

Welcome to the Equid-Nexus Learning Commons!

Thank you for your interest in learning IFS+EMDR Equine Engaged Psychotherapy! We are thrilled to have you learn with us! This document is included to provide you with the basics of the learning commons and the underpinnings of the model. The Self-Led journey is shared with the hope that it helps the reader understand the transformative power of the model and to create hope that permanent healing is possible through engaged connected relationships.

The learning commons was designed to provide you with the foundation of the Equid-Nexus™ model that will help you begin your journey in implementing this transformative approach to equine assisted psychotherapy.

The model is broken down into the following modules:

- Internal Family Systems – Foundations
- IFS Concept of the Self – Beyond the 8C's
- IFS informed EMDR Equine Engaged Psychotherapy
- Building Relational Consciousness through Intersubjectivity
- Self-Led Horsemanship™

Each module contains a guided slide presentation, PDF slide handout, and PDF chapter. Some modules contain additional resources, such as meditations or flow charts. It is recommended that you progress through the modules in the order listed above.

At the present time, there are no CEs offered. However, as the training program grows CEs may be offered in the future. Returning students will be offered coupon codes when CEs are available.

The Equid-Nexus™ facilitation model was created to assist mental health (MH) and equine professionals (EP) in delivering trauma-focused care aimed at helping clients heal relational trauma. Internal Family Systems (IFS) and Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) are both recognized as evidence-based practices for trauma treatment. Specifically adapting these modalities with equine facilitated services, in this case named, “equine engaged psychotherapy (EEP)”, creates opportunities for the client to increase awareness and insight into their relational and attachment patterns by working with the parts that become activated within the relationship with the horse.

IFS can be utilized by licensed mental health professionals and, with some modifications, practitioners such as coaches and others in the helping and healing field. Equid-Nexus in-person experiential trainings and workshops are not intended to replace official trainings by IFSI and therefore are highly encouraged.

The EMDR's 8 phase protocol can only be used by licensed mental health professionals who have completed basic EMDR training through EMDRIA. However, the information provided within the IFS informed EMDR Equine Engaged Psychotherapy section is an adapted protocol to be used as a framework for practitioners. Equine professionals are invited to train alongside their mental health professional counterpart, as knowledge of the model will serve them well as they focus on the horse's responses to the client within the context of the session. It is also an invaluable lens used specifically within Self-Led Horsemanship™ component of the Equid-Nexus model.

Jenn Pagone is the creator of Equid-Nexus, and is a licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC) with a masters degree in clinical professional psychology and an undergraduate degree in psychology with a minor in gender studies. She has been in the mental health field since 2001 and has been treating women with trauma on a full-time basis for over 15 years. She has extensive training in treating eating disorders, dissociation, somatic disorders, and women who have experienced breast cancer and infertility. Her graduate level training was psychodynamic psychotherapy with a special focus on attachment. She has a background in teaching undergraduate classes in clinical psychology and has been a speaker at various conferences on trauma, eating disorders, IFS, and equine engaged psychotherapy.

Jenn has earned multiple certifications in order to provide the best treatment for her clients and best practices and education for her students and consultees. She is certified in IFS and has completed Level 1, three Level 2's (Deepening and Expanding, Addictions and Eating Disorders, and Intimacy from the Inside out), and trained with Dick Schwartz in Level 3. She is advanced trained and certified in EMDR and serves as a Consultant In Training (CIT) with the specialization of integrating IFS within the original 8 phase protocol. She is Master Certified with the Syzygy Institute and serves as a Lead Guide for IFS informed EMDR workshops. Jenn is advanced certified with the Natural Lifemanship Institute (NL) and is a trainer. She was previously certified and advanced trained in the Eagala model since 2012.

In addition to these training roles, Jenn has a full-time private practice, Pagone Psychological Services, PLLC, and owns Whispering White Horse Stables, a therapeutic horse ranch in Marengo, IL. She has co-authored a chapter, *Blended Therapy Modalities in Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy: Integrating the Internal Family Systems Model (IFS) and Equine-Connected Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EC-EMDR) into the Natural Lifemanship Practice of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)* in the book [Integrating Horses into Healing](#).

The Equid-Nexus team is comprised of individuals that have extensive experience and expertise in their scope of practice:

Kim Jozwiak, LCPC, EMDR Certified and Equine Professional, Private Practice owner - [Kimberly Jozwiak](#)

Kristin Helm, LISC, IFS Level 1 Trained, EMDR Certified, [Owner of Compassionate Counseling](#)

Jenn McPeak, IFS Informed Coach and Equine Professional

Jenn would like to acknowledge her mentors and colleagues that have supported this work and endeavor to support others in the pursuit of healing relational trauma through engaged connection with horses – the Jobe Family (the Natural Lifemanship Institute), Sara Sherman (Discovery Horse), Gabby Remole (Gateway Family Services), and Dr. Ann McCombs. She has so much gratitude and love for the Syzygy family, especially co-founder Bruce Hersey, and her IFS mentors Robert Falconer and Madeleine Warren.

Most importantly - Thank You for your interest in the Equid-Nexus facilitation model. We sincerely hope that you find the information useful to your personal and professional growth, and touches the lives of the humans and horses you serve to help heal.

About Equid-Nexus Workshops and Online Trainings

All workshops and online trainings are designed by Jenn Pagone, LCPC. The overview of the Internal Family Systems model (IFS) was gathered from Jenn's participation in her Level 1, Level 2 (Deepening and Expanding, Eating Disorders and Addictions, and Intimacy from the Inside Out), and Level 3 (with Dick Schwartz), Certification Process including extensive individual and group consultations, and her own experiences with treating trauma using IFS and equine assisted psychotherapy.

Equid-Nexus workshops and online trainings are not official IFS trainings, but rather an adaption of IFS into a new facilitation model involving engaged equines. All workshop materials are copyrighted and are not to be reproduced or disseminated. There are a step towards being IFS informed and does not take the place of official IFS trainings. It is highly encouraged for participants to continue their ongoing education by going to the IFS Institute's website (<https://ifs-institute.com/>) and engaging in formal trainings to further their understanding and education.

Onsite experiential therapeutic workshops are offered in Marengo, IL three times a year and will greatly elevate the level of embodiment of the material.

Consultation is **highly** recommended to support you in your learning. Equid-Nexus offers individual and group consultations.

For more information, please visit <https://equid-nexus.com/trainings-consultation>.

All for the love of one horse – For Casper

Whispering White Horse Stables was born out of the love for Jenn's first horse, Casper. Her secure attachment and engaged connection with Casper were catalysts in healing her own relational wounds and complicated grief. Casper was instrumental in helping her clients heal and find themselves by building their own connection with him. He also played a role in teaching Jenn's undergraduate psychology students about equine facilitated services. He was cherished and loved by many.



His legacy lives on through Equid-Nexus, as his healing presence touches the lives of learning facilitators and their clients. Jenn continues to provide direct client services with her herd of nine, in addition to training, teaching and consulting with other professionals.

Believing that the “personal is the professional”, she is committed to supporting the learning journeys for others that begin with knowing themselves; just like Casper did for her. The creation of Equid-Nexus was operationalized from the healing that occurred from their relationship, along with the hope that others can heal themselves within the power of engaged connection and connecting with their own internal systems.

Pain Informs Passion – My Self-Led Journey

One of my earliest memories is when I was five years old and I awoke to my mother braiding my long hair. The small lamp in my room was dim but casted a warm reflection on her face so I could see her tears. She was silent as she braided and it took her a second to realize I was awake. She explained that she had to leave for a little while because she was sick and that dad would be taking care of me and my two older siblings. Her words have been lost of the long years, but I felt her fear and sorrow. She kissed my cheeks and her tears leapt onto my face as if they were my own.

Over the next two weeks, which seemed like an eternity to a five-year-old, I would open the heavy front door of our Southside bungalow and press my face against the cold storm door, waiting for her to return. There were no phone calls from her at the hospital or discussion of her return. I wouldn't eat or go to kindergarten. It was February in Chicago, and the freezing temperature of the window pane was the only thing I could feel.

I can't remember if I was told that she was finally coming home. The memory I hold is watching my father help her out of the car and up the stairs. She was carrying a stuffed bunny holding a baby bunny, and the baby bunny held a carrot. It was a gift for me. The real gift is that she was alive. I started eating again.

Returning to school was not so easy and I refused to leave my mother. She explained that I had to go to school or she would get into trouble. She promised me she would not go home after she dropped me off at school. Instead, she said she would wait in the car parked in the lot behind the school. While this little white lie got me back into the building, I developed severe separation anxiety and it found expression through obsessive hand washing that lasted until my mid-thirties.

This memory is only one of many that involved my mother being medically unwell. Her coping strategies and social support were minimal, which led to more illnesses and a cycle of fear and dread for me. I honestly do not remember my mother being well or hopeful that she would be able to achieve a baseline of health and wellness. Since the focus was on her, I never once thought or imagined that her health issues had any impact on me. However, I was very aware that her anger, rage and dysregulation had a very significant reverberation within my system. It wasn't until much later that I realized the pain and grief that she carried was simply too much for her to bear.

She was barely discussed after she died. It almost felt that she had been erased from the family history. I internalized my grief and a part of me shut off from other people. I was just beginning adulthood and tried to move on with my life. The heaviness of my muted sorrow insulated me from establishing healthy relationships with secure attachments. I felt disconnected and dead inside.

A part of me wanted meaningful relationships, but another part was completely terrified. I would move towards friends, but then back away when they got closer to me. I needed a lot of space and a big bubble around me. Unconsciously I kept myself hidden, even to

myself. Working full-time in downtown Chicago and going to school at night was the perfect distraction from thinking or feeling anything other than clinical psychology. Time moved forward and I felt happy and hopeful when I met the man that would later become my husband.

When I realized how difficult closeness and vulnerability were for me, I sought therapy. No one had ever asked me about my childhood or my relationships with my parents. I still remember the moment when literally everything shifted. The therapist asked a very simple, but loaded question, “how do you feel about your mother’s death?”. In that moment I felt myself as the five-year-old with her face pressed against that cold glass. I began to cry and gasped “how could she leave me?”. This was the start of my healing journey.

I began to get to know myself over the next few years of ongoing personal therapy and professional clinical training. My perspectives became clearer and I became more secure in myself. Translating that confidence within a relationship that required vulnerability was a whole other animal. That is, until I met the animal that forever altered the course of my life.

As a clinical psychotherapist, I had worked within the equine assisted psychotherapy field and had some amazing moments with horses. In my personal life, I had always had cats and dogs, and they were my babies since my husband and I did not have children. Casper was entirely different. To express in words that he saw me and I felt him is an underwhelming understatement. Time stood still when we were together, in the manner that nothing else mattered or existed outside of our connection.

I had a distinct felt sense that he would never purposefully hurt me (even after I broke a rib falling off him after landing a jump, which was completely my fault). Never have I had the experience of trusting someone or something so completely. There were no words – only a felt sense of connection and communication through mindful intention.

Becoming securely attached with Casper meant that I needed to be connected with myself in order to feel the connection. We may think we are connected to something, but when there is an active, reciprocal engagement with congruent expression we feel it. It wasn’t scary to repair a rupture within our relationship because Casper was always consistent with his reactions. Meaning, I started to believe that I wasn’t a horrible person if I made a mistake, because I had new evidence that nothing terrible would happen. More importantly, I began to understand and accept forgiveness for my shortcomings.

The healing that occurred through my relationship with Casper evolved over time and increased my insight into my own behavior, beliefs and reactions. I began to see myself differently and became more confident. This increased connection translated into more fulfilling relationships with others. I no longer had parts that resisted vulnerability, but instead became curious about what the vulnerability may yield. I befriended my protectors in the spirit of understanding and helped them to realize that there was finally an adult in the room that could take care of things so they wouldn’t have to work so hard. And then there was the five-year-old, frozen in time and still standing by that cold storm door waiting

for her mother. I helped her unburden her pain so she could be free. She no longer had to wait for love to return to her because she will always have mine.

Connected with my internal system also provided me with the gift of articulating and processing my mother's parts and their impact on me. Emotional material that I was unable reach due to my protector's positive intention to save my heart from further fracture. The poem below is reflective of my own healing journey through IFS. I include it here as an invitation to get curious about what healing may feel like for your system. My hope is that it inspires you to invest in yourself and heal the pain that waits for you.

From my Mother to my Self

There were many of you, but I saw only one, slight changes in front of my eyes like a breeze through a curtained window

I couldn't tell if you remembered or if I should believe myself. As I was only a child, but my sense of you spanned many lifetimes

I would cry at the school door, begging you not to leave me. But despite past white lies, I trusted the You that promised to patiently wait beyond the barred windows and past the concrete playground. A place where I always felt the familiar comfort of numbness.

My little body would stiffen when the rage came, almost never at me, but I could feel your wave coming, like knowing the next note to the song we would sing to remind me of the fleeting happy moments between you and me.

Over time those memories became faint and hidden behind a never-ending cloud of cigarette smoke that I could never see through. I smelled that smoke as I laid on the cold floor next to your bedroom door. Pleading with any part of you that recognized me to let me in, or tell another white lie that would momentarily pacify me until the next heartbreak. Instead, I felt only your darkness and despair, that which swallowed you whole... leaving me again... and in your absence I couldn't remember to cry to release my own grief.

And then you grew old overnight, and by your own hand canceled out your remaining years, slowly and steadily. I never asked why, but I knew. Little bits and pieces that parts of you shared of the tragic tapestry that was your own childhood. Reminding me that some parts did their very best, even if I did not benefit from their protection.

After your death, parts of me grieved parts of You. And I was alone again. Without the familiar and brave You that I loved. The parts that showed me compassion and patience, perspective and clarity.

Instead, I was haunted by the You's that created my own tragic tapestry, that I have spent a lifetime trying to disentangle from.

The me of today still has parts that are still waiting for the You who loved me. But now, the difference is that I am fully present, as my true inner Self holds all of the parts of me that you couldn't care for. For your inner children's cries drowned out my own.

Today I no longer carry the burdens that are not mine. They have been released from my hallowed chest through red ribbons taken up by the wind into the farthest part of the night sky. Perhaps you can see them and know I'm alright.

For now, I gently send you my gratitude and compassion for all of your tries. With age, I no longer can remember your words or your laugh... only a faint image of your very tired smiles. I have emerged victorious as I can no longer pulled into the undertow of your anger. But... I recognize you in the familiar breeze that moves the trees, and in the rhythm of my own heart and breath. For you made me and we will always be together, because when I close my eyes, I feel you in my heart.