

Veteran Voices: SITREP - Episode #8 - Nate Ostrander Interview

[Tom Faust]

Welcome to Veteran Voices.

[Tom Faust]

I am your co-host, Tom Faust. I'm here with my son, Chris. And we also have with us today, Nate Ostrander from Two Eyes Horsemanship.

And we're going to talk about equine therapy for veterans. Hello, Nate.

[Nate Ostrander]

Hi. Good morning. Happy to be here.

Happy to be here.

[Tom Faust]

Great to have you. Great to have you. And so can you share a little bit about your background and kind of what led you to become, you know, to do equine therapy, particularly for veterans?

[Nate Ostrander]

Yeah. Well, I mean, background's a long, long story. You know, I grew up around horses and learning all this stuff.

And I guess it was 15 years ago or so is when I started to really think about doing something professionally around this area in Spokane with horses and stuff. So I just began training. It wasn't until I met a veteran who approached me about wanting to work with horses in a form of therapy that I really started to look into that and learn more about it.

And really, I learned more from him than anything. So that was back in, I think, 2015 or 16, somewhere in there. Yeah.

And ever since then, it's just been kind of on my mind. And, you know, I work with people. I get a lot of people that come through and ask questions about it and just teaching.

And there's another place around town that does therapy for children and like autism, work with autism and things like that. And I just know, you know, a lot about the fact that the therapy is very wide, you know, that it can cover so many different types of issues

when you're talking about horses or dogs or anything, any sort of animal like that. It's just incredible.

So it seems like a pretty big rabbit hole. You can go down and really get in there pretty deep and find out a whole lot. And it's probably never ending, really.

[Tom Faust]

So is it primarily, as far as veterans are concerned, focused around PTSD? Are there other issues that you deal with?

[Nate Ostrander]

Yeah, it's the PTSD for the most part with the veterans. And, you know, it's not just veterans either. And it's not just PTSD, I don't think.

You know, on a broad spectrum, when I think about any sort of animal therapy, especially the horse therapy, it's so broad that it, you know, there's an old saying that says the inside or the outside of a horse is the best thing for the inside of a man, right? An old cowboy saying. And it's really true.

It's just so broad. It helps in all aspects of life. You know, even myself, just working with horses, I grow all the time and learn more about myself.

And it's real therapy, you know, for anybody, really. But yeah, when it comes to the veterans, I think that the PTSD is the biggest part of what they're seeking to find help with.

[Chris Faust]

So can you kind of describe what the core principles of equine therapy, like, you know, how does it work to address the various symptoms that it addresses?

[Nate Ostrander]

Yeah. You know, I think that's an ongoing question, like an ongoing problem, because there's not a whole lot of support behind it yet. It's kind of slowly, very slowly growing.

But the core things for me, from working with the gentleman that I worked with in the very beginning, he was very, very astute. And he was an investigative reporter for some time. So very good at, you know, explaining things and teaching things to me.

So it was great working with him. But the biggest thing for him that he explained to me was the lack of trust. He said, when people come out of the military or out of a war, and they've just been, you know, crushed inside, everything's just crushed, and it's gone.

Any trust, you know, for humanity, and just life itself is kind of destroyed. And so that is

the biggest piece that they're, I think, seeking to find again. And then secondly, is connection.

You know, there's a very, very big disconnect that happens with PTSD, that they, it doesn't seem almost, you know, it doesn't seem possible to reconnect again. I've been told that it's been very difficult for people to connect with others, even family members or best friends that they've known in the past. And so it's almost like, you know, this alien thing where you can't come out of a situation like that and just re-immense into the normal world.

And so having an animal that doesn't talk back to you, doesn't ask you questions, you know, doesn't argue with you, doesn't do any of that stuff. It's just an entity, you know, an energy thing you can just be around and almost tell your deepest, darkest secrets to and develop this new way of building trust again. And that's what I found to be, for myself, the most profound work in the whole thing is that trust and that connection that is basically just taken completely away, you know, through war.

[Chris Faust]

Yeah. It kind of seems like you would, because talking about things gives your brain a better way to process it because you can stew on things internally, but you might not get, you know, you might not get that, you know, Eureka kind of, you know, understanding or, you know, or consoling, but, you know, unless you express it and talking to another person can always be daunting. You know, that's one of the reasons why I don't really do therapy much myself just because talking to somebody else, it's just weird, but talking to an animal, you know, you can express things out loud, let your brain process it as you hear it again and an animal's just there.

They're not going to judge you. I can see how that would go. So kind of rolling off of that, like how would a typical therapy set, you know, equine therapy session look like, you know, what kind of activities would you incorporate with?

[Nate Ostrander]

Yeah. You know, the thing that I found to be the most effective is to get hands-on work and it's, it's not just coming in there and brushing a horse and, you know, picking up their feet and sitting there petting on them and stuff. Although that is very, very nice and comforting as well, but it's really about being able to work with the horse and, you know, do things on the ground with the horse, like lunging, sending the horse through obstacles, you know, things like that.

We can set up a whole bunch of things in the arena and teach the person how to move the horse, how to communicate through hand signals and stuff with the horse. And that's the biggest thing because the communication line, kind of like you were just saying, it's

hard to talk about a lot of things, you know, for people with PTSD. It's, the trust isn't there.

They don't really want to divulge too much about it regardless. And so building that communication line is like one of the very first things that I find to be important. Make sure that this person understands and knows that they actually can communicate with this horse and that the horse, like, you know, hears that in a sense.

So it's super important that it's not just, we're coming and brushing on horses. You're actually working with them. You're going to be learning how to do it.

And then once you've learned stuff on the ground, then of course it'll go to riding. You learn how to ride the horse and communicate to the horse without being in front of them, but they can't see you anymore. So now it's a real touch sensitive communication.

And that in itself is all about trust, 100%. And I think for the random person, you know, it's kind of like, not everybody has the opportunity to go hang out with horses or work with horses. I kind of take it for granted because I get to do it every day, but more people have access to dogs.

Right. And so everybody kind of knows, like, you can make a dog sit and you can have them lay down and you can tell them to come here and stuff like that. And that seems kind of normal.

Right. But with a horse, it's completely different. Like this animal is 1200 pounds.

They're big, strong, scary. Right. It's, they can be very intimidating sometimes.

And so it really, it really digs deep into a person to find a place where they have to kind of almost submit themselves. And in therapies, submitting is a big part of progress. You have to be able to submit to yourself, your own feelings, your own thoughts, and be able to find a way to grasp, get a hold of things, control them, process, get through.

And submission is a big part of that. So a big, humongous, strong animal like a horse kind of strikes fear into a lot of people at first. They're like, you know, so it really brings a lot of feelings to the surface.

And I think that's one of the biggest first steps in the work that we do is getting a person to overcome that and grasp a hold of the feelings.

[Tom Faust]

Yeah. I know my wife's work with horses. I know she talks about how the horses tend to respond to you even unspoken.

Like if you're nervous, the horse is going to get nervous and get worried and may not do

exactly what you want it to do. If you calm down, the horse will calm down. And it's sort of symbiotic in a way.

So I know that off camera, we talked a little bit, you mentioned something about Mustangs that you were doing that I'll take a look at later on. So I don't know if those are the particular horses, but how do you select and train the horses that you use for therapy sessions? Is there a certain temperament you look for?

[Nate Ostrander]

So that gentleman that I was working with before, we were working with a Mustang, and we went down to the Burns Oregon holding facility and picked a Mustang out just from the crowd of 423 that they had down there. A beautiful, beautiful buckskin dun horse, just amazing horse, completely wild and untouched. And that was kind of our experiment at the time was, is it better to use completely untouched wild Mustangs to meet up with a veteran with PTSD, or is it better to use a domesticated horse who's already trained?

That was kind of the experiment back then. And what we found was that it was absolutely incredible how each part of the role, the horse and the veteran, they basically both had PTSD. Because the horse was already wrangled up by either helicopter or four-wheelers or cars chasing them and basically traumatic experience there and lost even more trust for these two-legged creatures that they don't want to be around in the first place.

So we kind of see this very, very apprehensive and then sometimes highly apprehensive behavior in these Mustangs. And the gentleman was just like, I feel the same I just feel the same way. So it was a really quick link where he was able to identify the same types of emotion or energy, you could say.

And you're exactly right on how the horse does mirror that. So with that Mustang, I think he was able to have that same connection with this gentleman too, just like he did with the Mustang. It was like they could identify each other as having the same type of kind of energy stored up in there of apprehension and fear.

And so the connection was very quick. Whereas a domesticated horse, it's true that all horses seem to be able to have, they've got this sixth sense about them. I always tell people, you know, the sixth sense you hear about in the movies, horses have that.

And it's as strong or stronger than their sense of smell and sight and all that. It's like this energy thing that they can feel. They feel you coming a mile away.

They can tell if you're having a bad day, if you're having a good day. And the thing about it is that they mirror, like you were kind of saying, they mirror you. So even if you're not acting upset, they know you're upset.

And so that tension, that energy inside of you is now being equated in the horse. So that is a humongous part of that connection too, is having, well, you kind of have to own up to what you're seeing. And when you see the horse acting a certain way, you're not going to be pointing the finger and blaming the horse.

You have to say, okay, what is it here? And that's where the therapy starts. That's where it begins.

You start to connect that, okay, what can I change? What do I got to work on here to be able to soften this whole thing? And it works both ways with wild horses and domestic horses.

But I found, I think, a bigger connection with the wild horses. I got to tell you though, if you're going to go work with a wild horse, you definitely want to be working with somebody who knows wild horses, who has experience with wild horses, because they're a different animal than a domestic horse. So you can't just have any random trainer say, okay, let's go get a Mustang and I'll help you work with him.

Don't do that.

[Tom Faust]

Yeah, I can see that. And since it's really on that subject of potential dangers with a wild horse, and even with a domesticated horse in certain situations, if it spooks or something, because you're talking 1,200 pounds, that's a lot of animal. And so are there any safety considerations that you take in every time you go in that you warn the people about in advance or do something to make sure that the whole situation is safe?

[Nate Ostrander]

Absolutely. Yeah. So there's a lot of situations where if you just know how a horse moves or how they will move when they react to certain things, there's certain places, certain things that you can do or be that are relatively safer.

So I go through everything. I just basically treat every situation as brand spanking new. A person may come in and say, oh, I grew up with horses, and I already know about this.

Doesn't matter. I'm going to start from the very beginning and go through all of my safety stuff. Kick zone is one of the biggest things.

I teach the people about the kick zone. Where is the kick zone? Where can the horse kick?

How far do their legs reach? Can they go sideways? All of those things.

How far can they reach with their mouth? Because they do. Certain situations, a horse

that gets triggered into that higher flight mode, if they're triggered hard, that's just instinct.

And they can throw a kick or they can throw a spike. So I'm always teaching people to be on their A game. And we learn all those places to be, places not to be.

Also, how to move around a horse, your movements, how you're going to portray yourself. Confidence is a big thing. And that's another piece where gaining confidence back in a person who's lost confidence is extremely difficult.

But if you're not confident around a horse, they know it. And they'll show you by basically taking the pecking order lead. And that turns into a situation where you don't really want that because now they're kind of stepping on your shoulder and into, you know, or knocking you with their head and doing these things that aren't safe.

And you quickly find out that, boy, I guess I'm not showing confidence in my leadership role. And that confidence in the leadership role is a humongous piece of the safety. If you don't have it, you're creating an unsafe environment for you and the horse.

So we go through all of that stuff from the very beginning, all the way until the person is just really confident and comfortable handling a horse on the ground. Just even leading the horse from one place to another can be a full session of getting people comfortable. Picking up the feet, brushing properly, you know, so you don't agitate the horse using a stiff brush on their spine or their legs or something, you know.

All those little things that mean a lot. Very important stuff.

[Chris Faust]

Okay. So I mean, other than like, you know, we've already touched a couple, you know, briefly on a couple of these things, but so kind of what specific benefits have you observed in veterans who participate in the equine therapy and kind of how do you measure the progress and effectiveness of it?

[Nate Ostrander]

That's the question right there. And that'll lead into a little bit more conversation because you can't measure it on the outside. It's only measurable on the inside of the person doing it.

That's the hard part. And so all they can do is just speak on it. And how well a person can speak on it is based on themselves, right?

Not everybody can say how it feels or what their experience was in a really in-depth way. Sometimes it's just, okay, it's mine. You know, it's my experience and I'm keeping it.

Sometimes it's not talkable, right? And so I think that's one of the major problems why these kinds of therapies don't get the support that they need. For example, when we were doing our experiment with the first individual, we were looking into funding and support from lots of different agencies, including government agencies.

And there's just none at that time anyway. I think it's gotten better now, but I haven't pushed to build this into a bigger thing where I would need financial support. But I think that the measure, like you're saying, it's hard to find that.

It's hard to see it other than testimonial. And so it's not on paper, right? Like with scientific experiments and research, they can prove by paper.

And that's why I think they like to just give pills instead. It's proof. We have it on paper that this many pills and this many days fixes this or helps this.

I don't know. It's odd. And I hope that through doing this and if more people continue doing it, that it'll kind of gain some momentum and hopefully get some more support behind it.

But for me personally, I can see the benefits right away. And it's a lot of times very deep, and you have to be kind of connected with the person as well. When I'm working with somebody, I'm trying to clear everything that I've got so I can be 100% open to feeling all the emotion, all the energy that's happening there too.

I'm trying to basically be able to receive all the energy that the horse is receiving so that I can then help the person to address this emotion or address this energy that's coming across. And I think that having that ability is a big part of why I'm able to help. Because if I wasn't able to kind of catch on to that and feel that and read the energy of the person and the horse, and if I can see it coming across in the horse, then I know there's something deeper in the human too that we should probably address.

And if I wasn't able to recognize that, then I wouldn't be successful in helping the situation. But boy, when you get across some points to the person and things start to come together and starts to smooth out, you almost have this aha moment for both the horse and the person. It's just like, it's amazing to see.

Because it happens with horses too when I just work with them myself. If they're stuck on something they can't get through or their energy is in a place that is just causing them a lot of anxiety, and I do some things to help them get out of that, you can feel it. It's like the elephant in the room just disperses.

It's just gone. And so when you're working with the people and the horses together and they get to do that with the horse, if I can tell them, okay, there's some tension here in the horse, there's some anxiety, or you see him moving his ears like that, or you see that tail deal, this is what it means. And so we need to do this or this.

Okay. And so they go and they do it. And when they have success and they feel that same thing, the elephant leave, yeah, it's just eye-opening for everybody.

And for me, like I said, that's my measure, because I can see it and read it.

[Chris Faust]

Okay. And then I know that it's a big internal thing, but just based on what you've seen, do you have any, we don't need full details if you don't want to share things, but any significant breakthroughs or success stories that have occurred when you actually noticed this aha change?

[Nate Ostrander]

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, during the sessions for sure, but it's such a long process, you know, that I wouldn't be able to pinpoint a moment where I'm like, huh, you're cured.

You know, that's not going to happen. But there's, especially with the wild Mustangs, any of those wild horses that have such a very strong fight and flight instinct, when, like for example, the gentleman I was working with at the beginning doing the experiment, there was a moment where we were using a stick with a plastic bag at the end of it, right? Horses really hate plastic bags.

So I showed him what to do with this plastic bag and what the horse was going to do, how he would react, you know, and this is where he's moving and how to keep his head in the right place and what the goal of the exercise was. And so as he was working with the horse, man, you could just see all of the tension just building and building. And the horse is kind of running around in circles trying to get away from this bag.

He was doing a great job sticking in there and staying in place in the right places to stay safe, had the bag continuing on. He didn't quit or give up. You know, it's just kind of a hang in there, hang in there situation.

And in the moment where the horse realizes that you're not trying to hurt him with this bag and that they can decide to stand still and allow you to be there with it, those are those moments where, okay, now you take the bag away and you both just stand there and breathe, right? And when they turn around, this gentleman, he turns around and stands there and puts the bag down. That was awesome.

That was crazy. And he, in that video that I was telling you about earlier, Thomas, on the Rhubarb Skies one, he talks about that moment with that plastic bag of the big blow up and then it comes back down and it's all just getting done. And I think that's just amazing because you see it and it's like, ah, I'm a believer now.

It makes a believer out of you that you can do it. You can actually work with this horse. You can scare the pudding out of him, scare the pudding out of yourself, but everybody's going to get through it and it's all going to be okay.

And what just happened is a little more closer connection of trust and bond with that horse and it feels really good. And when I see that happen, it's super incredible. Moments like that.

[Tom Faust]

Yeah, yeah, that kind of leads right into where I wanted to go next, which is on the personal side for you. I can see that you enjoy doing this and seeing the result in the people that you're helping and the horses that you're helping as well, because it kind of works both ways. So what have you learned through this?

How has this helped you personally through doing this for others?

[Nate Ostrander]

Oh man, that's a huge one because just personally myself working with horses is a massive change. It is every day, all the time. But working with other people and teaching them how to do this and seeing the change, I think that's a whole different ballgame, whole different kind of reward for me.

It's rewarding enough to be able to take a horse who's been possibly mistreated or stuck at a feedlot. There's a lot of horses where I've worked with where they're rescue horses that basically need to be rewired and complete therapy wipe and get them to come back to same type of thing. But I'm working with just the horse.

This horse may have massive PTSD, may have been through who knows what, and they don't trust people at all. And I have to get them back to a point where they can be rideable and put them into a good home so that they don't end up back in the same place headed down for whatever comes next. And that's extremely rewarding.

And so now you just double that because I'm taking a horse and a person who are kind of in the same boat, right, who are just kind of fraught with pain and hurt and mistrust and all these things. And I get to help both of them rewire, reconnect, build some trust. And I can't even explain really how that feels for me.

It could get very emotional for me if I get too deep into it, but it definitely pulls on the heartstrings when you see it start to happen. And when they walk out of that pen and they look at you and shake your hand, you know, thank you. You know, it's just those big breaths are the same.

I see the horses do the same thing. The horses do that. People do that too.

And it's just like, man, it's so rewarding for me to be able to have a part in doing that. And like I said, it's anybody too. It's not just veterans, although the highlight here is veterans, but I want to make sure that everybody knows that the therapy of a horse is good for anybody with any sort of history, whether it's traumatic history or not.

It's always, they help. They just always help.

[Chris Faust]

Yeah. So kind of what are the, you know, whether it's like specific or like overarching, like what are the main challenges or limitations you face in, you know, providing the therapy? How do you think you would address them?

[Nate Ostrander]

Well, I guess the biggest thing was, would be if I was trying to make this into a bigger, bigger thing where, you know, I wanted to have a facility built for me or anything like that, having sort of funding behind that is a huge challenge. Even if you did a 5013C, every year you're trying to, you know, do banquets and things and auctions and whatnot to, to raise money for your foundation. And it can be extremely difficult because like I said, there isn't a whole lot of support behind it.

There's not a whole lot of tangible results and knowledge on it. So it makes it tough. And then any agencies, you know, that would have the money to back it, they want to know that it's going to work and they're putting their money into something that's going to do good.

The idea is great, right? The idea is great. I mean, obviously they've kind of been able to prove it with dogs.

So now we have support animals, therapy, dogs, et cetera, et cetera. Quite a bit harder to like have a person walking a horse through a grocery market, right? So how are we implementing this?

We're not going to have everybody buy a horse and take it home, are we? So they're just going to come there once a week and just hang out with a horse. I mean, kind of, sort of.

So it's kind of up in the air. I'd say that's the biggest challenge for this. So basically what I've tried to do now is just leave it open for whoever wants to reach out to me to come get help.

You know, and I'm always here to offer the help. And there are other agencies, for example, I'm working with the Air Force base here now in Spokane. There's a agency on the base.

It's not actually part of the Air Force base, but it's an agency on the base where they set

up, you know, outings for active duty and their families to go out and do stuff like hiking trips, rafting, river rafting trips, et cetera. Now they've hooked up with us. So we're able to get people out and take them for guided trail rides.

So my wife and I, we own Pacific Northwest guided trail rides also. And so it's a great opportunity to get those folks out here and just get them outside, get them going and doing something, get them off the base. Right.

That's one thing I've learned is that a lot of the active duty folks, they just stay on base. Like this is the first time I've even left the base since I've been here. Oh, how long you been here?

Oh, two years. Like, holy cow, man. Yeah.

You got to get out more. So we're providing that opportunity for them too, which is awesome. And then that's kind of a good segue for me to be able to tell them, hey, if you've got interest in coming in and spending more time with us and more time with the horses, you know, anytime you come out and do lessons and, you know, I can kind of segue into the idea of it.

Not everybody knows that they need help either and not everybody wants help. So I'm just there open to help whoever I can. And then as far as challenges within like the actual training, the actual activities and stuff, I would say age has an issue sometimes.

You know, if I get older folks that want to come and work and be with horses, physical limitations might be a factor, right? Or people with injuries of any sort, that can be a factor. But there's nothing that I can't really get around.

You know, obviously I'm not going to put somebody who has a major disability, physical disability, in a pen with a wild Mustang, you know. I would tailor it to whatever they can handle. But I'm never going to turn somebody down.

So it's a challenge in one way, but at the same time, I'm able to overcome those challenges and so are they. It works out.

[Tom Faust]

So you mentioned about agencies helping or whatever. Do you know whether the VA, for instance, offers financial support for people that need to go through this? Is that a thing?

[Nate Ostrander]

At the time when we were doing the experiment in the first place, no, they did not and they had no interest in it. I don't know now if they do, but I haven't heard anything about it. So I'm assuming it's probably the same situation.

But we really pushed the VA at that time trying to get them interested and to show some support and it didn't happen. So that's a really disappointing situation where it's a tough thing and it's a sensitive topic, especially among veterans where they want the help and there just isn't support. And a lot of people don't want medicine, right?

They don't want to take pills. There's different ways to go about things. And like you said earlier, Chris, it's hard for you to go to therapy and talk to a person and there are other ways.

So how do we get the military or the government or different agencies to really open their eyes and look at this? I don't know exactly. We tried and I know lots of different places around the country have tried as well.

And typically it always ends up being a 5013C non-profit organization that they turn themselves into and they raise their own money to do it.

[Tom Faust]

Yeah, well, hopefully things like this interview and similar interviews, getting testimonials from veterans who have been helped through the therapy, you get enough of that going, maybe it'll eventually provide enough evidence that, hey, it's hard to show on paper, but this does work. And the VA really should be helping the veterans get the support. How do you see equine therapy fitting into the broader landscape of PTSD treatment available to veterans?

Is this something that, well, I mean, like we just talked about with the VA, is this something that veterans should be made more aware of that it even exists?

[Nate Ostrander]

Yeah, absolutely. That it even exists. That's a big thing.

Like we were just talking about earlier, the folks here at Fertile Air Force Base hardly even get off the base. So having some sort of idea that you can go do these things either while you're in the military or when you get out of the military, that's a good question. How does the military instill that knowledge into people?

Are they even? And so I think through stuff like this that you guys are doing right here is the way to get the knowledge out there. Agencies or individuals that want to try to build something like this, just continue pushing, continue pushing, continue pushing.

I'm not like a huge activist, so I'm not real knowledgeable about how to get my foot into the door or in the face of the people that will listen. But I know there's people out there like that. I typically just stick to the horses.

But there's got to be some folks out there that could help to get this rolling, get the ball

rolling on it. My job, I feel, is being here with the horses and the veterans or anybody who wants the therapy. And I'm kind of doing my part here.

There's got to be somebody else out there who understands kind of the politics of it all that would be able to push it harder for everybody. I don't know who that is though. The other part of your question was, where do I see it fitting in?

I mean, the goal would be that every single person who comes out of the military is required to go spend a certain amount of time at a ranch with some horses and a trainer, a knowledgeable trainer, basically kind of like a detox period of time where you're going to go spend 30 days down here at this ranch and it's completely funded. You're going to go and hang out with this trainer and a horse and you're just going to relax. And there's going to be a whole lot of healing happening in those 30 days, even if it's just a week.

Any time is going to help, but the longer the better. And I think that's where it would fit in as a humongous piece of the first step of getting through these things.

[Tom Faust]

Do you do this always with individuals or do you ever do this with groups, like a small group of people together?

[Nate Ostrander]

Yeah, either way, either way. It's a little bit somewhat more difficult if you have a group because I can't really focus on one person at a time. And in this kind of situation where you're trying to make it a therapy thing and you have PTSD involved or any sort of traumas that a person's trying to work through, having that one-on-one time is pretty important.

It's kind of crucial. But later on, once people are past that first initial step of regaining connection and trust and being able to open up and get a hold of their emotions and all this stuff, then it's no problem having groups because now you're starting to implement not just horses but now other people again. And that's where you start to take these skills that you learned with the horse and start implementing them now with other humans.

And another big thing that I've learned over time with the PTSD with veterans is that this whole human thing is almost like, I can do without anymore. It's almost better not being around people, right? So they have that feeling behind it, but at the same time, they're looking for that connection still, right?

Humans are instinctively group built. They want to be together. They want to be with other people.

Just, I guess that goes for anything. You got flocks of birds and herds of horses. So that's just how it works.

But at the same time, there's something clouding that that's making it like, yeah, but I don't really want to. So once you kind of get through all that, then you start re-immersing into a group setting, I think that it really does help to bring those skills into the human world again.

[Tom Faust]

I think we've covered a lot of good stuff here. I really appreciate your time with this. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

I'm going to be sharing links to your website and Facebook and that. Is there anything else you'd like to share with anyone that we haven't touched on?

[Nate Ostrander]

Well, yeah, I also work with the Cops Mounted Patrol Unit here in Spokane as well. And just recently, the Sheriff's, it's called the Scope Mounted Posse, they merged with the Cops Mounted Patrol. So I'm the head trainer for that group as well.

And it consists of folks who are either active duty or retired, and then also volunteers that just want to be part of the program and help. And that is also a wonderful program that they've got going on with that too. And, you know, there's obviously trauma and PTSD within the police departments as well.

And so that program that they run is super awesome. It's really incredible. They end up doing some work with me individually sometimes, depending on the person, if it's a volunteer or whatever the situation is.

But sometimes they'll come and do personal sessions with me. But most of their stuff is on a group setting. And that's a really cool thing you could look into as well.

And I imagine there's more of those around the country that people could get involved in. And that's another big way that they, the guys here, they go to all the parks within the city and around the borders, and they take their horses there. They've got little like playing cards, right, like baseball cards, but it has a picture of the horse on it.

And so all the little kids, they'll get cards of their favorite horse, and they'll collect the cards and do scavenger hunts and things like that. So it really raises the awareness to the community of just the fact that this whole thing exists with the horses there as well. So you were asking me that question earlier, how do you raise awareness?

Agencies like that, people putting together those types of little agencies to go out and do things like that. I think it's pretty incredible. And they have to go through a certain

amount of training with me because it's now we're talking about taking all these horses out into the public and keeping little Johnny safe from running up and getting kicked by a horse or whatever.

So they go through quite a bit of training with me to be certified, to be able to take the horses out. And so they take it really seriously. And there's some major connections made there too, even within those big group settings, a lot of change happens there.

[Tom Faust]

But I know it's a good group here. And I've considered volunteering myself at some point in time if I have more time once I get, I'm getting close to retirement. And so that's something I was considering.

[Nate Ostrander]

There is another thing that I could add to this. Another thing to add would be that this kind of therapy helps with people coming out of prison as well. There are programs within the prison around the country where they have the prisoners working with wild mustangs.

And so they're actually training the mustangs and that is a great program. There are some people that are kind of fighting against it because they think it's like rewarding the prisoners. But man, if you have a heart, everybody needs healing in some way or another.

Everybody's got traumas in some way or another. And so the fact that these inmates can go out there and get into a program with horses and take some time there, perhaps the traumas that they had in the past is what got them there in the first place. And it's majorly healing for them.

And I'm not sure how much effect that's having on getting any agencies to help fund and push this in the public. But hopefully that'll be a piece of it too. But I've seen it personally working with some folks that have come from prison.

And it's the same thing. It's the same thing. Coming from a place like that, it's like the same deal.

You don't trust anybody. You don't really want to talk to anybody. Coming back into the real world is really odd.

It's very foreign to them, especially if they've been in prison for a long time. It could be very disheartening. Almost like, well, I'd rather just go back.

I'm more comfortable there in some ways. And so it's a major deal too there, working with a horse. All those connections and that trust building and stuff, it really does

something.

It really does something to the inside of a person. It's pretty incredible when you really look at it. And if people could spend some time just around this whole process, they'd start to believe it.

It's real.

[Chris Faust]

Yeah. So that's definitely a good thing to know that there's something out there. Because some people, it's like we've discussed multiple types of therapy, art and music.

That's my big thing for me. I've never been a huge fan of horses. So that wouldn't appeal to me specifically.

But there are those out there that are like, wow, horses are these really majestic creatures. And just knowing that there's options out there that could potentially help them, that's why we do this podcast to bring some light to potential ways to help veterans with PTSD to say, hey, there's more than one option. It doesn't have to be therapy.

It doesn't have to be pills. It doesn't have to be music. There's different things you can do and try.

And I think that means more than anything is doing the therapy will help. But trying things, it's a way to entertain your brain to say, okay, I tried music. No, it wasn't really my thing.

Oh, okay. Let's go. Horses are available.

Let's try that. Oh, wow. This is amazing.

Just getting those there. And that's why my dad and I do this podcast to bring light to these things to say, hey, there is help out there. And we're just trying to introduce people to the idea of, hey, this is an option.

Look into it. Do some research. See if it's for you.

Just get that help that you need.

[Nate Ostrander]

Yeah. You nailed it right there. Like you said at the beginning of that, you said you're not really a horse person.

You haven't been a fan of horses. And that could keep a person from trying it. But that's

the important part is, yeah, see what's out there.

Go try it. Maybe it's not for you. Maybe the music didn't work.

Maybe the horses didn't work. But at least you did try. And that reminds me of a question you asked me earlier about just certain moments that were notable.

There's a thing called join up when you're working with horses. And if there's a person who comes in, they're kind of skeptical or they're not really a big fan of horses or whatever. Sometimes the first thing that I'll do with them is have them get into a pen with the horse who is already trained, who's safe and knows how to join up.

It's what we call join up. It's basically kind of this process of being in the round pen. You're standing in the center of the round pen.

The horse is kind of trotting around a circle on the outside edge of the round pen. And as you're working that, you change directions. And you do this whole process to where at some point, then you just kind of turn around and you face your back to the horse.

And then the horse chooses whether they want to come up to you and be part of the team with you. And so they call that join up. And a lot of times you'll just be standing there.

Your back's completely to the horse. You can't see him. And you just wait.

And you're just standing. You're waiting. And all of a sudden, you just feel this little nudge on your elbow.

And you look behind him. There's that horse just right there. Just like, hey, what's up?

And I've had people just melt and just go to tears when that happened. That horse was coming up there and just bumping that elbow like that and saying, hey, I'm here with you. Just brings them to tears right there.

And you would never know that you liked horses until one of them said, hey, I like you.

[Chris Faust]

Thank you very much for talking with us tonight. We really appreciate it. Appreciate your insight on this as well.

[Nate Ostrander]

Man, I'm so happy you guys asked me. It's been an honor. And what you guys are doing is amazing.

I've been watching some of your podcasts. And I think it's super cool just getting the

word out and getting the knowledge out like you're doing. So thank you guys very much for all of it.

[Chris Faust]

No problem. I also want to thank all the listeners, people that tune into the podcast. We appreciate you tuning in.

Hit like, subscribe, thumbs up, whatever you want to do. Just help us get the word out there because word of mouth is going to be the best way to get this information out to people. So anything that anyone can do to help push people this direction, that's what we're doing for.

So on that note, I guess we will go ahead and sign off, Chris. All right. Dad, Tom, Nate, our guest speaker.

Appreciate everybody. And I hope you all have a great day. All right.

Bye-bye. Thanks.

[Tom Faust]

Bye-bye.