



Katherine

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KATHERINE'S STORY

When uncharacteristic emotional outbursts and anger affected her school and social life, both Katherine and her mom knew it was time to get professional help.

Her Nemours psychologist and psychiatrist worked together to help Katherine, who was a freshman in High School at the time, calm herself in stressful situations. Over the course of treatment, they practiced successful therapies such as coping and communication skills and mindfulness strategies.

“When her care team learned how to incorporate Toby into the treatment plan, things really changed,” notes Katherine’s mom Laura.

Toby is the family’s horse, who, Katherine realized, was a lot like her. “He was easily spooked and at times, out of control,” says Katherine. “I could see so much of myself in Toby,” she recalls.

Katherine’s care team encouraged her to practice mindfulness strategies with Toby. Every day, she worked to help ease his fears and teach him not be scared. “This was the biggest breakthrough for me,” says Katherine. “I remember thinking, ‘I need to do this, too — desensitize myself to obstacles, be like the horse and just get on with it,’” she adds.

Laura says she’s seen immense change in her daughter and Toby. Even with ongoing stressors, Katherine is no longer angry and withdrawn. She’s back to excelling in school and life and continues her therapy with Nemours — and Toby!

Katherine’s success with Toby sparked an innovative Nemours program called ADAPT, which stands for Assisted Dog and Pony Therapy.

ADAPT is a fully integrated animal-assisted therapy partnership that helps kids overcome mental or emotional problems. It combines the experience of credentialed mental health specialists, registered dogs and miniature horses with their handler volunteers, and researchers from the University of North Florida’s animal-assisted therapy program.

To support the Nemours ADAPT program, please consider a donation.
To learn more, visit [Nemours.org/AnimalTherapy](https://nemours.org/AnimalTherapy).