

Ten Tips for Incorporating DIR framework and Hippotherapy

1. The DIR framework based on understanding of development, individual differences and relationship building. Therapist should have this in mind with both the clients they work with as well as the horses that are their partners in therapy.
2. **D= development.** Where is your client in their social emotional development? How can you use the equine environment to meet the client where they are at? The horses' movement can often help children at the first developmental milestones to improve their response to sensory input and self regulation.
3. **D= development.** Where is your horse in his/her training and development? Is your horse able to meet the needs of the client and your requests during your therapy session? Development of your horses' skills in movement, suppleness and response to the handler are important.
4. **I= individual based.** Understanding your clients' individual sensory differences and unique family needs will improve the quality and success of your therapy. The therapist will careful select treatment strategies based on the individual differences of the client.
5. **I= individual based.** Use of equine movement and the equine environment can assist with sensory modulation, sensory processing and sensory based motor deficits.
6. **I= individual based.** Your partner horse also has individual based differences in how they react and process sensory events and react to clients. For optimal results match horses and clients on individual based differences.
7. **R= relationship building.** The relationship you have with your client and their family will impact the success of your treatment. Floortime methods provide guidance on relationship building based on a child's social and emotional development. The client must have a trusting relationship with you to be willing to participate in an equine assisted therapy session.
8. **R= relationship building.** Incorporating DIR into my treatment framework includes modeling techniques and explaining them to family and caregivers. Home carryover is paramount.
9. **R= relationship building.** What relationship do you have with your partner horse? Does the horse respect you? Therapists working in this environment must improve their teamwork skills. Relationships between you, your partner horse, horse handler and therapy aide are all part our success or failure during therapy.
10. The DIR framework has improved my abilities working with children with developmental differences while incorporating hippotherapy into my occupational therapy strategies.