



EQUUSOMA®
HORSE-HUMAN TRAUMA RECOVERY

EQUUSOMA® Level 1 Assignment

Create a curriculum for a 2-day workshop or clinic that incorporates EQUUSOMA® material that you've learned to date. It would be ambitious and likely impossible to include everything you have learned to date in your event; rest assured that this is not the expectation. Rather, focus on creating a curriculum that holds together well and provides a focused experience within which you can hold specific intentions about where you will place your attention.

Titrate what you attempt to include so that the curriculum also reflects your existing capacity. Less is more. What you integrate will also reflect your current scope of practice, social license to practice, level of familiarity with the material, degree of comfort with somatic/embodiment practices, how far you have gone in your own personal process work, the scope of the curriculum, and your goals for the workshop/clinic. Of course, the participants and horses will also determine how things go as well.

The following is a summary of key concepts that were covered in Level 1 to varying degrees to help prompt your creative process.

- **Somatic Experiencing®:** Activation cycle, tracking (mindful witness), sensation language, SIBAM, over- and under-coupling, titration, pendulation, trauma vortex/counter-vortex, thresholds, containment, expansion-contraction, cultivating felt sense resources, orienting, sandwich model, renegotiation, working through the biological completion of thwarted self-protective responses, boundary repair work, joining vs merging/disconnecting
- **Polyvagal theory:** Neuroception of safety, danger, life threat; 3 branches / "dials" (sympathetic nervous system, ventral vagal complex, dorsal vagal complex), blended states
- **Equitation science:** Humane Hierarchy, LIMA principle (Least Invasive, Minimally Aversive), ethical use of reinforcement methods
- **Ethology:** Understanding equine and human health and behaviour under natural conditions; recognizing the impact of "captivity conditions" (adversity / trauma) on horses and humans; holding a trauma lens on challenging or confusing behaviour; recognizing myths and misperceptions about humans and horses
- **Trauma-informed care principles:** Safety, consent, choice, voice, empowerment/agency, trust, collaboration, compassion
- **Interpersonal / interspecies neurobiology:** Triune brain, brain in the palm model, window of tolerance, "faux window", social coherence, co-regulation/co-dysregulation, entrainment, emotional contagion
- **Attachment theory and relational dynamics:** Secure / earned secure attachment, insecure attachment, supporting conditions for feeling safety in relationship, growing capacity in the body for connection, recognizing and interrupting re-enactments of trauma patterns, awareness of self and other (intersubjectivity)

Your curriculum outline will include:

- A description of your team members (scopes of practice, roles) and who will be doing what (triangle vs. diamond model of service delivery)
- The equines that you intend to include in the experience (brief background information, if known)
- Your target population (describe the clients or participants the curriculum is for)
- Social justice considerations to ensure anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice
- Your event's scope (Experiential learning? Therapeutic or mental health? Horsemanship skills or riding instruction? Equine behaviour consultation?)
- Your theme, focus, intention and/or goals
- A breakdown of time structure: Consider the order and timing of experiences to support regulation and flow (think of the SE™ sandwich model and the thresholds bell curves) and to scaffold learning and growth. Remember that there will be an overall structure to your event, and then a structure within each segment. Be sure to include the time ranges each day per segment, as well as allowing time to transition between locations / segments (transitions are often the most activating or destabilizing and often require more time than expected in farm settings).
- Preparation/set up, materials, handouts, and equipment required
- How the animals' needs will be taken care of before, during and afterwards
- How you and your team will be applying the material with one another (the quality of your presence, capacity for flow and co-regulation with one another, the safety of your container)
- A sample promotional flyer for your event

Your curriculum can be in a table or in a narrative format or a combination.

Remember that it's really not about the activity, but about the process unfolding. However, if you are used to thinking in terms of activities and wish to set up your curriculum with that as a focus, then include how you will address the somatic and relational process unfolding within each activity's structure. Be prepared to let go of the activity or original goal to be with what is wanting to happen next, as we say in SE™. Remember that some nervous systems prefer slow and reflective experiences that are more unstructured, while others prefer more active or dynamic activities with a clear structure. This reflects each nervous system's capacity and window of tolerance (slower nervous systems may have a harder time with speeding up; faster nervous systems may have a harder time with slowing down).

If you are trained in other approaches and wish to include aspects of these in your curriculum, indicate the approach(es) and how you are adapting them based on what you have learned in EQUUSOMA®.

The Somatic Experiencing® Institute (SEI, formerly SETI) has a page of resources on its website that includes a number of published theory and practice articles and research studies that may be of interest (at least two are around including SE™ in group settings). There are other topics of interest as well.

<https://traumahealing.org/resources/>

You are welcome to make use of EQUUSOMA® handouts provided during the training in your curriculum.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to any EQUUSOMA®-approved consultation provider for input during your curriculum development process. Once the curriculum is as complete as you can make it (this will look different for everyone; typical range is 3-10 pages, depending on font size), please submit it to your group and chosen consultant for review 5 days prior to the group meeting during which your curriculum will be discussed. The group process is an opportunity to get additional feedback and support from other nervous systems before you roll out your curriculum.

Have fun!