and creative expression.

It offers opportunities to notice, explore, and discover—without prescribing what someone should experience or learn.



Not just another horse activity

EAI isn't simply an equine-assisted learning exercise followed by a creative activity.

Creativity isn't an embellishment or a reward for completing an exercise.

Creative reflection isn't a test to see whether someone learned the intended lesson.

The encounter, the exploration, the making, the noticing, and the discovering are interconnected parts of the experience.



The horse is a partner

Horses are not props, teaching tools, or instruments for producing human insights.

They are living beings with their own preferences, horse-onalities (like personalities), boundaries, and responses.

We respect their agency, allow them space to be themselves, and remain curious about what unfolds between us.



The foundations: How I approach the experience

No horse whispering required
I don't assign human meanings to horse behavior.

A horse moving closer, moving away, standing still, or wandering off doesn't come with a built-in interpretation.

We don't need to turn every moment into a metaphor. Sometimes a horse is simply being a horse.

And that's rather wonderful.

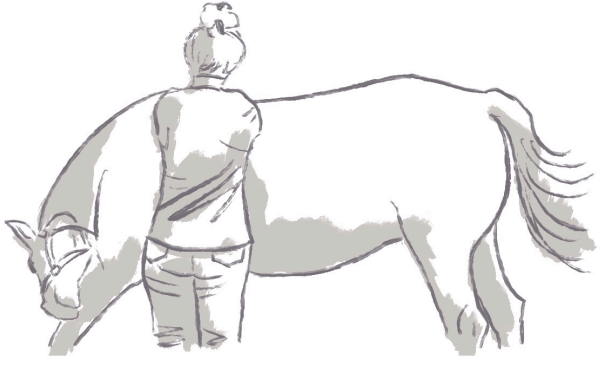
People are people, not projects

EAI draws on a person-centered philosophy.

Each participant is welcomed with respect, acceptance, and Unconditional Positive Regard.

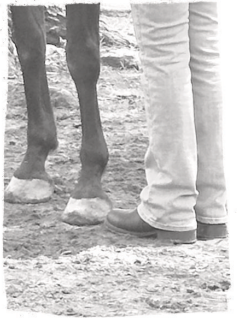
There is no expectation to be brave, insightful, expressive, or particularly good at anything.

You get to arrive as you are.



The body has a voice

So much of what we experience doesn't arrive as a narrative. It may come as a sensation, a sudden jolt of emotion, an intuition, or a gut feeling.



We may notice a change in breathing, tension, balance, movement, energy, or an impulse to approach or retreat.

EAI makes ample room for these embodied experiences.

In fact, we deliberately keep interpretation and narration to a minimum, allowing somatic responses to emerge and be noticed before they're translated into familiar words or explanations.

Sometimes what we feel knows something before we know how to say it.

Don't hurry the discovery

Silence isn't empty time. Stillness isn't inactivity. Sometimes we need to watch, feel, move, pause, or simply be.

EAI allows ample room for an experience to settle before asking it to become a story.



Creating the conditions

As a facilitator, I thoughtfully design each experience, consider the needs and safety of both people and horses, and offer opportunities for exploration.

Good facilitation doesn't mean controlling every moment. Quite the opposite. Giving space for the unplanned is where the alchemy lies.

I prepare carefully, pay attention, and allow room for the unexpected.



Clean language, curious minds

The words my co-facilitators and I use matter.

We listen carefully, stay close to the participant's own language, and ask questions that invite exploration rather than suggest answers.



Instead of deciding what someone felt, we might ask:

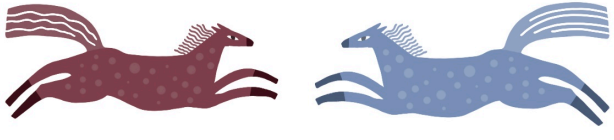
"What did you notice?"
"What was happening for you?"
"And what else?"

No borrowed interpretations

We don't tell participants what their experiences mean for them.

We don't assign emotions, identify lessons, or explain what a horse was supposedly communicating. We may, however, draw attention to an aspect of the horse's behavior or an interaction that a participant may not have noticed.

The distinction is that we offer the observation, not the interpretation. What it means, if anything, is for the participant to explore. We offer space for participants to explore their own reactions, thoughts, feelings, and associations.



The meaning belongs to you



There is no one correct, prescribed, or expected answer to an EAI experience.

Simply making the time and space to step outside familiar routines, slow down, and pay attention can be meaningful in itself. You may notice something you've never quite noticed before, discover something new, revisit something familiar, encounter a question, or change your mind.

You may find something that stays with you, or discover that nothing in particular needs explaining.

Your experience belongs to you. So does the meaning you make of it.

The possibilities: What can emerge?

Creativity is part of the process.



Making marks, writing, assembling, movement, and working with creative materials can offer ways to explore experiences that may not yet have words.

Creative expression isn't necessarily what happens after discovery.

Sometimes the act of creating is where discovery begins.

There is more than one way in



An EAI experience might include observing a herd, moving alongside a horse, exploring an invitation, noticing patterns, experimenting with balance, creating something, or finding stillness. There may also be opportunities for gentle discussion, with attention to bodily sensations, emerging feelings, and whatever participants themselves notice along the way.

Creative exploration offers another way to engage with an experience—to give form to a sensation, explore an impression, or follow a curiosity without necessarily having to explain or narrate it.

There is no single recipe. Each experience is thoughtfully designed around its intentions, its place in the arc of the day, the people taking part, and, of course, our equine partners.

Learning, growth, and therapeutic value

EAI is not a clinical model, nor is it simply another name for equine-assisted learning or coaching. I coined the term Equine Assisted Inspiration to describe an approach that brings horses, human experience, and creative exploration together in distinctive ways.

Sometimes an experience brings something important into view, where that exploration calls for clinical support, collaboration with an appropriately qualified professional can provide a pathway forward.

No two experiences are ever quite the same. Returning to this kind of exploration over time can reveal new dimensions, deepen awareness, and open possibilities that weren't apparent before.

An invitation

What might become possible when you make room for genuine encounters, slow down enough to notice what you're experiencing, and allow discovery to unfold in its own time?

What might you notice when you step outside your familiar routines and give yourself permission to be curious, to feel, to explore, and perhaps to see something differently?

There is no particular destination you need to reach, no lesson you must take away, and no expectation that every experience will reveal something profound.

The invitation is simply to be present, to pay attention, and to see what unfolds.

The conditions are created.
There is room for the experience to become.
The discovery belongs to you.

charcoal horse

Equine Assisted Inspiration

www.happyart.com/charcoalhorse

A little about this zine

A zine (pronounced zeen) is a small, independently produced publication made to share ideas, discoveries, and creative explorations. This one introduces Equine Assisted Inspiration (EAI), an approach to personal exploration and creative discovery developed through my work with horses and people.

I'm Marti, an artist, equine specialist, and lifelong explorer of the connections between creativity, human experience, and the natural world. I developed EAI to bring these interests together in a distinctive way, creating opportunities for people to slow down, explore, and discover what becomes possible in the company of horses.



Thanks for taking a little time to explore it with me.