

If people asked me for one thing that's made such a difference to my ASD and ADHD, my answer would be: horse-riding. That, is where I feel most free. I feel something that I don't feel anywhere else; it's a different connection, one I can't seem to manage with people! I feel I can relate to horses in my own way, without feeling judged, without the social pressures around me or an overwhelming environment: it's just me, the horse and a bit of peace in my brain. When I'm around the horse I like to look into their eyes and see my reflection, it feels like they can see through me and understand all my struggles without me having to use words to communicate!

Every horse I have met have always had their own personalities. I have two horses that I like to ride the most as I feel we relate to each other well. Millie is my favourite, she's stubborn, hates being told what to do, but she likes to see things first and follow others around. She likes it when people are clear and fair with her! She is the autistic side of my brain!

Then there is Liquorice who hates being still and waiting for her turn. She has a very cheeky side and can be very impulsive. If she wants to do something, she will try very hard to make sure that it happens! She also hates being told off. Liquorice is the ADHD side of my brain, we work well together as I have to contain a lot of my impulsivity to control hers too, which is extremely challenging, but when it works, and it's amazing!

Riding horses is the one thing that makes me stop and think about how another feels about things first. They like things done in certain ways, they get confused when too much information is given to them and they don't understand when you don't give them the right message! Just like my brain! So I make sure I am clear at what I tell them because I know how it feels to feel like you're always in trouble for doing the wrong thing, but, actually, it was because the message wasn't given correctly! There are things I do with horses from reflecting on what I find hard too. I never stand behind them. I know this could scare them. When people are behind me, I feel uncomfortable and spin around. If a horse is tied up, it has no way to fight back other than to kick!

One time this was nearly taken away from me. RfA helped me when I was kicked out of my horse-riding group because my behaviours were too challenging to manage! With help from RfA I was able to have confidence in proving that it isn't me that is too challenging, it's how people support and understand me that either makes it challenging or makes it successful. I have proven this and I am now fully part of my group lesson, where everyone tries to understand me as much as the horses do!

Horses have saved me, they make me feel accepted for who I am! They understand me!

