

Benefits of Equine-Assisted Psychotherapies in the Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Combat-Exposed Military and Veterans: A Literature Review

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Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Symptoms of PTSD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Lehavot et al., 2019)
- Negative impacts of PTSD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Kehle-Forbes et al., 2016; Wisco et al., 2014)
- Prevalence of PTSD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Fisher et al., 2021; Wisco et al., 2014)
- Combat exposure and PTSD (Kehle-Forbes, et al., 2016; Kehle-Forbes, et al., 2014)

Current Treatments

Recommended

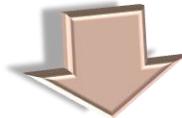
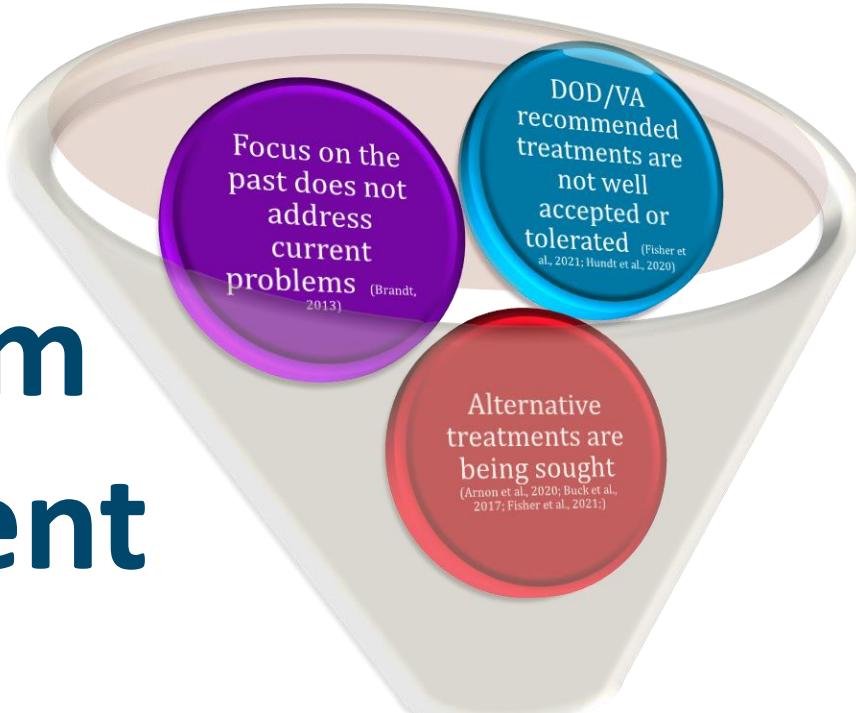
US Department of Defense (DOD)/Veterans Affairs (VA) offers exposure-based therapies

(Hamblin, 2019; Kehle-Forbes et al., 2016; Sciarrino et al., 2020; Steenkamp et al., 2015; Wharton et al., 2019)

Problems

- **Avoidance** (Arnon et al., 2020; Hundt et al., 2020; Marchand et al., 2021; Steenkamp et al., 2015)
- **Dropout rates** (Arnon et al., 2020; Fisher et al., 2021; Hundt et al., 2020; Marchand et al., 2021)
- **Lack of improvement** (Fisher et al., 2021; Kehle-Forbes et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2021)

Problem Statement



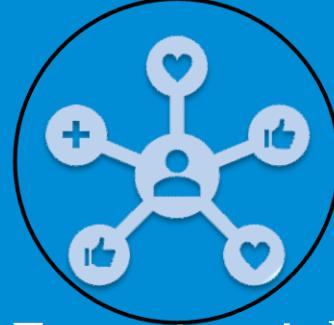
EAP is one treatment with promise
(Arnon et al., 2020)



Mental health treatment by professional providers (Flynn et al., 2022)

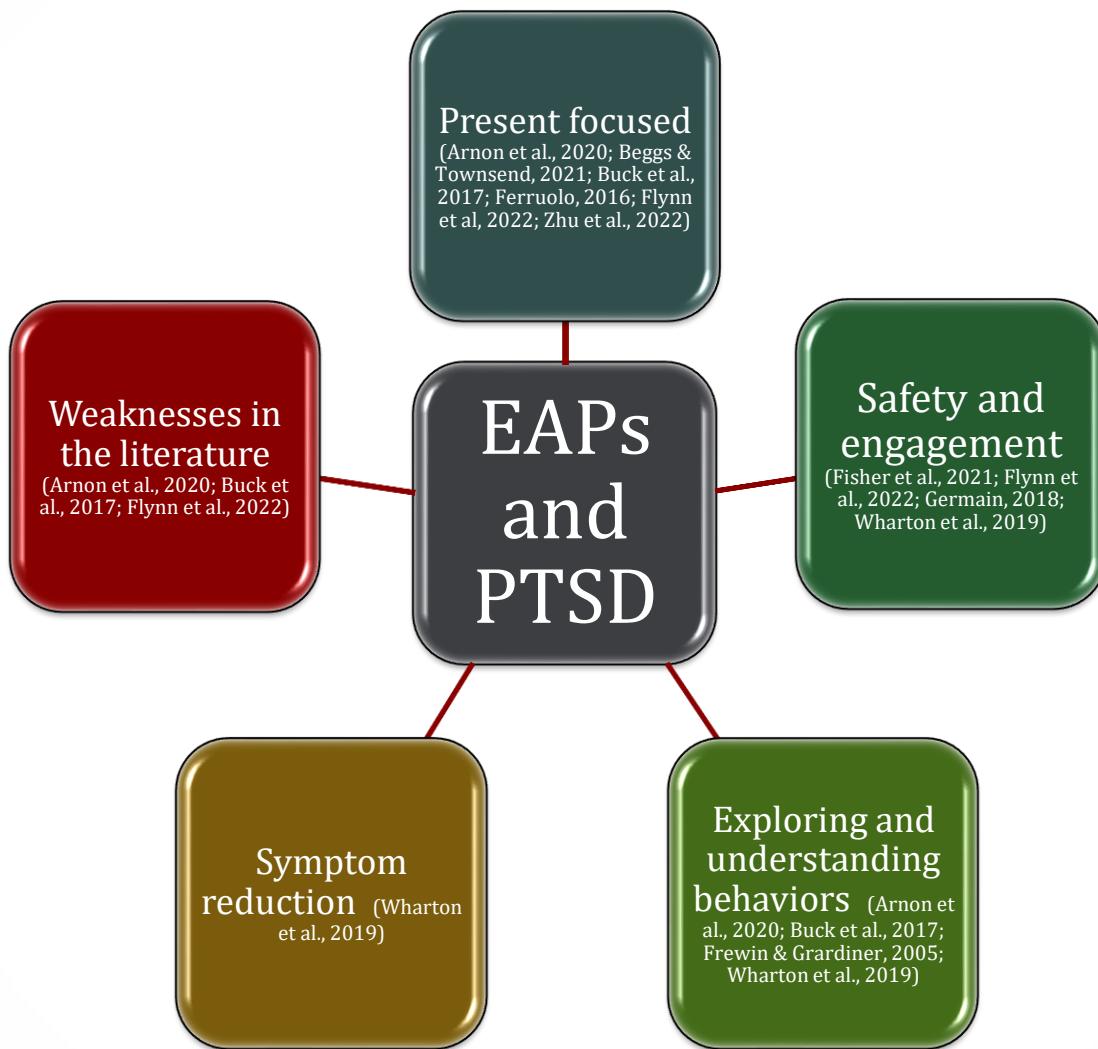


Equines specified in planned interventions
(Beggs & Townsend, 2021; Buck et al., 2017)



Experiential and present focused but can address the past (Arnon et al., 2020; Beggs & Townsend, 2021; Buck et al., 2017; Ferruolo, 2016; Flynn, 2022; Zhu et al., 2021)

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)



Proposed Mechanisms of Action

- Changes in the brain (Arnon et al., 2020; Fisher et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2021)
- Reduction in stress hormones (Burton et al., 2019)
- Improved relational attachment (Burton et al., 2019; Compton, 2019, Fisher et al., 2021; Wharton et al. 2019)
- Practicing (Brandt, 2013; Buck et al., 2017; Compton, 2019; Frewin & Grardiner, 2005; Nieforth & Craig, 2021)
 - Behaviors
 - Emotions

Proposed Mechanisms of Action

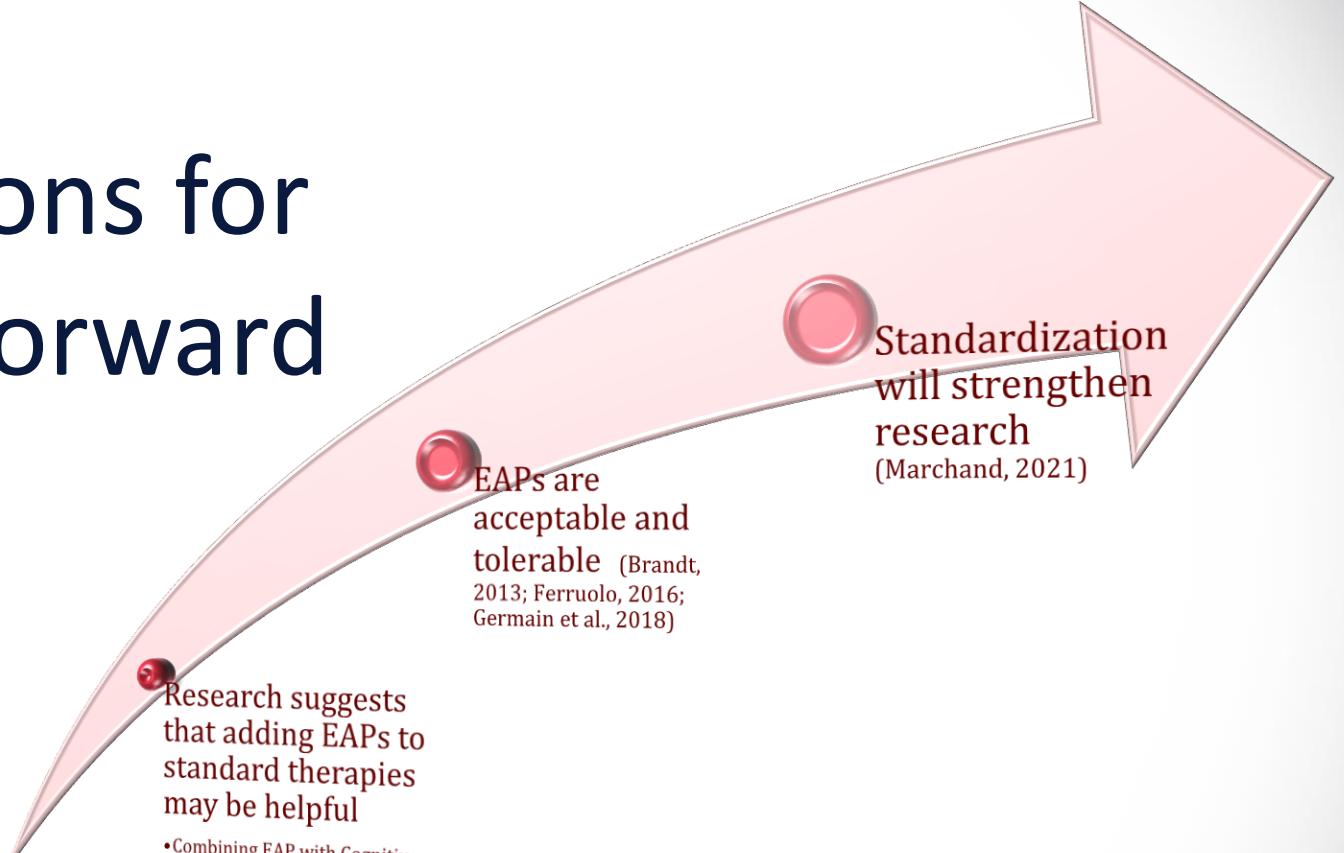
Changes in the brain (Arnon et al., 2020; Fisher et al., 2021;
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Reduction in stress hormones (Burton et al., 2019)

Improved relational attachment (Burton et al.,
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Practicing (Brandt, 2013; Buck et al., 2017; Compitus, 2019; Frewin &
Grardiner, 2005; Nieforth & Craig, 2021)

Implications for Moving Forward



Research suggests that adding EAPs to standard therapies may be helpful

- Combining EAP with Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) (Wharton et al., 2019)
- Adding EAP to Treatment-As-Usual (TAU) did not change outcomes (Burton et al., 2019)

EAPs are acceptable and tolerable (Brandt, 2013; Ferruolo, 2016; Germain et al., 2018)

Standardization will strengthen research (Marchand, 2021)

Christian Worldview

- Soul wounds are difficult to overcome (Pro 18:14)
- Man can learn about God through creation (Job 12:7-10; Rom 1:20)
- Animals are responsive and obedient to God (Gen 7:8; 1 Kgs 17:4; Dan 6:22; Jon 1:17, 2:10)
- Others are important (Ecc 4:9-12)
- Horses demonstrate some characteristics of God
 - Non-judgmental and forgiving (Psa 86:5, 130:4; Rom 8:27, 5:8)
 - Impressive, majestic, and powerful (Deu 3:24; Job 39: 19-21; Psa 28:7; Isa 12:2; Jude 1:25)

Questions?



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