

# Fighting PTSD with Horses

## PTSD Amongst Veterans:

- The symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has linked this disorder to increased suicide rates amongst trauma survivors (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs).
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder has become a growing disorder in the United States affecting nearly 12% of all veterans (Howley).
- To combat the symptoms of this disorder, the therapeutic riding and rehabilitation center, Hands & Hooves, offers a program to give veterans a weekly activity to look forward to.
- According to Johnson et al, “THR [therapeutic riding] is effective at improving coping skills and in lessening one’s difficulty with emotional regulation, especially with longer riding interventions” (5).

## Helping Hands:

- The “Helping Hands” program at Hands & Hooves is designed specifically for veterans who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- By introducing the veterans to each of the horses and teaching basic horsemanship, they build on these skills during their time at Hands & Hooves.
- Doing hands-on work with such large creatures who can sense emotions, the veterans work on focusing their energy into positively helping the horse.

## Works Cited:

"How Common is PTSD in Veterans?" *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*, 24 Sept. 2018, [www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common\\_veterans.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp). Accessed 21 Nov. 2019.

Howley, Elaine K. "Statistics on PTSD in Veterans." *U.S. News & World Reports*. *U.S. News & World Reports*, health.usnews.com/conditions/mental-health/ptsd/articles/ptsd-veterans-statistics. Accessed 26 Nov. 2019. Originally published in *U.S. News & World Reports*, 28 June 2019.

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## My Experience:

- I was a group leader in the “Helping Hands” program working with the veterans weekly.
- A visible difference was noted in the demeanors of the “Helping Hands” participants.
- The veterans who participated in the program said they felt less stressed, more comfortable in social interactions, and inclined to partake in activities.

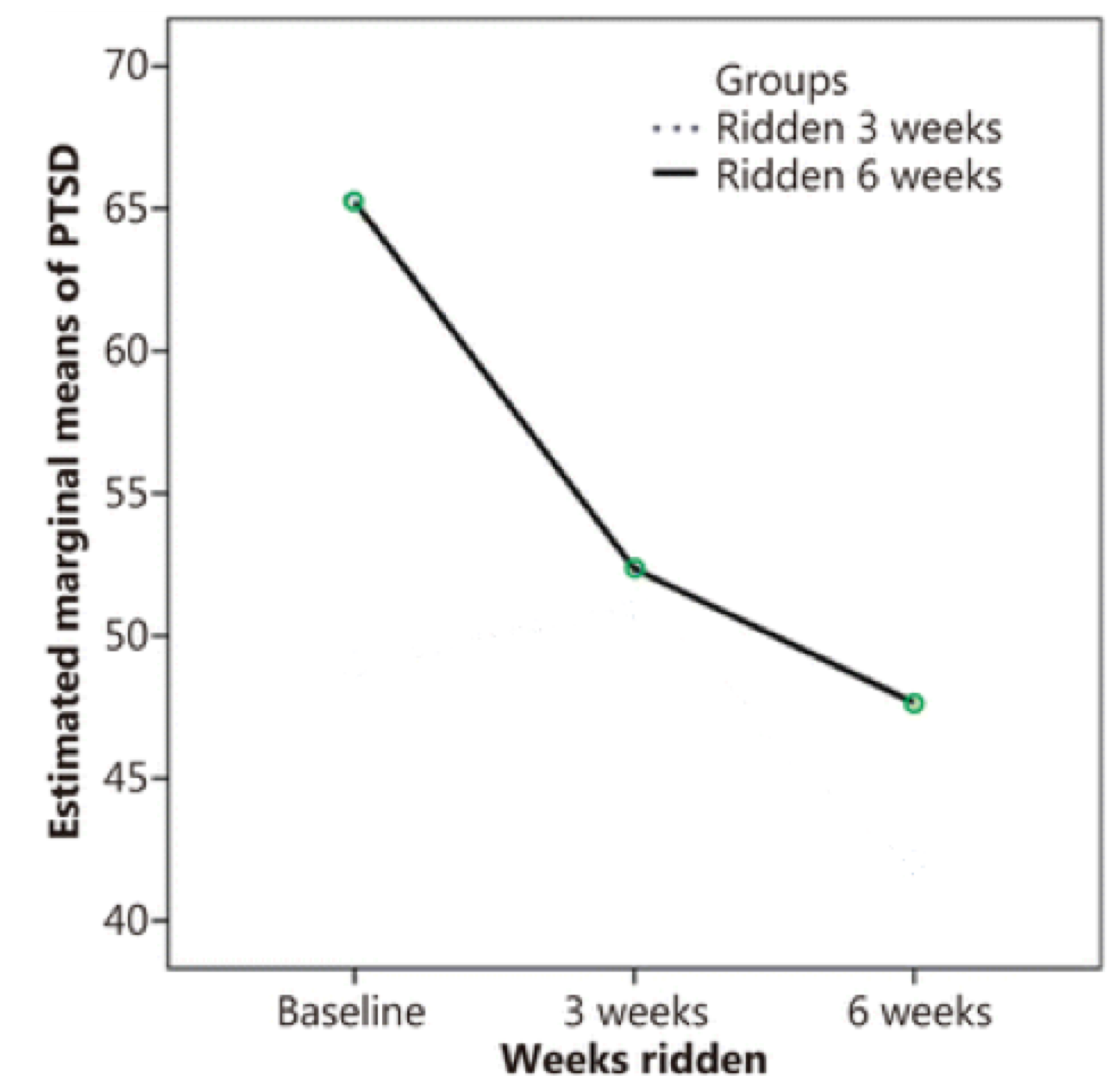


World War II veteran, Norman “Norm”, visiting the “Helping Hands” program at Hands & Hooves to relive his glory days as a farrier for the United States Army (Owens).



## Takeaways:

- Veterans deserve to live the rest of their lives in peace, especially after sacrificing an incredible amount for our country.
- My research has found that therapeutic riding has successfully reduced the presence of common PTSD symptoms including: stress, anxiety, and lack of confidence in social settings.



A consistent decrease in PTSD symptoms is seen in veterans who continued this therapy from week four to week six (Johnson et al.).

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