



Taking the REINS

As equine therapy inspires luxury-spa menus with the aim of chiseling away at modern-day stress, Marcia DeSanctis assesses her life—and calls in the cavalry.

On a pristine Santa Fe morning, I leave a half-eaten stack of blue corn pancakes on my hotel bedside table and traverse a dried riverbed across the property to a handsome little ranch. The air smells of juniper and pine, and my pulse is racing. I am about to come face to face with four giant horses, and I'm terrified.

Like many destinations looking to tap into the white-hot world of wellness, the Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado added the EQUUS Experience to its spa menu of massages and facials in the spring. The program claims to “inspire lasting change and breakthrough learning” via the healing powers of horses, according to Santa Fe native Kelly Wendorf, a lifelong equestrian with a background in

neuroscience, who conceived the multi-hour or multi-day program and runs it with her partner, Scott Strachan. “It’s about radical self-inquiry.”

The field of equine therapies is booming, thanks in part to our warp-speed modern lives, which often leave us craving a pathway back into the natural world. Occupational therapists integrate horseback riding into the care of patients with cerebral palsy and autism, and mental health professionals certified in equine therapy use the majestic beasts in their treatment strategy for addiction, eating disorders, depression, and PTSD. “I’ve seen people get more out of one session in the horse arena than in dozens of sessions with me in the office,” says Laura Grant, Psy.D., a clinical psychologist and equine therapist in South Hadley, Massachusetts. **BEAUTY>80**

HORSE AND CARRIAGE

ANIMAL-GUIDED TREATMENTS, SUCH AS THE EQUUS EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AT THE FOUR SEASONS IN SANTA FE, ARE DESIGNED TO HELP EASE MENTAL BURDENS BY CREATING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS. PHOTOGRAPHED BY BRUCE WEBER FOR VOGUE, 2012.

Equipped with large and sensitive nervous systems, these ancient animals have an exquisite ability to read scent, brain waves, and body language, so they are keenly attuned to humans' emotional states and able to deliver nonthreatening feedback. This makes it easy for the quartet of horses at the ranch to size me up when I arrive: These days, I can't see my way around life's persistent roadblocks, and neither can my therapist.

There is no set syllabus at EQUUS, because whereas fear has a big hold on my life—the fear of aging, that I'll never finish my book, that I'll end up in an Alzheimer's home, like my mother—other people may need to explore different things: boundaries, creativity, grief, leadership, or joy. I approach the horses, expecting them to rear and trample me, and my heart threatens to catapult onto the sand. But as I chat to them and stroke their manes, never mounting them, each remains somewhat calm, expressing its own personality. One is playful, another wary. Cooper, a brown quarter gelding with gorgeous undulating flanks, catches my eye. Three hours pass dreamily as I amble from horse to horse, until the strangest thing happens: They all lie down on the ground.

"The horses are saying, Fear isn't something you have to get over," Wendorf explains. As long as I put up no false front, they can relax, which brings me peace as well. I wonder why fear should ever defeat me. When I get back to the hotel, I weep.

The next morning, some equine magic draws me back to

Cooper. He presses up against me with warm support, like a gentle nurse. What can I say? I connect with this nearly 900-pound champion as if he were a mirror. "He doesn't engage much," Wendorf tells me, explaining that Cooper is a thinker who tends to live inside his head. "But when he does, it's serious."

It is also seriously mystifying. The area of equine therapy still lacks robust research, but some scientists, including Tim Shurtleff, a lecturer on occupational therapy at Washington University in St. Louis, hypothesize that changes in brain chemistry that lower stress-inducing cortisol and raise bond-building oxytocin levels occur when a person is in contact with a horse. "It's hormonal," he says. It's also spiritual, which is how Noreen Esposito, PMHNP, an equine therapist who teaches nursing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, describes the "deep and real" connection when I return home to Connecticut, desperate to make sense of what happened to me in Santa Fe.

As the weeks go by, I nurture a new relationship with my fear—that living with it, rather than struggling against it, could in fact lead to better writing, more inner peace, and more acceptance of passing time. If the horses possess an ability to reflect only what is true, then my truth is that fear is not a force holding me back. "There are other things that they reflected back to you," Wendorf writes in an email. "Those are for you to continue to discover." □

BEAUTY > 82

"I've seen people get more out of one session in the horse arena than in dozens of sessions with me in the office," says Laura Grant, Psy.D., a clinical psychologist

Fragrance

IDYLLWorship

In 1993, photographer Mario Sorrenti and his then-girlfriend Kate Moss set off for a secluded island, armed with rolls of film and a bottle of Calvin Klein's Obsession. The campaign that followed redefined the visual language of perfume. Bracingly intimate, the black-and-white stills and gauzy 16mm footage managed to freeze time and transcend it. "We were in this beautiful, crazy place in our minds, and the emotion was very honest," Sorrenti recalls of their ten-day shoot on Jost Van Dyke, in the British Virgin Islands, with no hair, no makeup, no stylists. "Somehow it hit a nerve." Decades later, an appreciation for the nineties' raw aesthetic has sparked a meta-infatuation with the model as seen through Sorrenti's lens. It has also inspired a meta-perfume. For his first fragrance at the helm of Calvin Klein, Raf Simons riffs on Obsession with the new white lavender and musk-laced Obsessed for Women, which will be released with a series of unseen outtakes from Sorrenti's original shoot. To a generation raised to contest so-called truth in advertising, the stripped-down portraits still resonate. "She's present without anything dictating that it's 1993 or 2017, which offers an interesting space to question what makes something feel timeless and authentic," says Mike Eckhaus, cofounder of the label Eckhaus Latta, whose spring campaign starred street-cast couples. There's power in that real-world relatability, he explains: "being curious about what is human and making something that we can all feel a part of." —LAURA REGENDORF

TRUE ROMANCE

A NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN OUTTAKE FROM THE 1993 OBSESSION CAMPAIGN, STARRING KATE MOSS. FOR CALVIN KLEIN'S NEW PERFUME OBSESSED FOR WOMEN, MARIO SORRENTI REVISITED THE SHOOT WITH AN EYE TOWARD THE "RELAXED, IN-BETWEEN MOMENTS."

