

The Effects of TTouch with Traumatic Brain Injuries:
A Presentation on Changing The World One TTouch at a Time for
The Therapeutic Riding Association of Virginia
By Sandy Rakowitz and Robin Bernhard

Robin Bernhard and Sandy Rakowitz gave their presentation, *Changing the World One TTouch at a Time* on Saturday, February 2, 2008 to the Therapeutic Riding Association for Virginia (TRAV).

The material presented shows the multi-faceted impact that we have found TTouch can have with horses and humans, especially for those who have experienced brain injuries and trauma. We reviewed two studies, and then gave a description of some ways we have applied the TTouchees with our group of people who have experienced traumatic brain injuries and who have been learning TTouch. We had a spontaneous and remarkable demo of the effectiveness of wraps with an audience member and one of our head injury group members, Terri Nelson, also shared her experiences of TTouch as well!

Our first informal study showed both short term and cumulative changes that occurred using TTEAM with Robin's mare, Grace. Robin described the behavioral changes that occurred gradually over a year's time while using TTEAM. And then she showed the dramatic changes in Grace's brain wave patterns both while using the EEG and stroking with a wand at the time of stroking Grace as well as the dramatic changes that occurred over a year. I demonstrated the simplicity of Stroking with a Wand with Robin posing as my demo horse!

Our second informal study that took place at the TTouch Celebration was reviewed where volunteers used Clouded Leopard Circles and Heart Hugs on themselves while having EEG assessments. Overall, we saw a calming and balancing of brain wave patterns. Sandy led the TRAV group through a demonstration of the Clouded Leopard Circles and Heart Hugs on themselves for a personal experience that they could take home. Sandy made suggestions for ways to use the TTouchees with the participants' school horses, for self care and with their volunteers and riders back home.

The EEG assessments from this second study suggested that the participants had experienced some kind of head injury in the past. We were so excited to see how TTouch calmed the brainwaves and produced a positive feeling, even in participants who were in pain from their injuries at the time of the assessment. Sandy explained to the TRAV group how she thought about some people she had recently met who had traumatic brain injuries. She saw and heard about the neurological issues that had occurred from their varied accidents. Sandy explained that she had already seen dramatic changes when using the Whole Body Sequence of Connected Lines that is outlined in the Booklet for neurologically impaired horses. The need for those with Brain Injuries to learn TTouchees became obvious to Sandy! So we formed a group to try out how TTouchees might help people with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) improve the quality of their lives.

Applications of TTouch for the Traumatic Brain Injury Group

We described the remarkable journey of our first TTouch group for people with TBI. First, we invited 3 people with head injuries to join us, and asked them each to bring a helper with them to learn the TTouchees as well. We taught our TBI participants TTouchees they could do for themselves beginning with Clouded Leopard Circles. We then showed them the Whole Body sequence of Connected Lines that we adapted from the version used on horses. For the brain injury class, we added in the use of Heart Hugs, Body Wraps, Ear and Mouth Work, Python Lifts, Coiled Python Lifts, and walking the Labyrinth. We have found that TTouchees reduce the impact of many common symptoms. These include problems with pain, mobility, motor function and coordination, concentration and memory.

Consistently with our TBI group participants, **Heart Hugs** were found to be calming and centering; **Body Wraps** helped sharpen the mind, improve focus and help calm emotions; **Clouded Leopard Circles & The Whole Body Sequence of Connected Lines** helped with balance, strength, and pain reduction. After using **Ear TTouches** one woman reflected that the uncomfortable heat in her head redistributed and things felt quiet. Over time, the group members continued to notice how speech has become more fluid again. Everyone loved how the **Mouth Work** helped to ground and center. They came up with the idea of doing ear and mouth work before entering a supermarket to help them deal with the over stimulation that they find there.

Comments from the TBI class Participants:

- *“Sandy, my head pain has improved greatly over the last few months. I don't know if I can convey how much that alone has improved my quality of life. I had begun to believe after 2 1/2 years that it was chronic pain I would have to try to deal with the rest of my life. In my dark moments, it was overwhelming. I'm also sharper and more focused generally. I feel more like "me." That's miraculous. Those improvements fade when I get overloaded, but as I've said in the past -- recuperation time needed after being overloaded is shorter than it used to be (since using TTouch). Again, that's a huge improvement in my quality of life.”*
- *Another time, she wrote, “The TTouch I did today is helping already. I'm not dragging that left foot anymore and I'm a little sharper in the head, with less pain.”*
- *Another participant wrote in her class evaluation after completing six two-hour classes of TTouch, “I learned that there are ways to improve quality of life and medical issues in spite of ongoing problems relating to brain traumas. I think that anyone, brain injured or not, would benefit from this work to lower stress and to enable relaxation.”*
- *One of the Helpers wrote, “The most important thing I learned from class is that the application of the TTouch was physically and emotionally life-changing for the participants. It was incredible for me to see a person change from one state of being to another in just one session. That is, via the touch therapy, I witnessed several participants transform from a stiff, tense, unbalanced body to a body that was relaxed, poised, and much more balanced. Through the entire body-sequencing this was achieved....and it was amazing.”*

During the presentation to the Therapeutic Riding Association of Virginia (TRAV), Sandy gave a demo using a simple TTouch body wrap around the waist. This was one of the simple wraps discovered to be so very effective for people with brain injuries. She offered to let a few people try out the wrap for themselves.

One experience from the group that day was nothing short of a miracle. A woman who suffered the effects of Guillain-Barre's since 1988 was in attendance. Over the years, she had lost all feeling in her feet, legs, arms and hands. Following about 30 seconds with a waist wrap she began to feel warmth and sensation all the way down her legs and into her feet along with some new connection with her hands. She was astounded.

She asked to try the wraps again later in the day, and Sandy wrapped her up around the shoulders, cross-wise around the chest and down her arms in addition to the waist. Tears of joy were streaming down her face as she said her husband had taken her car from her as he was afraid to let her drive due to her numb legs and feet. Now she anticipated driving again as she felt sensation all the way down to the bottoms of her feet. AND, she had been almost ready to give up her therapeutic riding because she couldn't feel anything in her legs and feet while riding. She

stood in her riding position with the wraps on and exclaimed, "Now I can ride!" She was in tears with gratitude at how good it was to be feeling her body again! She was in the wraps for about 5-10 minutes total.

While wearing the wraps he shared that she had been about to take pain medicine just before trying the wrap initially. She decided not to take the pain medication because she was no longer in pain! Initially she was walking around pitched forward. Her movement was stilted and very stiff. After wearing the wraps she was walking free and easy and in great balance.

Guillain-Barré is a disorder in which the body's immune system attacks part of the peripheral nervous system. Symptoms of this disorder include varying degrees of weakness or tingling sensations in the legs. These symptoms can increase in intensity until the muscles cannot be used at all and the patient is almost totally paralyzed. In these cases, the disorder is life threatening. At this point the condition is considered to be a medical emergency.

Remarkable wraps! Her responses of feeling sensation down her legs and into her extremities were immediate and dramatic. Everyone was amazed with the fact that her pain went completely away. She hadn't been pain free in years. It was amazing. What joy.

And a big thanks also go to one of the TTouch for Brain Injury Group Participants. We put her in the spotlight and she eloquently shared some of her experiences for people to hear about! All in all, a great day! We would say it was more than a success!

***Sandy Rakowitz** owns and operates One Heart Healing Center for people and animals in Charlottesville, VA. Sandy is a Certified TTOUCH Practitioner for Companion Animals, TTEAM Practitioner for Horses, Centered Riding Instructor, and Brennan Healing Science Practitioner for people. Sandy integrates these modalities with Animal Communication, therapeutic-grade essential oils and flower essences. Schedule a private session via phone, video conferencing or in person to receive a personalized plan for you. www.onehearthealingcenter.com 434-973-8864 sandy@onehearthealingcenter.com*

***Robin Bernhard, LCSW, MEd** has been in practice since 1985, with an ongoing interest in the integration of the innovative treatments of EMDR, traditional Neurofeedback and LENS Neurofeedback. These, combined with individual or family therapy, dreamwork or sandtray work hasten healing for people suffering from various kinds of trauma. Her areas of specialization include: the neurobiology of attachment, dying, death and bereavement, life transitions, PTSD, creativity and performance enhancement. She has been a consultant to the Hospice of Western New York, the NYS Department of Social Services in Chautauqua County, Chautauqua County Head Start and the Charlottesville-Albemarle Mental Health Association. For EEG assessment information, please contact **Robin Bernhard or Jessica Eure** at The Virginia Neurofeedback, Attachment and Trauma Center. **434-979-4901** bernhard.robin@gmail.com*