



LLAMA DEARA RANCH

DAY LEARNING PROGRAMS FOR ADOLESCENTS AT LLAMA DEARA RANCH
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General Information

Students: Adolescents from the Casa de Corazon Residential Treatment Center, mostly ages 13-16, with programs for girls, boys, or both.

Format: Two six-hour summer day programs, one in July and another in August. These programs could continue into the fall, with continuity maintained.

Purpose: Behavior challenges, including obsessions, defiance, and violence, as well as drug and alcohol abuse, evolve from low self-esteem and a lack of respect and empathy for self and others. These workshops will use experiential formats that allow the teenagers to continue to get to know themselves through working with each other, the animals, and earth at Llama Deara. The activities will build cooperation, empathy, and a sense of self worth, in addition to addressing the losses the teenagers may have sustained in terms of divorce, broken homes, violence and death.

Challenges: Adolescents may want most the experience of being heard by the adults in their life and the knowledge that other kids have had similar experiences. This premise, coupled with physical needs, dictates a multifaceted program that keeps the kids stimulated mentally, physically active, and well fed, and combines experiential discovery with times of sharing knowledge and observations.

Philosophy: Change is manifested over time, with hundreds of experiences of being recognized and respected by self, others, and especially by grounded, mature, and fun adults. Quick fixes are not anticipated; the program is committed to the self-care and growth of emotional awareness of each student and the participating staff. The subjects covered, such as nature, animal husbandry, physics, and art, may be resisted, and the seeds can also be planted to grow in the students when appropriate. The agenda at LDR is fluid and expands with the workshop participants.

Didactic Syllabi: The syllabus on didactic discussions, such as animal and human violence, will be available once the program is set.

LDR Staff: Primarily Hannah-Leigh Bull, with perhaps a ranch helper or intern to aid in activities. If further workshops are desired, other professionals can participate, such as a physics, mathematics, and art teacher, for a physics and nature module.

RTC Staff: At least one per four kids.

Possible Summer Dates: July 16, 17, 23, or 24 and August 13 or 14, 2004.

Facilities: Llama Deara is a four-acre ranch, with a number of buildings for human use, as well as structures facilitating animal care and comfort. Only one building will be available to the students: the studio, which has both a bathroom and kitchen and is a very large room appropriate for didactic sessions, breakout groups, and full discussions. The outside areas are generally available to all students and staff, within reason and according to ranch rules.

Supplies: Provided by Llama Deara Ranch.

Food: To be negotiated with the RTC, but can be provided by Llama Deara depending on state rules.

Cost: \$650 per 6-hr day, for a maximum of eight adolescent participants. Family therapy in the company of the animals is possible selectively outside of the day program schedule and at an additional cost.

Website: www.llamadeara.com contains bios of the staff, both two-legged and four-legged, and descriptions of the grounds and services provided.

DAY 1

9:00 – 9:45: Introduction to the camelid family of animals and to the llamas at Llama Deara, with hands-on experiences in the corrals and discussion about the impressions and feelings that arise around these large, gentle, curious animals. These talks and others will focus the youth on learning about themselves in relation to the animals and will foster a respect for the animals that can evolve to self-caring and acceptance.

Handouts will include a guide to interacting with the llamas (see attached).

Respect, boundaries, concurrent emotions, curiosity, conflict resolution, thinking before acting, and family values as modeled by the llamas can be observed and discussed in the context of human relations.

9:45 – 10:30: Written creative activity requiring the kids to write at least a couple of paragraphs about how the *llamas* viewed their interaction with the participants; this will allow the youth to share how they sense they are perceived and give them a chance to voice how they see themselves. The discussion can evolve into assessing the accuracy of their opinions of self. This activity also helps youth learn how to consider their affect on others. Paper and pens/pencils provided. Writing circle in the apple grove or studio.

10:30 – 10:45: Healthy snack, in the apple grove or studio.

10:45 – 11:45: Walk or run down to the *bosque*. At the river forest, time could be spent exploring the ecology, building a meeting place by the river, and being active physically in nature. Depending on safety guidelines, inner tube rafting on the river might be fun and also build trust. Earth Stewardship and Animal Care Challenge are possible activities derived from Project Adventure programs for building connection with others and the Earth.

11:45 – 12:15: Lunch in the *bosque* or apple grove, with unstructured exploration.

12:15 – 1:00: Speaking Circle in the cottonwood cemetery, where kids actually can stand on their stump and speak or not speak. Starting point: If there were only one thing you could share with a stranger about who you are, what would that be. Freedom of speech is encouraged here,

1:00 – 3:00: Because this is a farm, we offer the following invigorating llama farm activities that can teach the kids new practical skills, build social-emotional skills, and lead to income-earning ventures. The kids can choose from these options:

- 1) A vermicomposting project that uses California red worms to convert llama droppings to rich fertile soil (the worms eat through the droppings and create the soil through their excretions). Setting up this project could be energetic and intriguing for the kids. Further workshops would allow the kids to assess the progress of their project.
- 2) Soil preparation, planting, and tending of vegetable or flower gardens, and the concurrent stimulation of the garden of their dreams. If this involves planting from seed, this can help the kids have a more realistic sense of the time it can take to grow in their lives, as well, and help them learn to enjoy the journey.

- 3) Processing llama wool to create felt objects. Wool processing involves the cleaning, carding, and felting of llama fleece. Whether we do the wool processing or the actual creation of clothes items or art objects, this activity is sure to raise self-esteem very quickly, and can be resumed at any time, given that it doesn't depend on tending to our earthworm friends or delicate maturing plants, as options 1 and 2 do. This activity promotes the innate creativity of participants.

Note: The optional activities described on pp 3 and 4 are also possible for kids who are resisting anything related to nature and animals at the moment.

3:00: Return to RTC (or continue to work/play, depending on the attitude of the kids and staff).

DAY 2

9:00 – 9:45: Didactic module on respect for animals and how animal violence can lead to violence among humans; new thoughts on anger management and how to process the injustices in our lives.

9:45 – 10:00: Healthy snack.

10:00 – 10:45: Communion with llamas in the apple grove. Self-assessment of how the kids' relationships with the llamas are growing and what they are noticing about themselves. Definition of their own boundaries and those of the animals. Body language.

10:45 – 11:45: Walk or run down to the *bosque* to see how things have changed and to continue project started down there last month.

Assign pairs or trios. Let the kids explore: How has nature rearranged or enhanced their efforts of the previous month? Have new families of animals taken hold? How has the river changed? What's flowed in their lives since last being here? Does observation come more easily to them? Can they observe, or does their nervous energy prevent them from seeing, smelling, being?

Let them assess this themselves. Let them share their knowledge of animal and plant totems and what they know from their cultures, whether it be drug, pueblo, or blended, among others.

11:45 – 12:15: Lunch in the *bosque* or apple grove, with unstructured exploration.

12:15 – 1:00: Quicksilver Trust-Building Log Activity in the cottonwood cemetery. Some trust-building warm-up exercises, all fairly physical. These exercises build communication skills, creativity, confidence, and trust. Laughter typically abounds.

1:00 – 2:30: Continuation of farm-related projects started in last workshop, or optional activities described below, depending on group.

2:30 – 3:00: Assessment of what they've learned about nature, animals, themselves and each other that they can take back to their homes, school, and the RTC.

3:00: Return to RTC (or continue to work/play, depending on the attitude of the kids and staff).

Optional Activities

Farm life and activities generally teach communication skills, self-confidence, patience, consideration, compassion, and self care, among many other gifts. The following is a sampling of activities that can be integrated into future workshops.

- 1) Creation myths, writing, acting out, speaking the story that brought them where they are at this moment and how they want their lives to be right now. Facilitator will share concrete ideas about goals for right now, such as how to feel more comfortable in this new environment, how to handle relations with fellow students or staff more easily, and so on. As the students feel at ease with the program, discussion can lead to what they want for their lives in a broad sense, including livelihood, family, and friendships.
- 2) Experiential group play/challenges in the apple grove. These exercises will build trust, communication skills, successful group dynamic, and leadership. They are modeled after the Project Adventure and Association for Experiential Education publications. A wealth of fun and invigorating activities exist to help students connect with themselves, nature, and other humans and species. Humor is often emphasized in these activities, which in itself is healing and stress releasing.
- 3) Experiences with a visiting scientist, relating the patterns of nature to physics and math, with discussion of chaos theory and the interconnectedness of all creatures and all acts.
- 4) Down-to-earth discussion of self worth and compassion, skits demonstrating first empathy, self-esteem, thinking before acting, followed by other skits or role-plays that demonstrate cruelty, aggression, and inconsideration toward self and others. Assessment of physical and emotional cues and sensations of various behaviors. New research on the brain and how we grow as humans.

Further Information

For more information about Llama Deara Ranch programs, please contact Hannah-Leigh Bull by email at hlb@llamadeara.com, or by phone at 505-685-9416.