



Therapeutic & Recreational Activities Program

“Creativity & Innovation in Promoting Emotional, Mental, Physical, and Spiritual Growth”

The Therapeutic & Recreational Activities Program at Sierra Tucson (known as TRAP) is unique and eclectic, in that it serves the entire Sierra Tucson community with a variety of dynamic therapies. Specifically designed as an adjunct to primary treatment to enhance a patient’s experience and promote emotional growth, the program also serves visiting families and children in the Family Program. Nancy Jarrell, M.A., LPC, EAP, manages the TRAP team, which is comprised of 10 people with job titles ranging from therapist, fitness specialist, naturalist, equine specialist, equine-assisted psychotherapist, and wrangler. This wide range of skills has allowed the program to develop into one that now offers much more than the name suggests.

Every patient entering treatment receives a fitness assessment. The fitness specialists meet with patients and work with them to incorporate exercise into their program. This can involve supporting patients who have been debilitated by their depression or are in poor physical health due to addiction, or helping compulsive overexercisers find and maintain a healthy balance in their lives. The TRAP Department monitors all patients in the gym and pool and has developed specialty exercise groups for the Mood and Anxiety Program and the Eating Disorders Program. Some of these groups include Yoga, Aqua Tone with a focus on body image issues, meditative stretching, mindfulness in exercise, and opportunities for staff-monitored cardio and strength training. In an Aqua Tone group, the participants may never actually get in the water, as the facilitator may need to engage in process work with the patients around their fear of being seen in a bathing suit. These body image issues will often be similar for both compulsive overeaters and anorexics.

Even Yoga can develop into something very different from our customary experience in a Yoga class. For example, if the anorexic patients want more physical activity and the compulsive overeaters are challenged just to sit on the floor, a therapeutic opportunity is created. Patients can later explore their frustrations and family dynamics as they recognize the connection of their feelings during this group to emotional responses from other situations in their past.

One of the newer groups is a Nature Walk. This activity is specifically designed for chemical dependency patients. Designed as a metaphorical journey through an area in our Sonoran Desert, nature is utilized to entice patients to see themselves with more clarity through the metaphor. A metaphorical approach is at the core of

other experiential groups, which include Equine-Assisted Therapy, the Climbing Wall, Low Ropes Challenge Course activities, and the new High Ropes elements.

On the Challenge Course, patients work in a group and are invited to negotiate challenges. There are 16 elements on this course, but it is important to note that the group itself is the 17th element. What is important in all of our experiential groups is not that patients succeed at a certain challenge, but, rather, what comes up for them while they are attempting to do so.

Equine-Assisted Therapy is a powerful modality that uses a horse or horses as tools for promoting healing and emotional growth. Metaphor is key in this therapy, which forces participants to be congruent, as the horses will mirror back whatever is presented to them. A skilled therapist observes how a horse behaves with the patient and how the patient behaves with a horse and uses this information to explore the patient’s world. Often, feedback from the therapist and the horse will engender emotions, memories, and recognition in the here-and-now of how the patient’s unhealthy behaviors have impacted his/her relationships with self and others. Facilitators often draw from various approaches, including psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, Gestalt, and solution-oriented therapies.

“Out on a Limb,” part of Sierra Tucson’s new High Ropes element, requires participants to climb a telephone pole up to another pole 30 feet in the air that is set parallel to the ground. The participant is then invited to walk across the pole to the other side. The individual is harnessed and belayed to provide safety. An addition to this element now includes climbing even higher to the very top of a support pole and then dunking their patient badge in a bucket. Patients may be

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asked to sing a song of their choice as they take the risk of leaning backwards and letting go as they are belayed down to the ground. An additional element, known as “Boatman’s Chairs,” requires participants to walk from one suspended swinging chair to the next.

The Climbing Wall is also a powerful therapy. We often hear patients reporting surprise that the group was so therapeutic, as in “I just thought I was going to climb up a wall, and I had no idea I would end up working on my trauma history.” Some staff refer to our groups as “sneak therapy”; the effect is often powerful and cathartic. Great skill is required to conduct the interventions and then bring the patient back to emotional safety within a short amount of time. Sometimes activities use blindfolds, tying one patient’s leg to another peer in a tandem climb, carrying weights up the wall, or other factors that enhance the experience and make it more than just an activity.

A paradoxical approach is sometimes used, as when mood and anxiety disorder patients arrive at group feeling lethargic or disinterested. By increasing their anxiety with a very stimulating and fast-paced activity that seemingly presents as risky, the patients are required to be present and alert.

Other activities offered include one-on-one Body Tracings, which may focus on body image issues or trauma and how it is held in the

body. An Expressive Arts group is provided for patients in the Program for Sexual & Trauma Recovery. We also provide meditation groups and trail rides. Some staff are trained in facilitating patient groups in our new labyrinth, which was recently created at Sierra Tucson. The TRAP Department also manages the stables and barn area, as well as 16 other staff members who happen to be horses.

Sierra Tucson’s staff are trained through experience to expect the unexpected. While facilitating a group with a primary focus on chemical dependency, the work may take a different direction towards childhood sexual trauma, for instance. The patients and the horses or the challenges will dictate what the work needs to be. This is where cross-training in all aspects of treatment becomes critical. TRAP staff are skilled in addressing addictions, chemical dependency, eating disorders, trauma, anxiety and mood disorders, and other mental health issues.

Therapeutic and recreational activities require an inordinate amount of skill and focus. In addition to providing therapy, TRAP staff must also monitor patients’ physical and emotional safety and focus on ropes, knots, large animals, and the safety of staff members. Within a diverse range of activities, patients are taken to their deepest fears—and they emerge with profound insight and tools for transformation.

By Nancy Jarrell, M.A., LPC, EAP

Letter from the Executive Director David E. Anderson, Ph.D.

Dear Friend,

I don’t know if a “Top 10 List” originated with David Letterman or not, but it seems that just about everyone has some kind of similar list. So do I, except in the interest of time and space, I’ve whittled it down to the “Top 6 Reasons Why Professionals Like to Send Patients to Sierra Tucson.” This is certainly not based on any formal poll or official survey—just a summary (not in any particular order) of what people often tell me in my role as Executive Director.

1) The well-thought-out and articulated Sierra Model® of treatment. We’re not just “12-Steps-Plus,” and we’re certainly more than just a hodge-podge of eclectic services. Rather, the Model is carefully based on a combination of disease model, family systems formulations, systems theory in general, and integrative medicine and practice.

2) The rich, innovative, and comprehensive programming. And the emphasis on our belief that treatment is only 20% about what must be *subtracted* from our lives (addictions, character defects, worn-out defense mechanisms, etc.), and 80% about all the wonderful things that must be *added* (sense of hope; rediscovered and redefined spirituality; new friends; new ways of thinking, being, doing, and loving).

3) The staff. We have a very rich therapist- and physician-to-patient staff ratio. Our staff are all very passionate about Recovery and Discovery and they are known to “walk the talk.” They’re extremely well-trained and competent and tend to stay employed here for a very long time.

4) Our ability (and desire) to treat people with complex, co-occurring disorders—no doubt a direct consequence of our Model, our programming, and our staff.

5) The emphasis we place (probably more so than most treatment centers) on the central role of the family in both Recovery and Discovery. The Family Program is an entire week of carefully constructed educational programs, group processes, and communication exercises designed to “lock in” recovery for the rest of people’s lives.

6) The beautiful setting of Sierra Tucson and the sense of a total Community-in-Recovery. Obviously, recovery can and does take place in any setting imaginable—but there is something about the majesty of the Santa Catalina Mountains, the lush foliage of the Sonoran Desert and the fabulous Arizona night-time sky that seems particularly conducive to re-establishing personal honesty, balance, wholeness, and health—all in the context of a patient and staff community that is serious about our Calling and our Mission.

There are many other reasons, too: the coordination of treatment plans with referents, the helpfulness of the clinical outreach coordinators, particular clinicians and physicians that people have high respect for... and the list goes on. Also remember that Sierra Tucson provides a safe, nurturing, and special place for those in need of treatment during the holidays.



We hope that you are specially blessed during this holiday season and the new year.

Sincerely, with warmest wishes,

David E. Anderson, Ph.D.

David E. Anderson, Ph.D.
Executive Director

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The New Labyrinth

Sierra Tucson has a new structure on campus—a labyrinth over 42 feet in diameter, made of river rock symmetrically arranged in a circle in the desert. The labyrinth, a single path tool for personal, psychological, and spiritual transformation, was initiated by Specialty Therapist Liz Fitzmorris. Ours is an 11-circuit design, patterned after the famous labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral near Paris, France, which was built around 1200 B.C. A dedication ceremony took place on September 30 with Sierra Tucson staff and Albert Sombrero, and staff training was provided by Grief and Spirituality Consultant Monika Muller.



The single path of the labyrinth (not to be confused with a maze, which has a goal to confound) leads the walker through a pattern that symbolizes the journey from the outer world to one's center and then back into the world again. Labyrinths are thought to enhance right brain activity. To quote labyrinth scholar Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress of San Francisco's Grace Cathedral:

“Why does the labyrinth attract people? Because it is a tool to guide healing, deepen self-knowledge, and empower creativity. Walking the labyrinth clears the mind and gives insight into the



spiritual journey. It urges action. It calms people in the throes of life transitions. It helps them see their lives in the context of a path, a pilgrimage. They realize that they are not human beings on a spiritual path, but spiritual beings on a human path. To those of us who feel we have untapped gifts to offer, it stirs the creative fires within us. To others who are in deep sorrow, the walk gives solace and peace. The experience is different for everyone because each of us brings different raw material to the labyrinth. We bring our unique hopes, dreams, history, and longings of the soul.”

Liz Fitzmorris states, “The structure will offer patients and staff a spacious place in the beautiful natural surroundings, a time away from groups, dining rooms, and appointments to help restore balance in their lives. Walking the labyrinth allows us to reflect on what is most important in life.”



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*Meet Nancy Jarrell, M.A., LPC, EAP
 Therapeutic & Recreational Activities Program Manager*

As Manager of Sierra Tucson’s Therapeutic & Recreational Activities Program (TRAP), Nancy Jarrell’s responsibilities are far-reaching. In addition to supervising, training, and team-building of TRAP staff, Nancy is on the Safety & Risk Committee and oversees management of the horses and stables, recreation center, and pool. She also supervises the challenge activities, fitness assessments and exercise programs, and specialty groups such as Yoga and Expressive Arts Therapy. She is involved in patients’ multidisciplinary treatment teams, program development, and she continues to provide individual Body Tracings and Equine-Assisted Therapy.

Nancy finds her supervisory role to be very fulfilling, partly due to her therapy background. “I enjoy sharing my knowledge about addictions and therapy, helping staff deal with countertransference, and providing support to team members,” she says. “Each person on our team works with patients and helps in their recovery process. I feel honored to work with such skilled, creative, enthusiastic, and diverse staff members.”

After receiving her bachelor’s degree in Spanish from the University of Arizona, Nancy obtained her master’s degree in Counseling Psychology from Prescott College and then became a Licensed Professional Counselor. She believes that her 1997 internship at Sierra Tucson contributed to her versatility. “I was able to experience so many different modalities and programs that I could then jump into many different roles,” she comments. She began

working at Sierra Tucson as a Family Therapist and helped develop the Family Program for the Program for Sexual & Trauma Recovery.

Nancy’s 20-year-old son is a junior at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her 16-year-old daughter, still living at home, is a junior in high school. Nancy likes to try new things, but her greatest hobbies involve the outdoors—hiking, traveling, and, of course, horses.

With a passion for horseback riding since age 7 and a long history of owning and showing horses, trail riding, endurance riding, cattle roundups, etc., it was natural for Nancy to become interested in Equine-Assisted Therapy. She has been trained and certified as an Equine-Assisted Psychotherapist (EAP) through the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA), but she has developed her own techniques that allow for immediate therapeutic results. From the moment the group arrives, Nancy assesses everything about the patients and uses her intuition to determine the most effective plan for each session. She provided insights into



Equine-Assisted Therapy in her article printed in the June 2005 issue of *Counselor: The Magazine for Addiction Professionals*. Nancy stated, “I feel privileged to be part of a magical encounter between horse and human... an effective way to give clients invaluable clarity resulting in a move towards health and recovery.”