



TS-EAM

**Trauma Sensitive
Equine Assisted Mindfulness for
Cancer Patients with Post-Traumatic Stress**

Katarina Lundgren

MiMer - Equine Human Education and Research Centre

Katarina Lundgren

- Director of MiMer Centre – Equine-Human Research and Education Centre
- Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness (TSM) Facilitator & Researcher
- A strong advocate for Equine and Human Welfare and Wellbeing.



TS-EAM Cancer Study

Aim: investigate the effect of a Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness program incorporating Nature and Horses in supporting the psychological recovery of cancer patients.

The Trauma Sensitive Equine Assisted Mindfulness (TS-EAM) Program:

- Group sessions: patients + horses in nature
- Session: 90 min - once per week - 10 weeks
- Facilitated by a trauma sensitive mindfulness instructor + equine specialist

Project Stages – 1-2

Stage 1. The TS-EAM-Cancer Protocol (1 year: 2021 – funded by AKG's memorial fund):

- Study group: Researchers, User reference group with cancer survivors, and Experts on cancer treatment and cancer rehabilitation
- Finalize TS-EAM-Cancer protocol

Stage 2. TS-EAM-Cancer Feasibility Study (2 years: 2022-2023 – applied for funds)

- Randomized Controlled Trial: TS-EAM intervention (n=10) vs Standard Cancer Rehabilitation Program active cntrl (n=10) and Waiting List – passive cntrl (n=10)
- Network and partnerships: Cancer Rehabilitation Centers and TS-EAM facilities

Project Stages – 3-4

Stage 3. The TS-EAM-Cancer Full Study (3 years: 2024-2026):

- Randomized Controlled Study: TS-EAM intervention (n=10) vs Mindfulness cntrl (n=10) and no intervention (n=10) – in multiple centers.
- Designing a positive equine welfare protocol (One Health).

Stage 4. Implementation of TS-EAM as an option for cancer rehabilitation (3 years: 2024-2026):

- Expanding networks and partnerships: establish a network of providers of TS-EAM throughout Norway.
- Formalizing and standardizing educations for TS-EAM facilitators. International implementation.

Why
Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness
with Horses –
in Nature
for Cancer Patients?

Cancer as Stress and/or Trauma – potentially Leading to PTSD

- Fear of harm, fear of pain, fear of dying
- Terror, loss of control
- Anxiety, panic
- Depression
- Numbness, shut down
- Anger, irritability
- Sleeping problems, nightmares
- Eating problems, no appetite, over-eating
- Financial worries
- Burn-out and fatigue
- Cognitive dys-functioning
- Loss of or altered sense of identity
- Loss of or altered sense of worth
- Loss of hope, loss of future, loss of “now”
- Lesser, low quality of life

Mindfulness for Cancer Patients

- Proved to be good for cancer patients
- Are not in general Trauma Sensitive
- Part of making it trauma sensitive IS doing it out in nature, with horses present.
- You learn mindfulness easier when more embodied
- Practicing it with the relational aspect of a horse present supports better attunement to self and others
- Added benefits of nature and movement.

Mindfulness

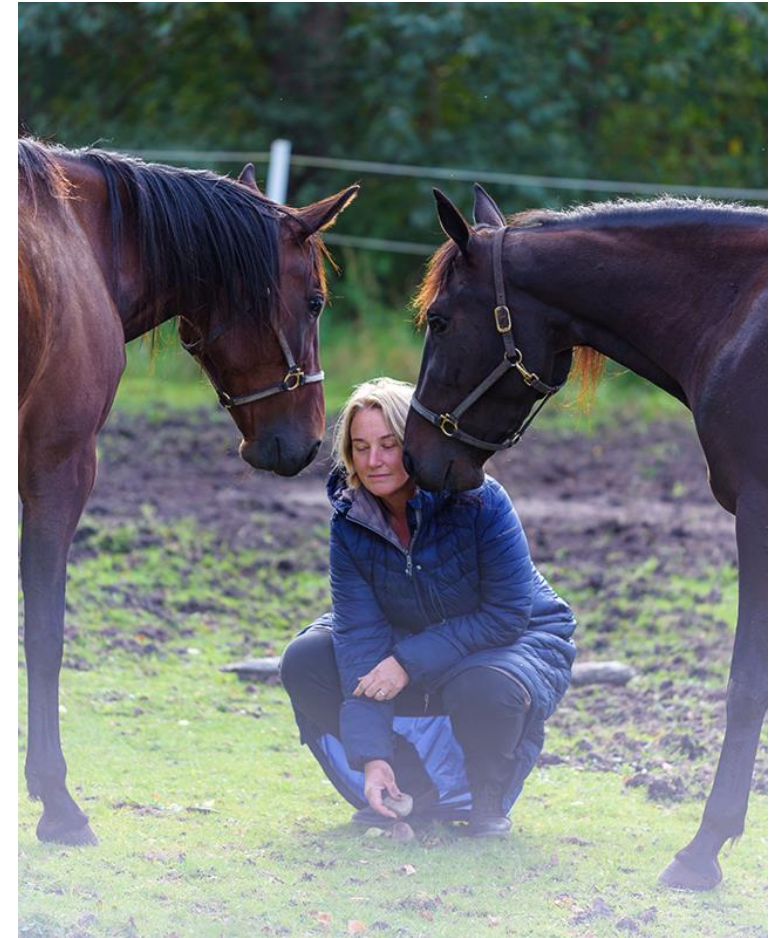
Definition: “the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

How do we become more aware? When we are stressed (or traumatized), defense mechanisms kick in (like dissociation=a disconnection from self, others, environment, experiences, reality, time etc).

To be – become more mindful, more present in our own lives – we need to **practice** mindfulness.

Being or practicing mindfulness is hard – the “here and now” is not always a nice place and time to be in...



EAM – Equine Assisted Mindfulness

EAM is a combination of **Mindfulness** and **Experiential Learning *with horses***.

We also prefer to offer EAM out in nature (**nature-assisted**), since the benefits of being in nature supports the mindfulness as well as the experiential work.

Being in nature also makes it easier to look out for horse welfare, an important component of EAM, not just for the horse.



TS- what is Trauma Sensitive?

Trauma Sensitive do not mean we focus on resolving trauma (being **Trauma Focused**), it means we are educated in and know about trauma, recognize the signs, can adapt our activities and interventions to possible trauma.

It means whether someone develop PTS or PTSD from having cancer, TS-EAM will be suitable still.

Cancer can create PTS (Post Traumatic Stress) – and lead to PTSD (adding Disorder). Cancer can also trigger older trauma to resurface, this is NOT uncommon.



Being trauma Sensitive

- Always giving options
- Always letting everyone set their own pace
- Always give space
- Always have consent for everything you do with the other (touching)
- Paying attention to the external world, not the internal
- Hold back with breathing exercises, body scans etc.
- Be present and grounded
- Be accepting and open
- Be authentic

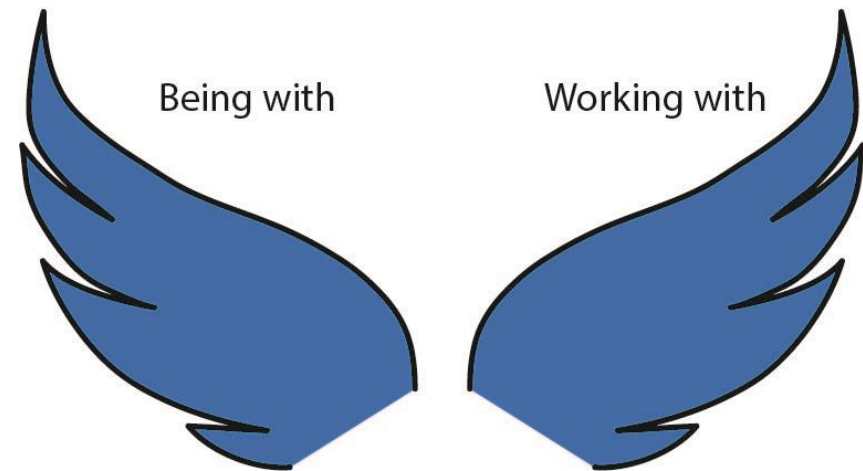


Mindfulness – is Dual

In mindfulness you can work on your ability to “be with” – the **Being With**.

Or you can work with “**Working With**” – that means you expand on your ability to be present. And it helps you to be the regulator of how present you want to be.

Working with “working with” means you will increase your ability to “be with”.



Experiential Learning

– not only Learning by Doing...

Learning through reflection on what we have done.

It is away of doing, not the activity of doing itself. It is an approach to learning.

Reflection is key. The reflection part can be a conscious or unconscious process, if conscious, a verbally uttered process, or expressed by painting, dancing, singing, drumming, creating...

Mindfulness and Experiential Learning

Mindfulness has a “working with” – is experiential

And Experiential Learning has a “reflecting on”

– is about awareness...

They strengthen each other!

Relational Aspects of the Horse

Having Horses present helps with the **relational aspects** of TS-EAM. Not only with relations to others, but to self (body, mind, soul), time, environment etc).

They help with a lot. By just being present (which is what many of us at times struggle with, especially when we have had something stressful or traumatic happen to us, like cancer).



Nature and outdoor based/assisted interventions – The Environmental Aspects and Movement – Connecting Body and Mind

- We choose to place our TS-EAM out in nature as often as we can – and work nature-assisted (not only nature based) – nature help with e.g grounding and connecting
- Movement adds another useful component and strengthen embodiment.



TS-EAM – The Steps

1. Introduction/Contextualization
2. Mindful Gauges
3. Safety
4. Resilience
5. Inner Awareness
6. Self-Compassion
7. Belonging
8. Presence
9. Mindful Attunement/Attachment
10. Integration



TS-EAM – The Steps – Adapted to Cancer Patients

ACCEPTANCE?

PATIENCE?

WHOLENESS?

So Why TS-EAM?

- Find and tailor mindfulness tools to suit your own needs
- Gauge what you need in any situation.
- Support yourself (handling feelings of powerlessness, fear, loss of control).
- Develop resilience, self-compassion, a better sense of safety, and belonging.
- Relate better. To self and others.
- Know yourself better – strengths, potentialities and limitations.



TS-EAM – One Health – Equine Welfare

- One being's health cannot be improved on another one's expense. Therefore, we have adopted the One Health Paradigm (<https://www.onehealthcommission.org/>).
- Each individual deserves both species specific welfare, as well as individually adapted welfare.
- The welfare of all involved will impact the outcome of your intervention or activity, no matter what the goal of it is.

References

Barett Feldman, L. (2017). *How Emotions are Made. The Secret Life of the Brain*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Bartley, T. (2017). *Mindfulness: A Kindly Approach to Being with Cancer*. Wiley Blackwell

Bartley, T. (2011). *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Cancer*. John Wiley & Sons Inc

Brinck, I., Vasudevi, R. and Zahavi, D. The primacy of the 'we'? In *Embodiment, Enaction, and Culture: Investigating the Constitution of the Shared World*. Ed. by Durt, C., Fuchs, C. and Tewes, C. MIT Press

Brinck, I. (2008). The role of intersubjectivity in the development of intentional communication. In: *The Shared Mind, Perspectives on Intersubjectivity*. Ed. by Zlatev, J., Racine, T.P., Sinha, C. and Itkonen, E., John Benjamins Publishing Company

Britton, W.B. (2019). Can mindfulness be too much of a good thing? The value of a middle way. *Current Opinions in Psychology: Special Issue on Mindfulness*, 28, 159-165

Carlson, L. E., Tamagawa, R., Stephen, J., Drysdale, E., Zhong, L. and Speca, M. (2016). Randomized-controlled trial of mindfulness-based cancer recovery versus supportive expressive group therapy among distressed breast cancer survivors (MINDSET): long-term follow-up results. *Psycho-Oncology* 25: 750–759. DOI: 10.1002/pon.4150

Carlson, L. E. (2013). Mindfulness-based cancer recovery. The development of an evidence-based psychosocial oncology intervention. *OE*, Vol. 12, No. 2

References

Forner, C. C. (2017). *Dissociation, Mindfulness, and Creative Meditations. Trauma Informed Practices to Facilitate Growth*, Routledge

Forner C.C. What Mindfulness can learn about Dissociation and what Dissociation can learn from Mindfulness. *J Trauma Dissociation*. 2019;20(1):1-15. PMID: 30095378

Forner, C. C. (2019). *Mindful Attachment: An Organic Way to Work with Children Who Have Been Through Complex Trauma and Neglect*. *Frontiers in the Psychotherapy of Trauma and Dissociation*, 3(1):91–106

Gallagher, S. (2020). *Action and Interaction*. Oxford University Press

Gallagher, S. (2017). *Enactivist Interventions. Rethinking the Mind*. Oxford University Press

Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential Learning. Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Pearson Education Inc

Lindahl, J.L. and Britton, W.B. (2019) "I Have This Feeling of Not Really Being Here": Buddhist Meditation and Changes in Sense of Self. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 26 (7-8), 157-183

Marich, J. (2016). *Dancing Mindfulness. A Creative Path to Healing & Transformation*. Skylight Paths

Marich, J. (2016). *Dancing Mindfulness Facilitator Training Manual*. Mindful Ohio & The Institute for Creative Mindfulness

Marich, J. (2019). *Process Not Perfection. Expressive Arts Solutions for Trauma Recovery*. Creative Mindfulness Media

References

Marich J and Howell T. Dancing Mindfulness: A Phenomenological Investigation of the Emerging Practice. *Explore (NY)*. 2015;11(5):346-56. PMID: 26260236

Marich, J. (N/A- In Press). *Dissociation Made Simple*. North Atlantic Books

Parent, I. B. (2016). *The Fundamentals of Equine Assisted Trauma Therapy: With Practical Examples from Working with Members of the Armed Forces*. Kindle Direct Publishing

Parent, I. B. (2019). *The Invisibles - Breaking the Silence: Emotionally Abusive Relationships*. Kindle Direct Publishing

Sipiron, S. (2012). Open Space. Talking horses: Equine psychotherapy and intersubjectivity. In *Psychodynamic Practice* 18:4. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group

Thompson, C. (2013). *Mindfulness & the Natural World. Bringing Awareness Back to Nature*. Leaping Hare Press

Treleaven, D.A. (2018). *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness. Practices for Safe and Transformative Healing*. W.W. Norton & Company

Trevarthen, C. (2005). Stepping Away from the Mirror: Adventures of Companionship. Reflections on the Nature and Emotional needs of Infant Intersubjectivity. In *Attachment and Bonding: A New Synthesis*. Dahlem Workshop Report 92. Cambridge, MA: eds. Carter, C.S., Ahnert, L., Grossman, K. E., Hrady, S. B., Lamb, M. E., Porges, S. W. & Sachser, N. The MIT Press. pp. 55-84.

Tversky, B. (2019). *Mind in Motion: How Action Shapes Thought*. Basic Books.



Contact Info

Katarina Lundgren

MiMer Centre

katarina@mimercentre.org

mimercentre.org

facebook.com/mimercentre

instagram.com/mimercentre

mimer-centre-school.teachable.com

lu.academia.edu/KatarinaLundgren

THANK YOU!

