

## HORSE TALES HUNTER VALLEY ... BUILDING STRONGER TEENS THROUGH HORSES



**Horse Tales Equine Assisted Learning Program** has been developed to provide young people a safe "Hands On" learning experience with horses for personal growth and development.

Using the connection between horses and humans, each young person is given an opportunity to explore and strengthen their awareness of their feelings, thoughts, self beliefs and behaviors in a secure environment, supported by a reliable relationship with their co-companion – the horse - under the guidance of a Youth and Family Counsellor and Equine Behaviorist.

Studies have shown that **"the brain changes physically in response to experience"** (Seigal) by activating neural firing which enhances new connections amongst neurons and neuroplasticity. This is enhanced by focused attention, aerobic activity, novelty and emotional arousal. The unique learning environment on the Horse Tales program combined with the ground based horse activities creates the perfect environment for these changes to occur. **The knowledge and skills learned and discovered within the Horse Tales program enable these new pathways to develop and be strengthened.**

Throughout the learning process - the young person's life experiences are paralleled with the horses own story, providing opportunity for insight and change. Growth in the areas of Self- Awareness, Boundaries, Communication, Confidence, Behavior Management, Mindset, Trust, Leadership, Teamwork and Accountability become evident.

As learning and adrenaline are linked for both horses and humans, we teach the use of the breath and mindfulness strategies for energy /emotion management. This assists in lowering adrenaline levels for the horse and young person, enabling the young person to learn greater self-control in life situations. At the end of the program a new sense of skills, knowledge, abilities and hopes are recognized within each participant that is transferred into their home and learning environments.

The program is delivered on a weekly basis over 6 weeks in 2-hour sessions at Hunter Natural Horsemanship Centre, and can also be delivered as custom designed one day workshops. Participants work in partnership with their own horse throughout the program and group sizes are limited to 6 participants to meet the learning outcomes. Our outdoor classroom provides the perfect place for group reflections, affirmations, peer support and new friendships to develop.

Young People are given an opportunity to display their skills and knowledge learned from the program to a significant other in the final session, which is followed by a celebration of achievements. Participants are presented with a personal learning journal full of photos of personal achievements and information around their learning for ongoing reflection.

The Horse Tales program was developed and is facilitated by **Fran Griffen** - Owner of Hunter Natural Horsemanship Centre & Author of **"Communication and Confidence with Horses"** with over 30 years experience as an equestrian coach and **Lisa Dyer** - Youth and Family Counsellor , trained in EAL/EAP with over 20 years experience working in Victoria and NSW with at risk Youth and their Families.