

Outline of Plan: Developing Mental Skills and Self-Awareness for Young Equestrian Riders

1. Introduction

- **Presenter:** Savanna Stirling (MSc Psychology), 4* Eventing Rider, Hypno-Psychotherapist in Training
- **Purpose:** To present a comprehensive program that helps young equestrian riders develop essential mental skills, self-awareness, and goal-setting strategies that contribute to their growth as riders and individuals.
- **Why This Matters:** Mental skills and self-awareness are as critical as physical skills in equestrian sports. By cultivating these areas, young riders can build confidence, manage stress, nerves and cope in pressure situations as well as set meaningful and achievable goals, leading to improved performance and overall well-being.

2. Program Components

1. Self-Awareness Workshop: Understanding Your Best and Worst Self

- **Objective:** To help riders recognize and understand their strengths and weaknesses, and identify strategies to enhance their performance. This is to help riders learn about themselves which will in turn help them develop coping skills, problem solving skills and understanding for how to manage their emotions in high pressure situations.
- **Key Activities:**
 - **Introduction:** Engage with riders by introducing yourself and the concept of self-awareness.
 - **Best vs. Worst Self Exercise:** Encourage riders to describe what their best and worst selves look like, and discuss strategies to move from worst to best (e.g., music, meditation, sleep, nutrition).
 - **Problem solving skills element:** This part is to teach them to solve problems, and understand that setbacks are key to growth and without them we cannot move forward, mistakes help us learn.
 - **Surrounded by similar problems:** An exercise that helps riders realise that they are not alone and everyone around them has dealt with or is going through something similar to them.
 - **Mental Skills Development:** Teach breathwork, self-talk, and mental imagery techniques to manage nerves and build confidence (self workshop horses).

2. Goal Setting Workshop: Reflect, Set, Succeed

- **Objective:** To guide riders in setting specific, actionable goals that align with their strengths and areas of improvement.
- **Key Activities:**
 - **Reflection:** Riders reflect on their previous season's successes and areas for improvement.
 - **Strengths and Improvements:** Identify strengths and areas that need development.

- **Goal Setting:** Help riders set goals based on their reflections and break them down into bite sized chunks. Also teaching the art of setting goals for each event to create expectations and not to base goals off external factors but internal ones to manage future progression.
- **Action Plan:** Develop a weekly action plan with small, consistent steps toward achieving their goals.
- **Measurement and Support:** Identify how progress will be measured (e.g., video analysis, coach feedback) and who will support the rider (e.g., coaches, parents, peers)(goal setting workshop).
- **Final Q & A:** A chance for the riders to ask lots of questions and finalise their understanding of the last 2 workshops.

3. Why This Program is Beneficial

- **Mental Resilience:** Riders will learn skills to cope with the pressures of competition and setbacks by employing mental skills.
- **Confidence Building:** By understanding their strengths and setting achievable goals, riders will develop greater self-confidence. Plus actioning some exercises to consistently grow confidence.
- **Enhanced Performance:** The combination of self-awareness, goal-setting, and mental skills will lead to better preparation, focus, and performance in riding.
- **Holistic Development:** The program not only aims to improve mental skills but also contributes to the riders' overall personal development, preparing them for challenges both in and out of the arena.