

Discovering the Power of Authentic Caring Leadership through Equine Assisted Experiential Learning (EAEL)



Jim D'Alfonso, RN, DNP,
NCAL Executive Director
Nurse Scholar Academy



Peggy Hilden,
NCAL Healthcare Education
Management Director



Gwen Kinney, RN, MSN
Consultant

Introduction

Regardless of title or clinical position, today's nurse leaders must effectively cope with a continuous cycle of rapid change, while balancing the important need for focus on the organization's vision/mission to serve members, families, and surrounding communities with authentic empathy, care and compassion. To address these challenges, a two day evidence-informed program was designed for KP NCAL nurse leaders and our community benefit partners (i.e.: university and community college nurse educators, behavioral health leaders, youth at risk educational programs, chaplain services, disaster recovery directors) to promote discovery and facilitate exploration of one's natural leadership ability through Equine Assisted Experiential Learning (EAEL). Immediate feedback from the horse to human interaction combined with didactic integration of caring science processes provides an experience to deepen one's subtle awareness (inner-action), develop ownership of one's professional practice, and improve how one affects others (inter-action). Specific emphasis is placed on self-responsibility for personal and group safety, clarity to one's intentions for team processes, caring behaviors that create trust and respectful connections with our patients/families, and facilitation skills to enhance caring-healing environments.



Methods

This program integrates didactic content, role play, 1:1 horse to human return demonstration, and an individual verbal review for each learning concept. At the end of the program each participant reviews their personal goals/objectives, shares self-reflections in a group discussion, and then completes a written evaluation.



Results / Conclusions

Written evaluations from the 2016-2019 programs were scored as excellent. With over 100 participants who have completed the program, participant feedback is providing valuable qualitative evidence that the EAEL learning modality is applicable to most health care settings and a meaningful and valued experience for personal and professional growth.

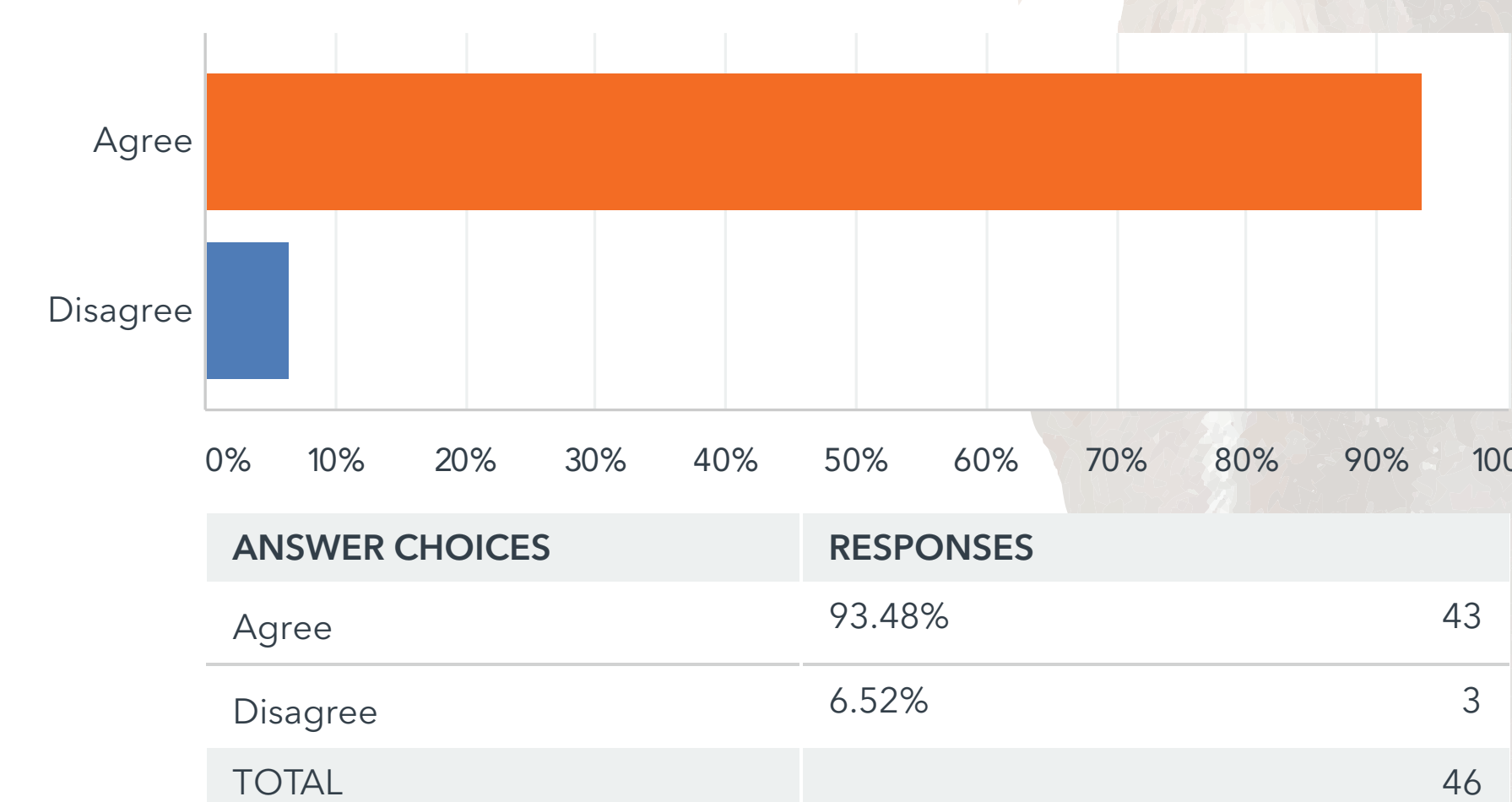


Implications for Practice

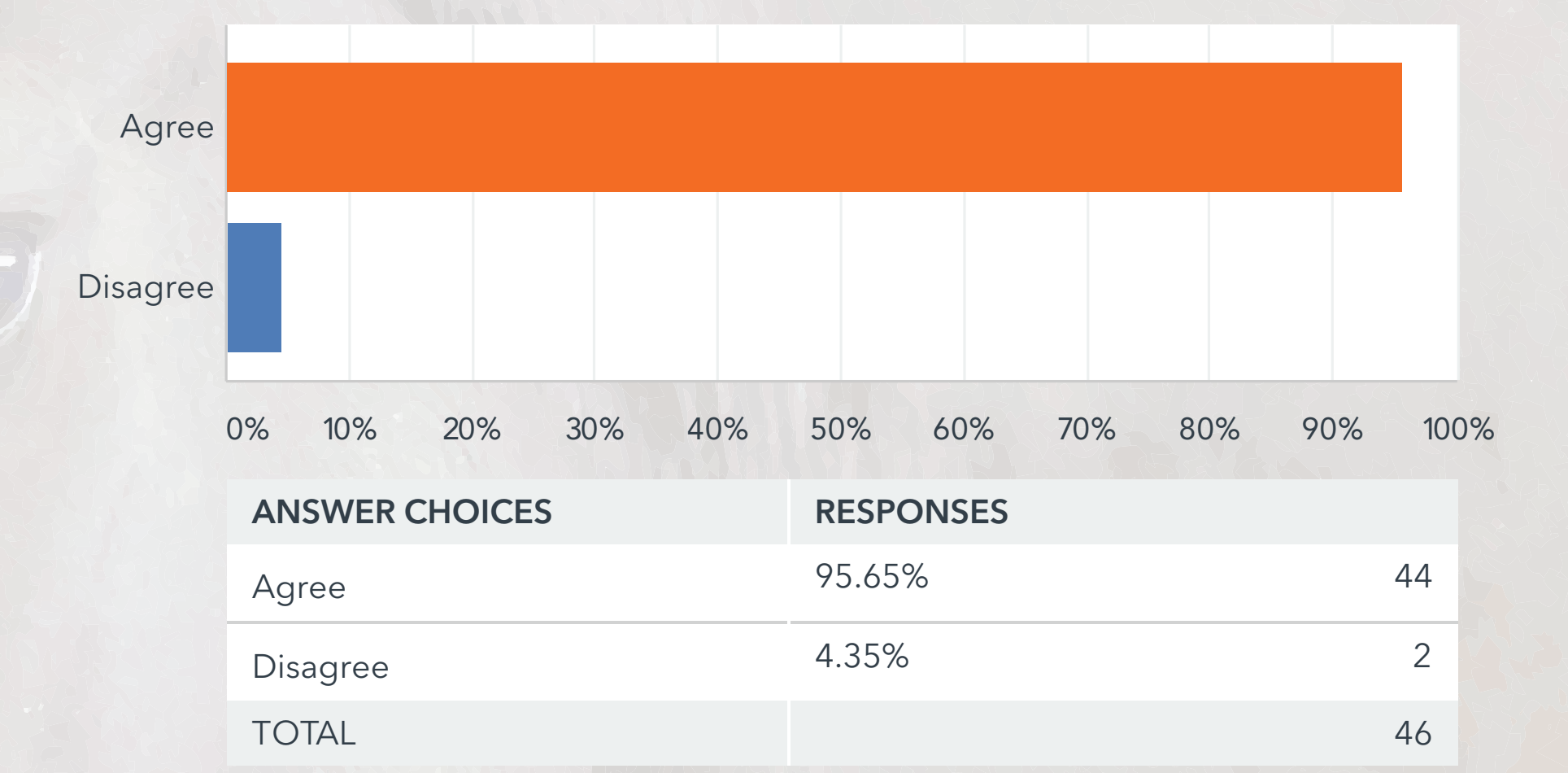
Participants have shared consistently that the practice of resiliency skills have helped mitigate personal stress, the experience of the horse to human connection has enhanced self-awareness and accountability to group coherence, and a discovery of how everyone is empowered to be innovators for healthy environments.

A 16 question written survey was completed first quarter of 2020. A total of 46 responses (42%) were returned. Survey responses provided evidence of long term impact of this program on participants awareness of self; their impact on others; the importance of self care; the value of listening with awareness; setting clear intention as a leader; and willingness to take responsibility for thoughts and actions. Sample survey responses below:

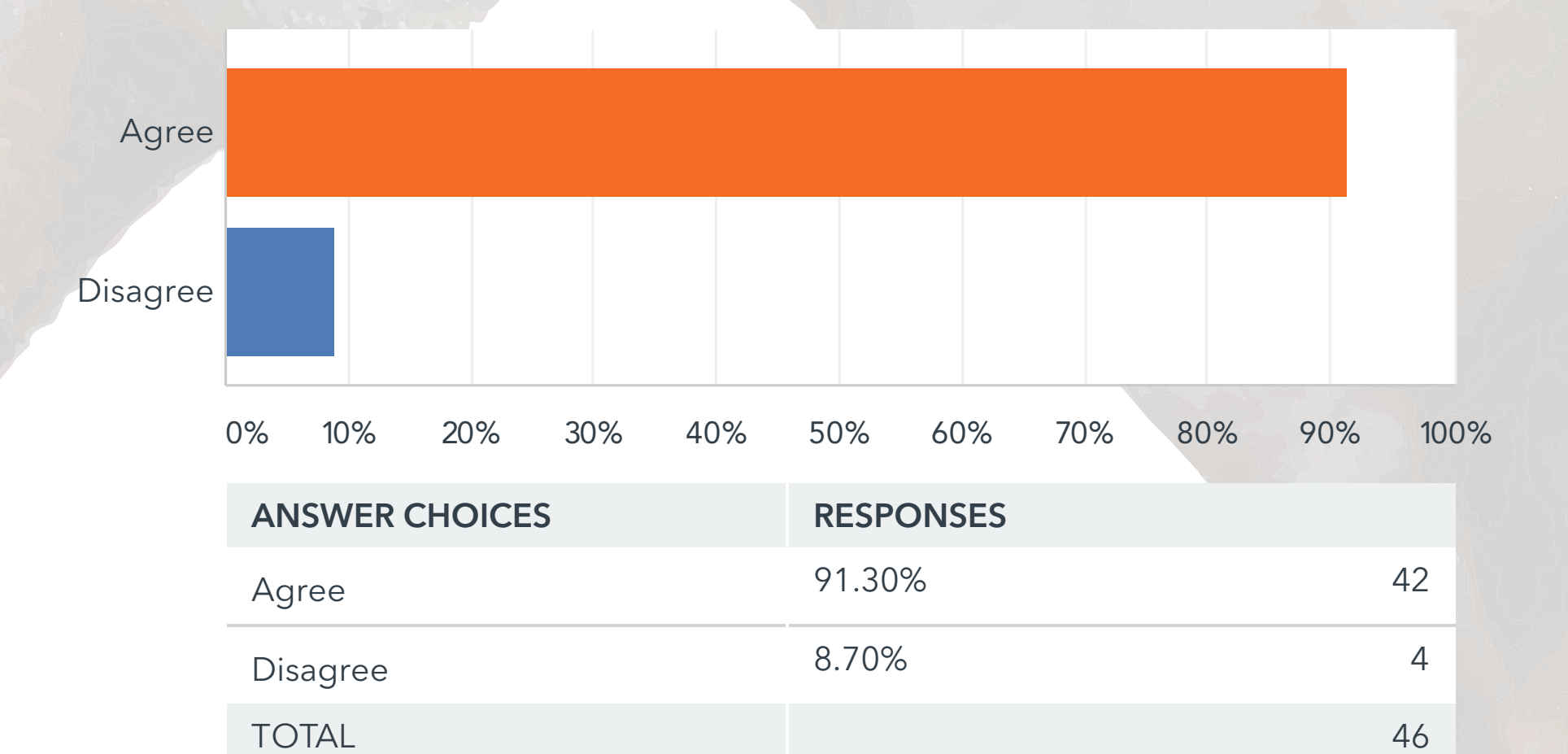
Q1 The EquuSatori program increased my self-awareness



Q2 The EquuSatori program increased my understanding of what elements create trust in a leader



Q3 The program enhanced my understanding of personal growth areas.



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