

Riding Instructor

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**Learn About
Riding to Hounds**

by Kate Selby

**What Makes a Summer
Riding Camp Great?**

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Contents

- 5 Ride More Than One Horse**
By Nikki Alvin-Smith
- 6 Sport Psychology**
Tips to Becoming an Emotionally Intelligent Trainer
By Laura King
- 8 Teaching Confidence**
Who Should be Teaching Beginners?
By Gincy Self Bucklin
- 10 Learn About Riding to Hounds**
By Kate Selby
- 14 What Makes a Summer Riding Camp Great?**
- 16 The Oversight of Equines in a Camp Setting:**
A Survey of American Camp Association Equine Camps to Determine Staff Qualifications and Equine Oversight
By Melanee W. Sinclair
- 20 Go Fish!**
By Didi Arias
- 22 Official Supplier Spotlight**
- 24 Working With An Anxious Horse**
By Brie Hoblin
- 28 Mounted in Blue I Was Wrong**
By Ric Sutton
- 30 The Power of Disappointment**
By Lydia Fairchok
- 31 Legal Focus**
New Year's Resolutions for the Equine Industry
By Julie I. Fershtman, Attorney at Law
- 32 Business Matters**
How to Charge What You're Worth Without Feeling Guilty
By Doug Emerson, The Profitable Horseman
- 34 Cameo's Cauldron Write Your Story**
By Cameo Miller

Cover photo: by E. Schneider—<http://ahorseandhisboy.com>. First Field Master Martina Lussi of Lake Placid, NY leads a well turned-out field. **Above:** Green Mountain Hounds Huntsman Kate Selby hacks their pack of crossbred foxhounds to the covert, with MFH/Whipper-In Terence Hook.

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Fax 239-948-5053

E-mail aria@riding-instructor.com

Website riding-instructor.com

Editor Charlotte Brailey Kneeland
editor@riding-instructor.com

Copy Editor Katie Aiken

Manager of Corporate Sponsorship
and Advertising Donna Hartshorn

Tel 407-927-3578; Donna@riding-instructor.com

Art Director Peter Fryns, PearTree Graphics
peter@peartreegraphics.ca

Illustrator Susan E. Harris

Member



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Ride More Than One Horse

By Nikki Alvin-Smith

Riders from all disciplines benefit from riding different horses. Photo by Nikki Alvin-Smith.

auditors. We have all been there. Confession is good for the soul, so you might as well just admit that even as an instructor you too have a favorite horse that you especially look forward to riding. So this rule of riding more than one, and preferably several different types of horses, holds true for you too.

Take the phlegmatic horse. Please! No, just kidding. Yes, as professionals we all prefer the more forward-thinking critter, but for a lesson horse the phlegmatic character is a perfect antidote for the nervous rider. These horses train riders to use their legs and driving aids. The rider will not be hesitant to tap this horse with the whip when it is a needed adjunct to the leg aid. When correctly taught, the rider will learn how to have the horse working on the 1/2/3 rule. First forward leg aid—a light squeeze, second one—an ardent squeeze with the toe turned out for a moment and not leg brought back, and if no response—a quick tap with the whip behind the leg with careful allowance to let the horse spring forward. This type of horse is a great confidence builder. If you have a student who is allowing the hotter type of horse to intimidate him or her and removes the leg aids at the slightest forward motion, simply transfer the student to the phlegmatic horse for a few lessons to make your point that the rider needs to be active and 51% of the equation in the horse/human partnership.

Horses have very different tolerances to the use of the hand as well as the leg. Everyone can have better hands. Yes, even you. Your students need to learn the connection between how much leg and seat to use and how much pressure or “wall” to use on the rein in half halts. As every horse has a different conformation and temperament, a switch between horses will facilitate quicker progress in learning the balance between driving aids and rein aids.

The variety in conformation of the equine also offers much help to students in learning how to use their seat. For work at the

► *continued on page 33*

HOW MANY TIMES has your student arrived at the barn and requested a particular horse for his or her lesson? Many students find a horse on your star team of lesson horses that they particularly like to ride, quickly form a bond with it, and become perturbed if asked to ride a different beastie.

Although it is super to have students happy to come to your barn and lesson, your tolerance of their attachment to their favorite horse may quickly have you undone. The horse may become unsound or unfit or for other reasons unavailable for work, resulting in the student suspending lessons altogether. Students will not learn to address all their riding issues as they settle too comfortably into the saddle of one particular horse. As the instructor, it is always of great benefit to you to see your students on different horses as you will quickly learn or at least confirm (if you didn't already know and I'm sure you have a keen idea), their shortcomings as well as their strengths as a rider.

We are all aware that very forward-thinking horses are extremely talented at “blowing off” the rider's legs. Riders stop using their legs and become used to making minimal effort to keep the horse in front of the leg aids (if any effort at all). Students on such horses quickly become dependent on their hands, and the horse will lean/pull/cajole the rider into whichever gait the horse feels he'd like to enjoy.

When giving a recent dressage clinic my husband Paul was heard to say,

“Your horse is upset with you because you are not riding her the way she has taught you.”

This evoked some merriment from the

Tips to Becoming an Emotionally Intelligent Trainer

By Laura King

Laura King is on a mission to increase equestrian Emotional Intelligence (EI). The South Florida-based certified hypnotist, sports coach, and life coach believes that EI is a pathway to performance success. Here, she addresses trainers about the importance of cultivating their EI to most skillfully train equestrians to their highest outcomes.

EVER SINCE the idea of Emotional Intelligence (EQ or EI) came on the scene in the mid-1990s it fascinated me. I think that's because it's so intuitive to me and dovetails nicely with hypnosis and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). After all, what I am really advocating for in my work, is knowing who you are and how your inner life works, and helping you make the most skillful choices. The better acquainted you are with your emotions—from being able to notice them the moment they arise to letting them pass without engaging them—the less suffering you will experience and the more effective you will be in your work.

In this article, I'd like to discuss the two main impact points of EI: 1) the emotions that arise in you as a direct result of the person you are training; and 2) the emotions that arise in the person you are training.

1 The emotions that arise in you as a direct result of the person you are training.

None of us likes to admit it but we all know it's true: other people "trigger" us. This can translate into everything from mild annoyance to full-blown rage. And whether or not your full-blown rage ever gets expressed isn't really the point. The point is that it emerges.

EI begins by becoming more aware of your own emotions and self-talk. For trainers, cultivating the ability to recognize your emotions as they happen and to understand your tendencies for responding to different situations and people is paramount. Without this self-awareness, the only way we would ever discover that we need to

manage ourselves is because someone else told us we need to. And that is not a position any trainer would choose for himself or herself.

To begin your journey of awareness of your emotions, there is one element of inquiry that I always recommend you add to your life in abundance: curiosity. And you can start right now. Start by being curious about your reaction to this material that you are reading. As you read about the need to cultivate EI and you realize that success in the trainer-trainee relationship is largely contingent upon how well-acquainted you are with your own emotions and how well you manage them, what do you feel inside your body? Do you have any resistance to this idea that manifests itself in the form of a queasy feeling in the belly or a tightness in the chest or a clenching of the jaw? Have you stopped breathing for a moment? And if none of that is happening, while we're on the topic, when *do* you get those feelings? This first step of curiosity is all about

understanding how emotions are experienced, real time, in your body.

As I'm sure you were told when you were a child, there are no bad emotions—no emotions that are wrong to feel. What might be bad or wrong, however, is what you end up doing with them. We have all programmed ourselves—mostly unconsciously—to react in certain ways when a given emotion arises. Part of developing EI is noticing the patterns that we have created and making a conscious decision to either continue with what are essentially habits of mind and behavior, or replacing them with different habits of mind and behavior.

Let's take all of this into your real world and think of a time you were training someone who did something or said something that triggered a reaction in you that you would change if you could. As of this moment, just because I have called it to the forefront of your mind, you are keenly aware of that moment. From this moment on, you can choose to change your relationship to whatever the trigger was. You can choose to experience it as a moment when your gratitude or your compassion increases profoundly, thereby leaving no room for a regrettable reaction. You can decide to meet that moment and all moments like it with a deep breath and a wise response. It's relatively impossible to make a wrong move in a relationship of any kind when you are taking a deep breath and thinking only about gratitude and compassion. Make that a habit and your relationships will change for the better.

2 The emotions that arise in the person you are training.

There are always external factors that affect performance, and some are not in our control. What we all need to focus on, therefore, are the factors that are in our control, and one of those is our relationship to stress. As a trainer, I'm sure you see stress as a negative factor all the time. And I'm sure you realize it's important for all of us to manage stress. There are many ways to do that.

- You might tell your students to forgive themselves for their imperfections and to go easy on themselves over their past mistakes. After all, although there are plenty of lessons to be learned from the past, reliving the pain and frustration of mistakes is not a good use of anyone's time. As a trainer, be aware that your students may become frustrated when they become overly self-critical. In turn, self-criticism can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy. When your students (and you!) start berating themselves with their own self-talk, bring attention to that immediately but gently, and remind them of the importance of self-compassion.
- One of my favorite ways to manage stress (that "s" word) is a breathing technique that you can do with your students or teach them so they can do it themselves. It is widely known as Combat Tactical Breathing, and is known for its ability to quickly de-escalate stress.

Find a quiet place and focus on your breathing. Breathe in deeply for four counts and hold your breath for four counts and then breathe out for four counts. Practice this exercise five times. Take deep breaths and make sure to inhale and exhale deeply. Pay attention to your breathing. And if you want to really slow down your internal system, exhale for longer than four counts.

- Another favorite way to manage stress is called the canceling technique. This involves either saying the word "cancel" when you find yourself thinking negative thoughts and replacing those thoughts

with positive ones, or thinking of something silly, including my favorite, a purple elephant. A purple elephant doesn't exist, of course, but thinking about it redirects your thoughts away from your stressor. Mission accomplished!

Finally, remember these three principles: You are what you think, a thought creates a physical reaction, and your imagination is stronger than knowledge. Your mind is very powerful. And although it can get you into a lot of trouble and create a lot of stress and suffering for you, on the other hand it can get you out of a lot of trouble and be responsible for your resilience. Improving your EI is an important part of improving your effectiveness and your relationships. ■



About the author:

To learn more about **Laura King**, go to www.lauraking-hypnosis.com or www.summithypnosis.com.

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Who Should be Teaching Beginners?

By Gincy Self Bucklin

In an earlier issue of *Riding Instructor*, Ann Reilly wrote a very interesting article about problems that trainers at advanced levels were having with their students, and with the students' horses. What it amounted to was that students either weren't willing to spend the time learning to ride well, or were being pressured into moving to more advanced levels before they were ready, often on horses that they weren't ready for. In either case, their initial instruction had not taught them the necessity of spending time at the lower levels if they were to be successful at the upper ones.

This is an area that I think needs unceasing attention, and I have written columns discussing how to start beginners and inspire them to spend the time developing correct basics before moving on. However, I think that a big issue is the not uncommon practice, especially in larger stables, of assigning the least experienced instructor to teach the beginners.

It is just as important for a highly expe-

rienced instructor to start beginning riders as it is for a highly experienced trainer to start "beginner" horses. Granted, neither the instructor nor the trainer needs the same sort of skills as those who teach very advanced students, whether human or equine, but their jobs are equally if not more important, because *the success of the advanced student depends to a great extent on how he or she was started.*

Building confidence during the first close encounter with the horse. Photo courtesy of the author.

What do you, as an instructor of students showing at advanced levels, want to see in a student who comes to you, who will be showing under your direction, and thus will have an effect on your reputation as a trainer? I think you look for the same things in a new student as you would in a new horse.

Two things are inherent and can't be changed; they are conformation and love of the particular discipline. Then there are three basics for both horse and rider that I consider essential, and these are the result of solid basic training from an experienced instructor. The first is a good relationship, which starts with overcoming the conscious and subconscious fears that both horse and human have with regard to a different species. The result should be security and confidence, resulting from mutual trust, respect, and affection. This is the horse that rises to the challenge of jumping the difficult fence, that realizes after a fall that his rider is trapped between his feet, and lies still (yes, I have seen that several times). This is the rider who says to his horse, "I know this may be more than you're accustomed to, but I'm pretty sure you can do it," and the horse does.

Second is the skill of the two, horse and rider, moving as one without either interfering with the other. Many people think that this has to take years, but the reality is that both the horse's and the human's body are programmed to perform all the natural movements in unison. If the student is a beginner, because of the fear issue she should not be asked to do more than her mind and body are ready for. This means going very slowly—I strongly recommend a hand leader, a bareback pad, and a grounding strap™—for some time while her body deals first with its natural fear of riding and that of the horse himself. The instructor should be able to keep the lessons challenging but not frightening while the student finds the good seat that is the essential foundation.

If the student is moderately experienced, the instructor must be knowledgeable and a good observer. Only then can she see any weaknesses the student may have, and offer exercises—and explanations—that help the student to recognize and correct the problem. It's very important that the student understands and accepts the necessity for correcting the causes of problems that will only cause more problems as she tries to move on.

Third is communication, which is of course about the aids, which are more than just reins and legs. Besides knowing how and when to use them, the aids are mostly about *listening to what the horse is saying*, and acting accordingly.

The choice of horses is extremely important. (I hear all the time from people who were bolted with or thrown in a very early lesson.) First the horse should have plenty of miles *learning the basic skill of performing all the natural movements while carrying the rider*. So generally you are looking at older (but sound!) horses, mostly of medium size. A good beginner/intermediate horse should be willing to both listen to what his rider is telling him, and tell the rider what she needs to know, in a non-threatening way.

Similarly, what you want first in your ide-

al student is one who understands that her relationship with her horse is one of partnership, based on mutual trust, respect, and affection. The horse is the athlete, and her task is to help him to achieve his best. Second, in order to do this, she must *spend the necessary time* overcoming the tensions that arise from fears, both conscious and subconscious, so that her body can use its natural abilities to follow the horse's movements effortlessly, giving her a secure, confident seat. At the same time she should be learning to listen to the horse, and allowing him to teach her what aids will best assist him in performing a particular task.

It is more difficult to work with inexperienced students, because if they get into trouble they have no skills of their own to

fall back on, and are thus totally dependent upon the instructor; unlike the more advanced student who may have the skills to get out of trouble on her own if necessary. The instructor of beginners must first have a very clear idea of how to safely create a foundation on which the advanced skills can be built.

To a great extent this means keeping the lessons interesting and challenging while maintaining comfort and safety for both

horse and rider. I believe that one of the problems at this level is that the inexperienced instructor lacks creativity, and thus tends to overface the student because she—the instructor—is bored!

One final suggestion for training instructors. A novice instructor should begin by working with a more experienced instructor with intermediate—walk, trot, getting ready to canter—students. (I recommend a maximum of four students in a class at this level.) First she watches and learns, then is given one student who needs extra help or practice, with oversight by the experienced partner. This is gradually extended until she is able to take over.

Last but not least, the novice—and all instructors'—motto should be "Better Safe Than Sorry." **R**

“
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student depends
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on how he or she
was started.”



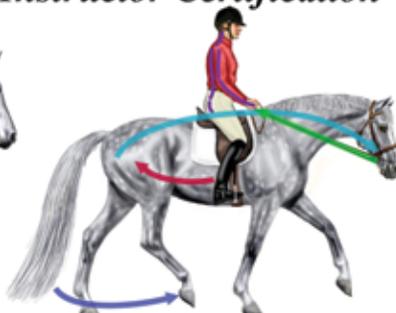
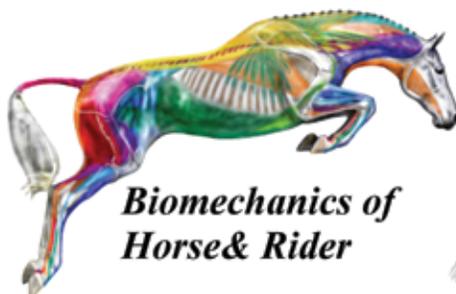
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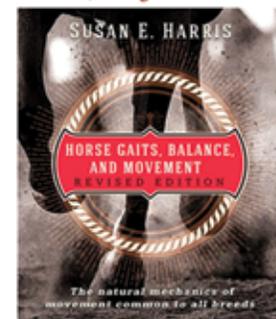
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Learn About Riding to Hounds

By Kate Selby

Riding to Hounds

WE'VE ALL SEEN that part in a movie or television show like “Downton Abbey” when a group of well-dressed riders heads off on beautifully turned-out horses following a rider in scarlet surrounded by a pack of hounds. They trot down lanes past verdant fields, then later can be seen galloping across the countryside, leaping stone walls, and following the cry of the hounds and the huntsman’s horn. Have you ever wanted to join the scene? Did you even know it was still a thing you could do?

Riding to hounds is a wonderful sport, with a rich history and a dedicated group of welcoming riders. Foxhunting is a celebration of the hounds’ ability to work as a team and follow a scent. The sport is fun and non-competitive, you’ll make great friends, and ride in beautiful country not necessarily open to others.

Hunting offers many benefits for both horses and riders. The partnership builds trust, teaches the rider that the horse must be allowed to navigate without micromanagement, and builds confidence for both. It’s great cross-training for other equine sports, teaches horses to be good with their feet over uneven ground, and to get along and play well with others.

There are more than 150 active hunt clubs in the United States and Canada, so it’s likely there is one near you (look for your local hunt club at www.MFHA.org). You probably already know riders who hunt, or used to. The best news is that, yes, you CAN ride to hounds! Here’s how to get started.

First Things First—the Right Skills, the Right Horse

As a rider, are you comfortable hacking out with large groups? Can you safely walk, trot, and canter in that situation? If the

Opposite: A good example of maintaining correct spacing over a jump. First rider is landowner Charlotte Hardie (Charlotte, VT), second is Eileen Liseno (Lake Placid, NY), third is Hesterly Goodson (Stowe, VT), and fourth is landowner Peter Swift (Charlotte, VT). Photo by E. Schneider—<http://ahorseandhisboy.com>

answer is no, you have a bit of work to do before heading out with the hounds.

To get started, hack in groups—as many people as you can get together. Ride at all gaits till comfortable. There is no need for speed when getting started; a solid trot and a slow canter are all you need. Attend something like a “Riding Out” clinic to gain confidence riding at different gaits and over terrain with a small group, or ask your instructor to offer one. Most hunts offer at least one “learn to hunt” day each year.

You need to be able to stop immediately when signaled, and to keep within one horse’s length of the rider in front of you. This is important. Many riders try to hold their horses back, thinking more space is better. But your horse is much more likely to become upset if he feels the herd is leaving him. It’s also surprisingly easy to get lost if you fall behind.

Of course, too close is not safe, either. If the horse in front refuses a fence, or the rider falls, you won’t have time to react if you are already riding on top of that person. And many ordinarily perfectly mannered horses will kick out if another horse is riding their flank. Make sure you can rate your horse’s speed to keep up, but not crowd the next horse.

Perhaps you feel confident in your abilities, but what about your horse? Even a tried-and-true trail horse may become overwhelmed by hunting the first few times.

The cry of hounds, other horses moving past at different speeds, and the general air of excitement can be a lot to take in.

What if your horse doesn’t jump? Not a problem—jumping is optional. Hunts have different groups, or “fields” of riders that follow hounds. First field—also known as first flight—will keep within sight of the huntsman and the pack. They will move right along, generally jumping whatever comes up in their path. Many hunts have very few jumps, or allow riders to go around as long as they ride toward the back. Second field will go at a somewhat slower pace, take a few short cuts so that riders can still watch the hounds work, and generally go around jumps. Sometimes there is a third option, called “hilltoppers,” which is just as it sounds. Hilltoppers are a walk-trot group, and will often stop on a hilltop to be able to view the action. This group is great for starting out new riders or young horses. Even kids on ponies can be brought along on a lead line!

Borrow Before You Buy

If you feel you are ready, but your horse is not, then borrow or rent a safe, seasoned hunt horse, or “guest horse” (aka “husband horse”) to get started. If riding to hounds seems right up your alley, most every hunt has members who are professional horsemen who can help you work with your horse, or find a mount that is suitable for hunting. Out hunting is not the time to school your horse, so prepare as much as possible before taking your horse on his first hunt.

Get your horse comfortable in the types of situations described above, and start out slowly. There is a speed for everyone in the field, but you must be able to keep up with your group. Although it is perfectly permissible to ask to move to a faster or ▶

Did you know?

Foxhunting has a strong history in the United States. In fact, George Washington was a devoted foxhunter and kept a pack of hounds.



Hunt to ride, or ride to hunt: what's the difference?

Many riders out in the hunt field are obsessed with watching the hounds find and work a line, running as a tight pack in full cry. They love to ride, but they are out there to watch the hounds. These folks “ride to hunt.”

Other riders love the camaraderie of the club, the ability to ride in beautiful places galloping and jumping to their heart's content. Following hounds gives them opportunities to do just that, while also enjoying the heart of the sport: the athleticism and brilliance of a super pack of hounds guided by a good huntsman. These folks “hunt to ride.”

Everyone is welcome and all have a great time. Which one are you?

slower group, it is most definitely not okay to decide to do things differently on your own. When starting out, it's advisable to start at a slower pace, for instance with second field, than to overface your horse and yourself with too much speed too soon.

If you've done your homework, and prepared your horse (or found a reliable one to borrow), it's time to get out there! Find

a hunt club near you, ask friends who hunt whom to contact at their hunts, and get yourself ready to ride to hounds.

Getting Started

Here are some details that come from frequently asked questions we hear at our “Learn to Hunt” clinics.

Many traditions encountered when hunting have to do with safety, from attire and tack to protocol in the field while out. Though they sometimes go fast and it is exciting, hunts are very safety conscious. Learn the rules—and follow them—and you'll be doing your best to ensure your own safety, as well as that of other horses and riders. Experienced foxhunters are a wealth of information, and most will help you if you go astray. The best rule, and one that is an absolute must in all hunts: stay with your group and follow the Field Master's instructions exactly.

Who's who in the hunt field

The Master of Foxhounds, or MFH, is like the club president. They are in charge of the health and well-being of the organiza-

tion, and may also hunt the hounds. It is customary to introduce yourself to them before you hunt, and greet them by saying “Good morning,” regardless of the time of day.

Photo by E. Schneider—<http://ahorseandhisboy.com>

The Field Masters are in charge of the groups of riders. The MFH may also be your Field Master. Again, introduce yourself, and ask if there are any specific rules for you as a guest. From starting off to heading home, the Field Master is your guide. Follow their instructions to the letter. Be sure to wait for your Field Master to dismiss riders back to the trailers at the end of the day.

The Hunt Secretary, or Field Secretary, is the one to find when you first arrive. This is the person you likely have contacted to get permission to “cap,” or ride as a guest. He or she will already know you are coming, and will need to collect a release form and capping fee (the fee to ride as a guest that used to be collected in a hunt cap passed around), and can direct you to the Masters and Field Master.



The pack running hard on a line, with second field watching from a distance.
Photo by Margaret M. Holmes, Cornwall, VT

The Huntsman and Whippers-In are the staff in charge of the hounds. They guide hounds and keep them safe. Let them do their jobs without interruption. At the end of the day, a simple “Thank you, Staff” will let them know you appreciated their efforts for the day’s sport.

You will see certain Field Members wearing their “colors.” A coat collar of a different color and buttons with the hunt’s initials denote riders with years of membership and service to the club. They are a valuable resource for a newcomer. When in doubt, ask someone with colors for help.

Landowners are a vital part of foxhunting. Without permission to hunt on people’s private land, most hunts would not exist. If landowners are present at a hunt, they are treated as honored guests, and it is entirely

Who wears Red?

Staff members wear red (called “Scarlet”) so they are easy to see and to distinguish them from field members.

appropriate to introduce yourself and thank them for the opportunity.

Dress for success: tack and clothes

As with a good hunt horse, the correct attire may or may not be something you already have. And as with the horse, the best advice is to borrow before you buy. Like any equestrian sport, hunting has its own customs and attire. This is true for the horses as well as the riders. Some are about tradition; most have a basis in safety.

Early in the season, most hunts are happy to have you come out in simple clothing: a white polo shirt or riding shirt, light breeches, a belt, tall boots or half chaps, and string or black leather gloves. If it’s chilly, a tweed jacket is perfect, though a black show coat is fine, as is anything tidy, warm, and relatively plain.

Later on, formal season requires more formal attire. Again, there are plenty of folks who may have things you can borrow until you get your own. A black coat, white stock tie, light breeches, a belt, and black or leather gloves will have you turned out in style.

Your horse’s attire should also be relatively plain and simple. No purple or sparkles in the hunt field! A plain flat bridle, with whatever bit allows you to have Whoa! when you need it. As an old saying goes, “There is the horse you ride at home, and the horse you hunt, and the only thing they have in common is their color.”

A jumping saddle, plain fitted saddle pad, and a martingale or breastplate if needed complete the package. Wraps are an absolute no-no, and any other boots you decide to use should also be plain, and you should be okay with leaving them behind should they come flying off during a “run.” Safety helmets are required, and safety vests are generally acceptable.

Where are the hounds?

The huntsman and staff control the hounds. You may see them, hear them, and they may even jump right out of the bushes near you, so you want your horse to be steady should this happen. Spring season or mounted hound exercise is a great way to gently introduce your horse to the hounds. They

➤ *continued on page 33*

What Makes a Summer Riding Camp Great?

Material for this article contributed by Bonnie Dungan, Director, Alfred University Equestrian Camps; Sarah Seaward, Director/Owner, Camp Nashoba North; and Amanda Hinski, Chief Marketing Officer, Frost Valley YMCA.

Our contributors suggest the following important factors to consider when looking for a summer riding camp:

Location: Day camps need to be close to home, but sleepaway camps can be almost anywhere, and sleepaway camps that offer horseback riding are alive and well all across America. Alfred University Equestrian Camp makes its home on a beautiful college campus in a peaceful village in western New York State, surrounded by rolling hills and beautiful meadows and valleys.

Camp Nashoba North is located in the lovely Sebago Lake region of southern Maine, just two hours north of Boston. The

camp's location on a spectacular lake allows it to offer a large array of water sports.

Frost Valley YMCA is located north of New York City, in the historic Catskill Mountain region of New York State.

Accreditation: A camp's commitment to safety standards provides reassurance to parents. Camp Nashoba North is accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA), and encourages families, when searching for a summer option, to start with accredited camps through the ACA. The ACA offers great parent resources and key questions to ask camp directors. Frost Valley's horse camps are accredited by the Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA) and uphold the highest safety standards.

Horse Time and Lesson Levels: Some campers may wish to spend their entire long summer days at the horse barn, or may have a horse of their own to take to camp. Some campers may want English riding lessons, others may want Western lessons or to trail ride. All of these options are available at different camps.

Alfred University equestrian camps offer an opportunity for all levels of riders from beginners through advanced to define and achieve their personal riding goals during an exciting, fun-filled week. Campers can bring their own horses or use Alfred University's great lesson horses. They'll ride and care for the horse throughout the week.

Frost Valley's horse camps are dedicated to providing the opportunity for developing equestrians to become more confident in their abilities and comfortable within a community of riders as, together, they develop lasting friendships while learning the fundamentals of riding and horse care. From the beginning rider to the advanced, campers grow leaps and bounds during their sessions, gaining confidence, independence, and leadership skills.

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their campers each summer. Nashoba owns all their own horses and ponies, which is not the case for every horseback riding camp.

Educational Programs: Some campers may want to have other traditional summer camp activities mixed in with their horse time. In addition to offering one of New England's premier horseback riding programs, at Camp Nashoba campers can experience tennis, soccer, theater, dance, archery, art, pottery, photography, woodworking, basketball, baseball, rock-climbing, hiking trips, water sports, and more!

At Alfred, students from throughout the United States and other countries mingle to experience programs such as art, astronomy, athletic performance enhancement, ceramic and glass engineering, computers, creative writing, equine business, exploration of expanded media, robotics, and theater; as well as residential sports camps, and swimming. Classes are kept small to allow for individualized attention.

Frost Valley emphasizes its values-driven programming. At Frost Valley YMCA, campers are guided by eight core values—caring, community, diversity, honesty, inclusiveness, respect, responsibility, and stewardship. Every program offered by Frost Valley is infused with each of these values, which helps children persevere through otherwise challenging endeavors. Whether it's learning a new horseback riding skill, equitably working through a conflict with a bunkmate, or mustering the courage to take that first leap off the zipline platform, values-based programming is the key to developing lifelong character traits.

Comfort: Cabins, tents, lodges, dorms—camps have many different types of accommodations for campers. Alfred campers stay in college residence halls and enjoy all-you-can-eat, cafeteria-style meals served in the University dining hall.

Camp Nashoba is a traditional, co-ed sleepaway camp with beautiful, modern facilities for 190 campers. Frost Valley campers at two different horse camp locations stay in a lodge and eat healthy meals in the dining hall. ■

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The Oversight of Equines in a Camp Setting:

A Survey of American Camp Association Equine Camps to Determine Staff Qualifications and Equine Oversight

By Melanee W. Sinclair

IN 2014 I surveyed American Camp Association (ACA) accredited equine camps. I asked the camps to identify the qualifications of individuals directly responsible for their equine programming, and I compared the results for for-profit and non-profit camps. The foundation of the study was two research questions:

- 1 Does camp status (for-profit or non-profit) influence the qualifications of staff in accredited camp programs?
- 2 Is camp status (for-profit or non-profit) a contributing factor to equine management?

Through a search of the ACA database I composed a list of all ACA accredited camps that provide horseback riding. I invited 264 camps to participate in the survey, and 61 camps completed it. The survey consisted of 10 questions, including: respondent's knowledge of equine certifying organizations, number of equines used in programming, staff certifications, total time equines were under human control, methods used to acquire equines, and disposition of equines after camp is complete.

The ACA lists specific certifying bodies that it accepts as part of the accreditation process for camps that offer horseback riding. I reviewed each certifying body's credentialing process and compared each against the ACA standards for staff who provide riding instruction.

Respondent camps reported that they owned and/or leased horses and ponies. The process of leasing or buying varied slightly among camps, but on-site inspection, reference, and veterinary reference were the primary methods identified by respondents.



Moochie the pony, for whom Team Moochie was named. Team Moochie provides services that benefit working equines. Photo courtesy of the author.

I asked respondents if the individual responsible for equine programming was certified, had a four-year Equine Studies degree, or practical experience. For-profit camps reported higher rates of staff with a four-year college degree in Equine Studies having oversight of all equine activities.

All camps surveyed used horses and ponies primarily for trail rides and lessons. Some camps reported very specific programming. Camps reported that year-round management of equines by camp

personnel was the primary disposition of equines when the camp season was done, although free lease to individuals or programs was also noted rather frequently.

Fifty percent of for-profit and 32% of non-profit camps reported having more than 20 equines in their program. The majority of equines were under human control more than five hours per week. No for-profit camps and 2% of non-profit camps reported working equines more than 40 hours per week.

The results of the study support the idea that camp status (for-profit or non-profit) is a factor related to staff qualification. Additionally, camp status appears to be a contributing factor to equine management, including disposition. Further study is needed to determine whether staff qualification directly affects equine care and management. Additional study may determine the disposition of equines, particularly through auction or sale, at the end of the camp season. ■

About the author:

Melane Sinclair is a social worker, and EAGALA certified Mental Health Specialist. Ms. Sinclair developed *Team Moochie* to provide education, financial support, and guidance for organizations and individuals who provide services that will benefit working equines. For more information about Team Moochie, including the opportunity to apply for a competitive scholarship for ARIA testing fees, please visit the "Moochie the pony" Facebook page or email moochiethepony@gmail.com.



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Go Fish!

By Didi Arias



E DUCATORS, GOOD EDUCATORS, are creative beings. They are enthusiastic and inspired, enjoy their work, and look for ways to pass on their knowledge to the student. When a lack of motivation creeps in to the classes and a feeling of “same old, same old” hangs over the arena, the fault may lie in the instructor’s loss of creative inspiration. A charge of inspirational juice may be needed, giving a lift and a rush that not only benefits the student but the general feeling in the instructor as well.

As we teach we tap in to our stock of creative resources. However, if we use up all these resources without restocking, we will, in essence, run out of inspiration. Author and expert in the recovery of the creative soul Julia Cameron writes about this subject in her book *The Artist’s Way*. She makes a great analogy of how we get our creativity from an internal well of ideas and inspira-

tion (fish). As the fish are being pulled out and used, the supply needs to be restocked. If we omit to restock our well it will become empty of ideas, leaving nothing new to bring to the job. I can personally attest to the importance of restocking for creative ideas, and find that doing so is immediately self-rewarding, with the results apparent virtually straight away. By nature, I tend to

find inspiration for one thing or another just about everywhere—I just have to make sure that I am looking and listening. In the following paragraphs I have outlined a few ways that have helped me keep myself well stocked with creative ideas.

Make the commitment, take notes, and keep a journal Julia Cameron advises creatives to take themselves on weekly “Art Dates.” Though fun, finding time away from the job or barn for the purpose of looking for inspiration may not be high on our “To Do” lists. A rural geographic location may also be a further barrier to the pursuit of our creative idea-finding missions. My suggestion to the barn bound is to ease in to the commitment by note taking. I keep a notebook with me as I find that so

many ideas can be conceived during an actual teaching session. For me this is especially true with topics for my writing, new classes I want to give, or exercises I want to work on. You may end up so impressed with something that you actually said or the way you said it that you may find a whole teaching or riding concept can be worked around it. Student questions can also be useful fodder, sparking some ideas that we can take further. If taking notes during a class I suggest giving a little explanation to the student, such as “You’ve just said (done/asked) something that really inspired me! Thanks for that, I’m just going to jot that down.” I also take notes at other times, too: a real brainstorm idea may hit me in the head when I’m standing in line at the cashier at the supermarket. Always be prepared to receive a brilliant thought to act upon.

You may find that taking quiet moments to devote to journal writing can be of benefit. Journaling can help you develop ideas that have been lying dormant inside you, or help you work out something that you have been uncertain about trying. Keeping a journal can give you a useful problem-solving opportunity of working out an idea on paper before putting it into action.

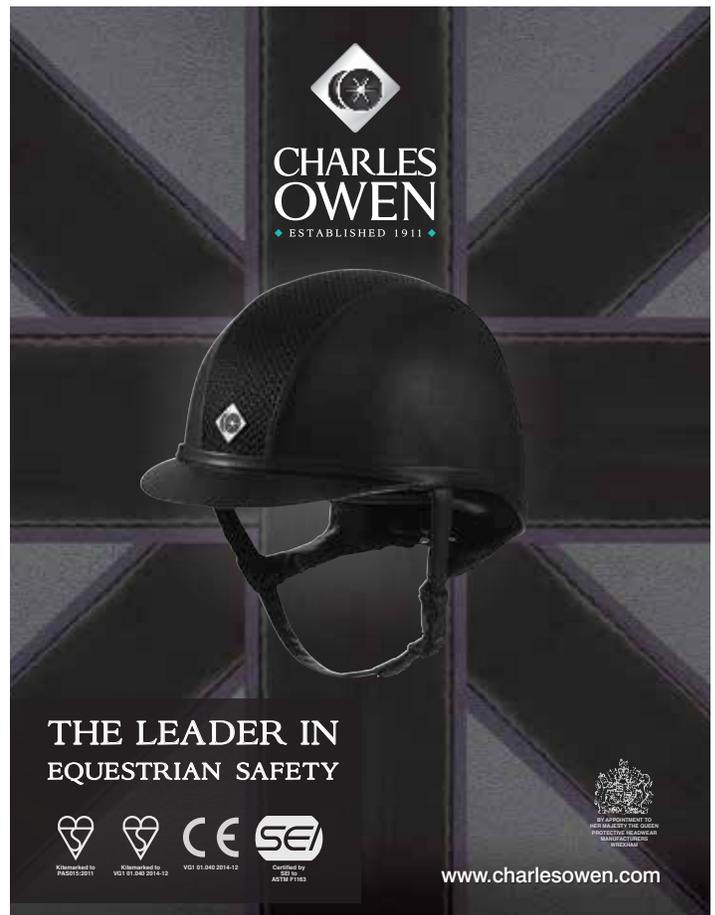
Make time to read It pretty much goes without saying that there is a plethora of horse-related reading material available to us (magazines, books, blogs), but do take some time to actually get some reading in. I always think that keeping up with the latest is a necessity in any profession. Schedule yourself some job-related reading time as part of your day or work week.

Plan some escapes As the reading recommendation above, also treat outside horse excursions as part of your continued growth and professional education. Of course you know the benefits of attending clinics, seminars, and workshops, so allot yourself a do-able amount of time and money per annum to partake of some outside horse experiences. For me it was always attending judging seminars and the yearly ARIA conventions that got me recharged for a good, long time. So do travel, if even a little. You do not necessarily have to go far. Think of it as a professional investment in yourself.

Be with others More horse people may be the last people you want to spend time with, but at least spend some time with those in your field, even if it is only through social media groups. Facebook, for example, has a wealth of horsey groups to participate in and learn from.

Cross train your brain You may find that your “zing” of inspiration comes by watching and listening to teachers of other sports or subjects, getting a different slant on how they conduct a class, communicate an idea, engage, plan, or program. Attend non-horse sport competitions just to get another perspective. Your kids or partner may be thrilled at your sudden interest in attending their sporting events. Inspiration can also be found in non-horsey books and films. A self-help book helped me better deal with professional client relationships and a film I recently saw inspired me to try

► *continued on page 23*



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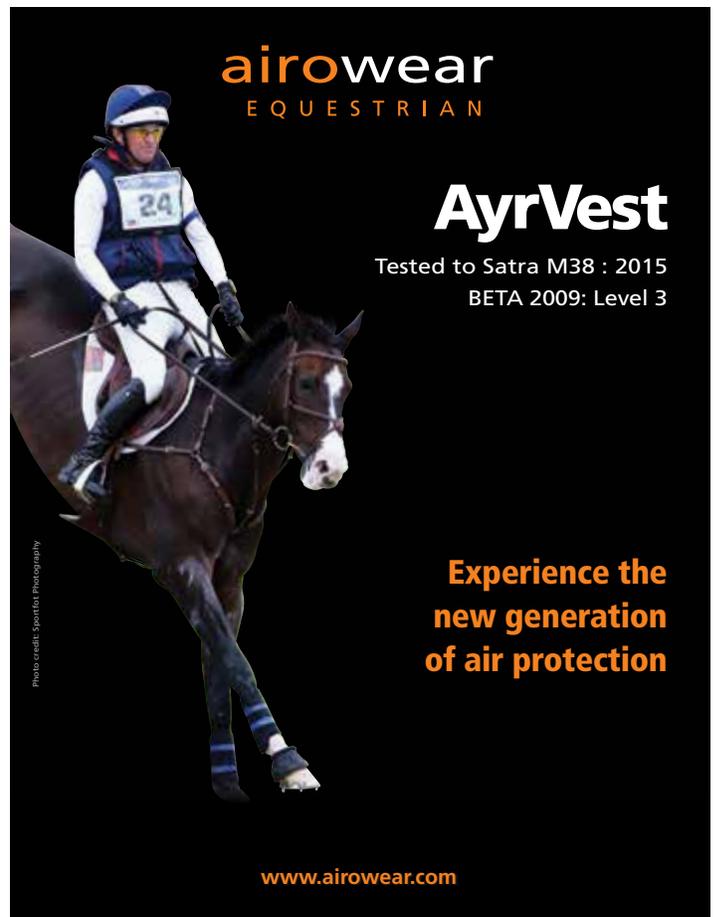
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GGT Footing sponsored rider Bobby Meyerhoff competing in last year's Rolex event. Photo by Michelle Dunn. ▶

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– Mahatma Gandhi

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► *Go Fish, continued from page 21*

a different technique in my painting. Not everything need have a four-legged star to be given our time and attention.

Find inspiration everywhere Look, listen, think outside of the box and be open to new ideas because there is just so much out there to absorb. As I wrote earlier, I cannot stress how much inspiration I have gained from unexpected sources; the trick is only to be open to it.

Silence the inner critic Do not be afraid to have a new idea or try something in a different way. Act upon your ideas before someone else with less self-doubt than you possess beats you to it. Be bold and do not be afraid to embrace the weird, as long as safety is not put at stake. It may require leaving your comfort zone, but so many great things have happened because of those who did.

Copy those you admire Years ago when I was first studying art I used to go to art museums, camp out in front of my favorite paintings, and observe color, brush strokes, contrast, value, and composition. The day would pass as I copied and sketched away. "Learning from the Masters" has always been an acceptable way to learn art, and we can find much inspiration by studying the masters in our field, too. We do not have to take on another's identity but we can be influenced by their style and knowledge. Much of learning is mimicking, and luckily, the internet and ease of travel have made the masters even more available to us.

A pinch of this and a dash of that If you have a tried and tested system that works well for you and your students, there is no need to fix what is not broken, as long as no cracks start appearing. If they do, a creative injection can cause no harm. I liken it to the television show "Master Chef." All of the contestants on that show are good cooks and they have their system that works for them. However, sometimes the small addition of an ingredient or a subtle adjustment to flavors and how they play with each other can make all the difference in producing that winning dish. There is always the possibility of a new way to communicate something or to demonstrate an exercise. So many students' light bulb moments are the result of the usual material being presented in a different manner.

Let this be the year that you enliven your classes and find increased enjoyment in them by tending to the replenishment of your stock of creative inspirations. It would delight me to know that on a regular basis a sign that reads "Gone Fishing" will be hanging on your doors! 🐟



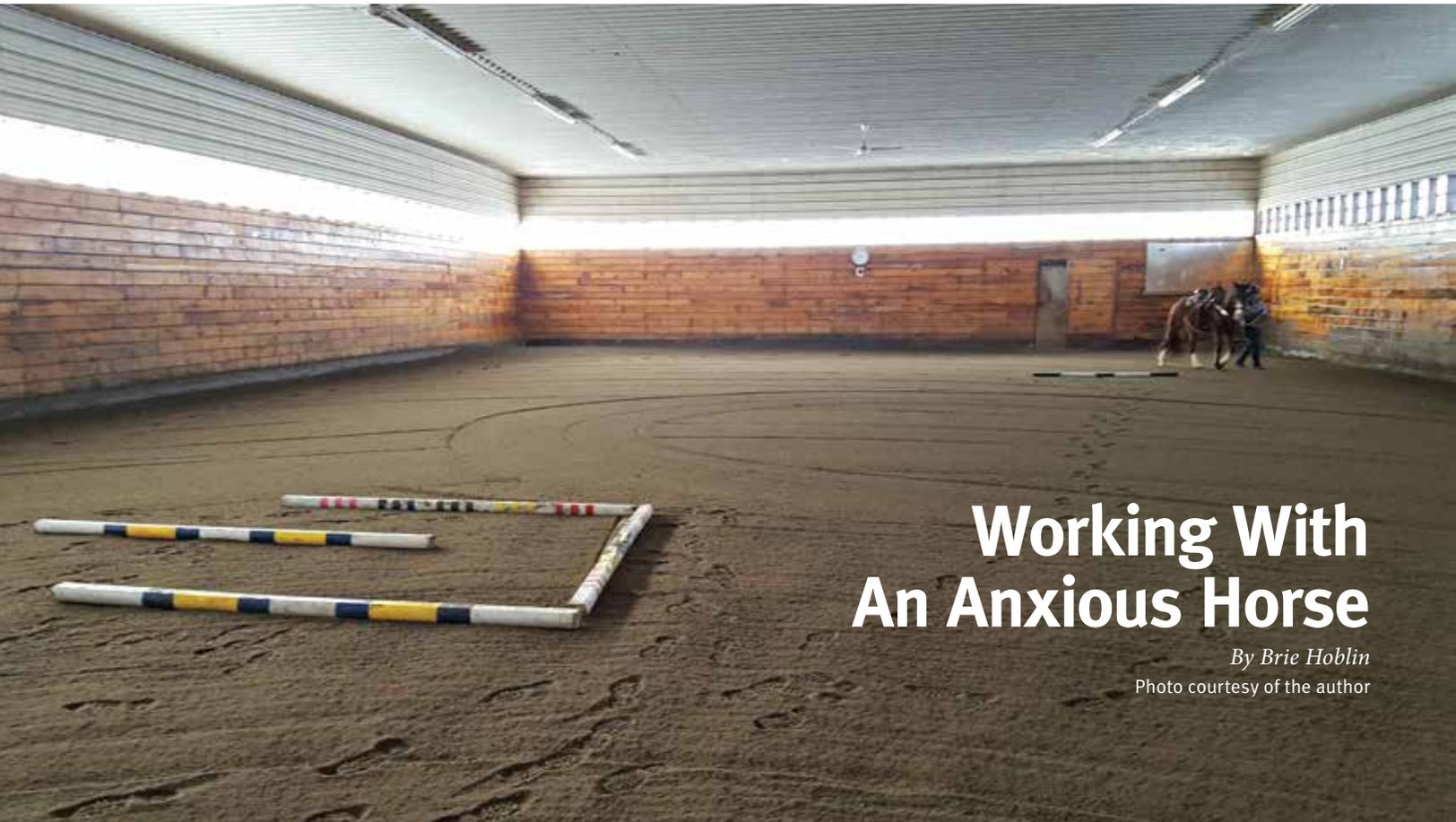
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Working With An Anxious Horse

By Brie Hoblin

Photo courtesy of the author

I'VE KNOWN MANY LESSON HORSES throughout the years; from off-the-track Thoroughbreds to Quarter Horses, from 12-hand ponies to 17.2-hand warmbloods, from palominos to paints. Good lesson horses come in all shapes and sizes, and from many different backgrounds. But what all good lesson horses have in common is, hopefully, a good mind.

A horse with a good mind isn't the same thing as one who is blindly obedient, or functions on autopilot. A horse with a good mind is aware of the instructor, the rider, the weather, and the footing, and responds accordingly. One of the best lesson horses I ever knew was an angel for beginner riders, and misbehaved juuuust enough to challenge her more advanced riders, while never, ever putting any of them in harm's way. Now that's a brilliant horse.

But there are many anxious horses out there, that instructors are called upon to deal with. As an instructor, what can you

do to take an anxious horse from being a hot mess to being a brave and resilient lesson pony? If a rider comes to you wanting to take lessons on his or her own anxious mount, how can you, as an instructor, help? Although every anxious horse or pony is unique and requires an individually tailored approach, here are a few suggestions geared towards working with the anxious horse and its rider.

Learn about the horse's background

Horses can have anxiety or an anxious

temperament for a wide variety of reasons. Some may have anxiety because of their genetics. Some may be a more athletic or "hot" breed and get anxious because of lack of exercise. Others may have been kept in living situations where they did not have other horses in the pasture with them for companionship, and feel anxious without a steady herd environment. Some horses have been passed from owner to owner. Some have been treated harshly or inconsistently by people in their past. The list goes on. As a riding instructor, you will be best equipped to help anxious horses if you have as many clues as possible as to how they have been treated, where they came from, and what bloodlines they carry. Other important factors include the age they were started and when they were weaned. Diet can also play a role as some horses get anxious or "hot" when they are simply being fed too much,

Left: Exercises using poles can help some horses.

or fed too much sugar. Check with the owner or rider about the horse's current diet in addition to getting the general history.

Observe the horse in different settings

Horses with an innately anxious temperament are likely to be as anxious in the pasture as they are in the arena. Whether they are overly submissive in the herd, or aggressive out of fear, or seem quite happy to settle in with their herd mates, sometimes the best clues on how to handle anxious horses come from simply observing them in the pasture away from human contact.

It can also be important to notice how horses react to humans entering their pasture or stall. Are they friendly and happy to see you, do they avoid human contact, or are they indifferent? Do they seem very comfortable around one particular human but dispassionate about others? Do they seem friendly towards most humans but particularly dislike one? Horses are very clear about how they feel towards humans, and observing them with different people can yield useful clues as to what causes their anxiety. Some horses are simply of a temperament to prefer having one human in their life and are not necessarily the best candidates for the variety of lesson horse life, for example. Others love children but dislike being lesson horses for adult riders. Some have a preference for quiet, calm people. Take note of how an anxious horse reacts to different people.

Another important clue is how much anxiety comes up for a horse on a longe line versus under saddle, with a light rider versus a heavy rider, in a bitless bridle versus its normal bit. Sometimes anxiety stems from physical pain and an upset horse is simply a clue to needing a saddle fitter or equine dentist, a different bit, or a more restrictive weight limit for its riders.

And last, notice how a horse behaves in the ring alone, in the ring with other horses causing a commotion, out on the trail, at a competition or clinic, or in a parade. Sometimes stimulating environ-

ments cause anxiety that can be addressed with some desensitization training beforehand. For a horse that has anxiety in a specific setting away from the barn, as a riding instructor, you can help the rider or owner plan goals for the horse (that may differ from simply going to a show with the goal of winning ribbons) accordingly.

Is the horse reactive or defensive?

Although every horse is different and manifests anxiety differently, thinking about whether a particular horse is reactive or defensive can be useful in determining how to help it gain confidence moving forward. Reactive horses spook when another horse trips in the arena, or when snow slides off the roof, or when a bird flies too close, or when any number of other things happen. This is a horse that may be almost as anxious in the pasture as in the ring, and that seems to lack confidence a great deal of the time. This horse may be more athletic or a hotter breed.

Defensive horses are more likely to have a calm temperament as a baseline. They may have been rushed through training, treated poorly, be suffering from physical pain, or struggling with understanding the cues of the rider. But in the pasture they are often confident or happy, and when left to their own devices they prefer eating or moseying along to running energetically.

Read the horse's body language

Another aspect of being mindful with an anxious horse is paying attention to its anxiety levels in an ongoing way. Being able to identify when the horse feels a little anxious versus when it's about to really lose its mind is an important first step. Once you're familiar with a certain horse's reactions you are better equipped to choose strate-

gies for managing the anxiety. Some horses flip their heads or bob their heads up and down when they're anxious. Others bolt, or jump sideways. Some simply snort and need a minute to look at something. For horses with big dramatic reactions, consider starting exposure therapy on the ground rather than in the saddle.

Take the time it takes so it takes less time

As riding instructors we often have far too many things going on in any given day, and it can be easy to brush off the little things we notice about a horse, or to simply not notice at all. We may assume a horse is "just crazy" or "just temperamental" or "difficult" when in fact it is giving us clues about what's bothering it. Part of being safe and compassionate riding instructors is listening to our horses when they give us these little clues. Whether it's noticing that a certain pony

dislikes being ridden in a certain saddle, or recognizing that a reduction in exercise during the winter months might be leading to greater spookiness in another, taking the time to be attentive to these little details is such a big part of what keeps us safe. Taking the time to address the issue directly with training is a gift to yourself, the horse, and the horse's rider(s) or owner(s). Problems that persist for months or years may clear up very quickly when addressed more mindfully.

Exposure therapy and thresholds

For some horses, anxiety is a problem solved entirely outside of the arena. Adding vitamin B or reducing the amount of grain may be all it takes for one horse. Another may need a visit from the chiropractor or saddle fitter. And another might simply need some time to relax and move past previous difficult experiences. I leave you ▶

If a rider comes to you wanting to take lessons on his or her own anxious mount, how can you, as an instructor, help?

to figure those many different solutions out on your own, as needed for each individual horse. However, within the arena there are some different strategies that can help certain horses gain confidence and reduce their anxiety.

For horses that are reactive and easily overwhelmed by unfamiliar sights or sounds, *or* for horses that are anxious about specific things based on negative past experiences, slowly exposing them to new things can help them gain (or regain) confidence. The important thing is to do so mindfully. So often we take a new horse to a show without thinking much about whether that horse has ever been exposed to the many sights and sounds at a show before. Or we put a new bit on a horse and hop on without taking the time to help it adjust to the new cues. Or we change where we're boarding our horses without giving any thought to how much it upsets their routine to leave behind all their pals and pasture buddies. Regardless of what evokes anxiety in horses, exposing them to a number of "scary" things slowly and mindfully can boost their overall confidence and resilience, leaving them better prepared for new challenges in the future.

If an anxious horse is never asked to leave its comfort zone, the horse may be very comfortable, and the rider may be more confident that there won't be any big reactions, but the horse's anxiety may not improve much. Although some horses with stressful experiences in their past may need a decompression period to "just be a horse," at some point anxieties improve because of controlled exposure, not avoidance. It is a very common mistake with anxious horses to simply avoid the difficult things altogether unless they are unavoidable. Sadly this is a disservice to the horse, and cre-

ates a very tense situation when the scary thing in question is suddenly unavoidable and without much warning the horse is in over its head psychologically.

On the other hand, purposefully exposing an anxious horse to its worst nightmare without any additional steps along the way will often simply reinforce the fear or anxiety.

Taking the time to address the issue directly with training is a gift to yourself, the horse, and the horse's rider(s) or owner(s).

The trick is to expose the horse to the thing that induces anxiety enough to bring up the anxiety a little bit...and then take the scary thing away again before the horse feels completely overwhelmed. With repetitive exposure that makes the horse slightly uncomfortable but not psychologically overwhelmed, its anxiety diminishes over time. The key is to work in between those two thresholds: a horse that is completely comfortable won't be making progress towards gain-

ing confidence, and a horse that is totally panicked won't be calm enough to learn.

It's also important to do this in as safe a manner as possible for the rider or handler. Sometimes starting on the ground is safer than starting under saddle. If a horse is having big reactions it may be helpful to increase the initial distance between the scary thing and the horse.

What does this mean in plain English? Let's look at a few examples.

Example 1: A few years ago there was a mare whose owner was taking lessons using an English saddle. The owner often tacked up in a hurry and the mare often made faux biting motions at her owner whenever the owner did up the girth. Eventually this evolved into a more complex ritual with the horse dancing sideways back and forth on the cross-ties while the owner tried frantically to throw the saddle on her back. Although the horse was expressing anxiety over the discomfort of being girthed so quickly, the

owner saw no reason for the mare to object and insisted on continuing to tack her horse up the same way each time. Things worsened steadily until the owner finally sought help. We started with the horse in a halter and lead rope being allowed to sniff her saddle and girth and then walk away. Over time we progressed to putting the saddle on her back on a loose lead. As she grew more comfortable with that we started doing up the girth just one hole on either side, and then undoing the girth again and taking the saddle off completely before repeating the whole process all over again several times in a row. It took the owner's mindfulness around tacking up more patiently as well as some exposure therapy before the mare stood calmly and quietly to have her saddle put on and girthed up.

Example 2: More recently I went to visit a gelding with a specific fear of poles (although when I got there it became clear he was anxious about a number of other things as well). He expressed his anxiety by flipping his head up and down rapidly over and over again, preventing his rider from having any consistent contact with his mouth. He had a history that included a rider that really yanked on the reins. We spent a few sessions working on a more relaxed contact with the reins because of how he expressed his anxiety. Once he was a little calmer under saddle, we did some exercises with two single poles at opposite corners of the arena. At first he was led by hand past the poles, then led by hand over the poles. After that he was ridden past the poles. Finally he was ridden in a pattern where he would go over one pole at a walk, be asked to trot a few steps, then simply walked past the other pole. At the end of this simple pattern his rider would reverse directions and repeat the pattern in the opposite direction. This pattern gave the horse some psychological space from the poles both because he needed to think about trotting, which was a different task, and because he was not asked to go over the pole every single time. Although he exhibited some anxiety and increased his head flipping again when

first being ridden over a single pole, with repetition he was able to go over a single pole at a walk without anxiety. The pattern then gently shifted towards trotting over the pole sometimes instead of walking. In the next session we increased the difficulty of the exercise until he was walking and trotting over four ground poles.

The importance of psychological space

In both these cases the horses needed time to process what was happening to them and needed periods of exposure followed by time and space away from the scary thing before being exposed to it again. The exposure therapy is nothing without the space in between for the horse to process it. It was also important for both equines to see the scary thing on both their right and left sides because horses process things separately on each side of their body.

Anxious horses come from many different backgrounds and each requires a unique approach. But for many horses exposure therapy may be a very useful tool in assisting them in gaining confidence. As many of us prepare for show season or other events this spring, it may be the perfect time to work on boosting the confidence of an anxious horse. ■

About the author:

Brie Hoblin has been riding & training horses for close to three decades. She earned her Bachelor's degree in computer programming & now balances her love of equines with her passion for technology. Brie became a certified ARIA riding instructor in 2014, after years of studying under other certified instructors. She owns a rare American Curly horse named Sage, who is her best friend & trail riding companion.

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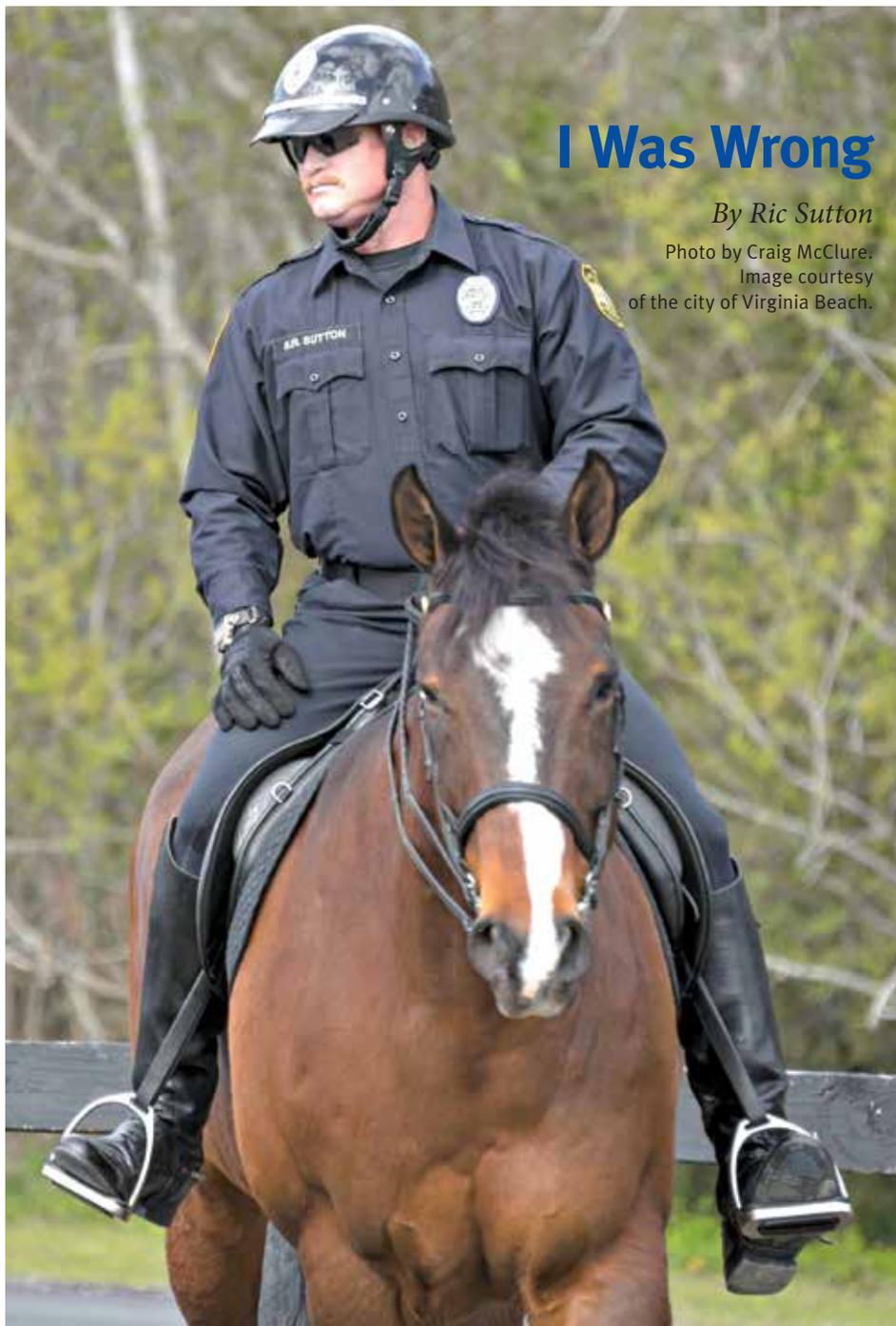
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"Do you have one like this in dapple grey?"



I Was Wrong

By Ric Sutton

Photo by Craig McClure.
Image courtesy
of the city of Virginia Beach.

AS A VETERAN POLICE OFFICER I knew what to expect. I had been assigned to this area several years before. I had worked all manner of cases in this neighborhood—thefts, assaults, stabbings, shootings, and plenty of gang-related cases. I knew from experience that as soon as we appeared on the street, word would go out. People would collect themselves from their yards, go inside, close the door, and pull the shades until the cops were out of the area. No one wanted to talk to us or be seen talking to us. We were viewed as an occupying force in this neighborhood. Our cars, bicycles, and foot patrols were seen as intrusions.

My partner had never worked this area but had heard about it and knew what to expect based on the reputation. We checked our girths and stirrups, strapped on our helmets, and swung into our saddles. We crossed a busy four-lane road at the intersection with a traffic light and were met with open looks of wonder and bewilderment.

As we turned onto the main road of the neighborhood it happened just like we thought it would—kids saw us and ran into their homes with shouts about the presence of the police in the neighborhood. Then it all changed. People came out of their houses and approached us tentatively at the edge of the road. They asked why we were riding horses. “Because they let us.” We smiled back. What were we doing in their neighborhood, they inquired. “Just riding around, patrolling and trying to keep everyone safe,” was our response. “That’s cool.” By this time we were surrounded by kids of all ages and parents holding little children. The usual questions—“Do they bite? Will they kick me? What’s their names? Can I take your picture? Can I take a selfie? Can I pet them?” all got asked and answered. The whole block had come out to meet us. After pictures, petting, and conversations we announced that we had to get going and check out the rest of the neighborhood. As we turned and headed up the street two things that had never happened to me in that neighborhood occurred. A group of kids excitedly and happily followed us through the area, and several people said, “Thank you for being out here officers.”

This exact same scenario happened several more times throughout the patrol as people swarmed out to meet the horse cops. Everyone was respectful and thankful when we took time so they could get their cameras and get a picture of their kids with the police horses. At one point a patrol car stopped by to check on us, and the officer in the car was met with the same cordiality as the horses. The officers and the citizens were not any different than the day before.

The difference was the presence of the horses. Thanks to the horses, we were able to have conversations and make connections that had eluded us on both sides for years.

I was pleasantly surprised and glad to have my expectations proven wrong. I believe that there is no better ice breaker or bridge builder in patrol work than the horse. Winston Churchill was on the money when he said, "There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man." ■

*Have a good ride,
Ric*

About the author:

Officer Ric Sutton is a twenty-seven year veteran police officer in Virginia Beach, Virginia. His assignments have covered a wide span of the law enforcement spectrum. He has most recently been assigned to the Mounted Patrol, and is the director of the East Coast Mounted Patrol Association.



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The Power of Disappointment

By Lydia Fairchok

“I’m disappointed in you.”

“That wasn’t even close to your best effort.”

IS THERE EVER a place for such words in the art of instruction? As one who thrives on positivity and encouragement, my initial reaction to such a question is a resounding “No!” But haven’t we all been genuinely disappointed in students who willfully make poor decisions or produce lackluster work that we KNOW they could have surpassed? Sugarcoating such situations does nothing to better your students. A healthy amount of disappointment, judiciously applied, may actually help more than it hurts.

This principle was driven home to me when someone whose opinion I truly cared about looked me in the eye and told me point blank, “I am disappointed in you.” We both knew that I hadn’t given my performance everything I had. It was easy for me to rationalize my poor attempt—I was tired, I was hungry, I had worked all day. It was not so easy, however, to disregard my coach’s blunt honesty, and the painful truth that I could have given so much more. Suddenly my subpar effort was not just a personal failure, but also a matter of letting someone else down.

The power of disappointment lies in the fact that the emotional obligation to others is often greater than the obligation to self. Essentially, people want the approval of other people. For this principle to have true leverage in the arena, a climate of respect, trust, and a genuine sense that the instructor is invested in the success of the riders must already exist. When students respect the teacher, they value his or her advice and affirmation. This leads to a desire to please, which in turn motivates students to operate at a higher effort level. Trust comes from the students’ experience that such effort will be

rewarded and poor work will be corrected fairly. Appropriate praise and meaningful feedback prove the instructor to be a reliable source of information. Perhaps most important, though, is the students’ conviction that the teacher truly wants them to succeed. This intangible quality is the product of the instructor’s entire attitude, commitment, and conduct. Lacking such a foundation, instructor disappointment is construed as criticism, accusation, or even hypocrisy.

When respect, trust, and investment are present, however, disappointment is yet another tool in your box. It should never be used to create a sense of defeat or self-loathing in the recipient. Know your student and take the whole situation into account. For example, a timid rider who digresses into an “I can’t!” attitude can be taken aside and spoken to kindly but firmly: “Can I be completely honest with you, Mary? I’m disappointed that you are giving up so easily. We can get through this together, but you are going to have to put in a lot more effort.” A more robust personality can be approached much differently, especially if the issue at hand arose from inattention or irresponsibility, or if the situation could have ended badly: “Ethan, frankly I am disappointed in you for leaving the gate open. You are lucky that none of the horses got out.”

Verbalizing disappointment is rarely telling students something they don’t already suspect from your involuntary body language and demeanor. When riders feel unspoken disapproval, it is natural for them to become tense and discontent, which only handicaps everything else they attempt to accomplish. When you break the cycle by stating your disappointment, however, you banish the elephant from the room and open the door for communication. Think of disappointment as a can opener: it is simply a tool for getting to the good stuff.

In order to be effective, though, timing and delivery are everything. Disappointment should never be conveyed in passing or amid a flurry of activity, and should typically be a private exchange. One-on-one and face-to-face is a good rule of thumb. Be sure that you can speak calmly and rationally with no trace of frustration. Do not devolve into a lecture, but ask open-ended questions that invite the student into a dialogue after you have stated your piece. “You are not applying enough of yourself today; is there something bothering you?” Telling someone that he or she has fallen short of your expectations must be the beginning of a conversation, not the end.

How you follow up on an expression of disappointment is dictated entirely by the circumstances. It may be appropriate to retry the failed activity immediately, or simply to ask for more commitment “next time.” However you choose to finish out the interaction, be vigilant for opportunities to praise without being effusive. As long as you were fair and objective in your initial conversation, you have nothing to apologize or compensate for. Remember, though, that disappointment leverages the human desire for approval to generate internal drive. When you see more effort, you *must* reinforce it with judicious praise or you will quickly undermine trust and confidence.

Disappointment is not a recourse for every student or every circumstance. It must be used wisely, sparingly, and in conjunction with many other teaching tools. Don’t let the inherent negativity of the word eliminate it from your vocabulary. When used appropriately, you are not manipulating or degrading your riders when you tell them you are disappointed in them, but rather paving the way for honest discussion, future improvement, and the untapped reserves of inner motivation. ■

About the author:

Lydia Fairchok is certified in Recreational Riding Level 1, and lives and teaches with her three horses in Central Indiana. Lydia segued from a full-time instruction career to the field of public safety in 2014 and continues to teach a small number of students while working as a police officer and 9-1-1 dispatcher.

New Year's Resolutions for the Equine Industry

By Julie I. Fershtman, Attorney at Law



PLANNING AHEAD FOR A SUCCESSFUL 2018? You might define “success” as great progress in your showing, breeding, training, racing, and riding. The fact is, however, that people in the horse industry still rely on handshake deals and incomplete contracts when they buy, sell, lease, board, train, haul, and breed horses, and when they give instruction to others. With the new year, resolve to protect yourself. Here are a few suggestions.

Be Cautious About Using Standardized Contracts

Standardized, “one-size-fits-all” form contracts are quick and inexpensive. People often share them on-line. However, use of these contracts creates a serious risk of including illegal or unenforceable provisions or failing to comply with unique provisions that the applicable state’s law requires. For example, many of the 48 state equine activity liability acts (as of December 2017) require equine professionals, equine activity sponsors, and possibly others to include special “warning” or other language in certain contracts. These requirements differ from state to state. In a few states, the laws specify that those who fail to comply with these requirements can lose any liability limitation benefits from the law.

Also, states differ as to what language can make a liability waiver/release enforceable. (A small number of states will not enforce them.) The same contract language that one state may enforce could fail in another state. Evaluating these state-by-state differences usually requires a review of ever-changing court rulings. For the best protection, retain knowledgeable counsel to help you comply with applicable requirements.

Read and Comply With Applicable Equine Activity Liability Acts

Now is the time to review the equine activity liability laws in effect where you reside or do business. For the 48 states with some form of an equine activity liability act (as of December 2017, all states except California and Maryland have one) pay special attention to these:

- Many of these laws have contract language and sign posting requirements, usually directed at equine professionals and equine activity sponsors. They all differ.
- Most of these laws list exceptions to the immunities, and these exceptions could provide grounds for a lawsuit. If you allow others to ride or handle your horses or if you allow people to bring horses onto your property, take a look at the “providing an equine horse and failing to make reasonable and prudent efforts” exception, the “faulty tack or equipment” exception, and the “dangerous latent condition of the land” exception, all of which are found in several equine activity liability laws.

Use Written Contracts

Some state laws may actually *require* contracts in certain equine-related trans-

actions. Equine activity liability acts in Arizona and Virginia, for example, have language requiring written contracts and releases, even offering some language, to benefit from immunities. Equine sales statutes in California, Florida, and Kentucky require contracts that include certain language.

Carefully written contracts can help avoid disputes and save money. In leases, for example, questions sometimes involve: Was the arrangement a sale? A lease? Were promises made regarding the horse’s disposition or training? Who pays the vet bills if the leased horse develops a serious condition during the lease that the lessee did not cause? Does the lessee have recourse against the lessor if the horse injures him or her during the lease? These issues could lead to costly, burdensome, and inconvenient legal disputes. A carefully worded agreement can help avoid them.

Remember That Laws Change

Laws affecting you may have changed without your knowledge. Recently, equine activity liability laws have been amended in Iowa and Texas (in 2011), Michigan (in 2015), North Carolina (in 2013), and Virginia (in 2008). A useful website that offers links to equine and animal-related laws, and updates them regularly, is www.animal-law.info.

Conclusion

Make 2018 a year of attention to legal matters. Stay safe and protect yourself. ■

This article does not constitute legal advice. When questions arise based on specific situations, direct them to a knowledgeable attorney.

About the author:

Julie Fershtman is one of the nation’s most experienced Equine Law practitioners. A lawyer for more than 31 years, she is a Shareholder with Foster Swift Collins & Smith, PC, based in Michigan. She has successfully handled equine cases in 18 jurisdictions nationwide and has tried equine cases before juries in four states. She has drafted thousands of equine industry contracts, is listed in *The Best Lawyers in America*, and is the recipient of the ABA’s 2017 “Excellence in the Advancement of Animal Law Award.” Her speaking engagements span 29 states. For more information, please visit www.equinelaw.net and www.fosterswift.com.

How to Charge What You're Worth Without Feeling Guilty

By Doug Emerson, *The Profitable Horseman*



IF SETTING FEES for your horse business is a struggle for you, you're not alone. You don't want to charge too much and risk losing a sale and you don't want to set prices too low and cheat yourself out of income. Where is the balance point between a fair fee and customer price resistance, and why isn't there an on-line guide to help you answer this question?

My son has been shopping on line for a used pickup truck. He's narrowed down his selection to make, model, year, and mileage. There are plenty of on-line resources for establishing values of used vehicles. You probably use these resources as price guides, too. With printed guides, price is well defined within a range of evaluation factors. It's fast and **easy**. Best of all, guides educate buyers not familiar with values and make seller/buyer negotiation easier for both parties.

Demonstrating value offered in the horse industry is far more difficult than beginning with a Blue Book guide to current values. Often, professional horsemen are selling to customers not fully educated on value differences in the industry. Successful professionals know the top five things they are really good at and memorize them to effortlessly convey the value they offer without having to think about it first. Confidence sells.

A riding instructor might say something like this: "Here is the value I offer my students:

- 1 My seven years of professional instruction experience as a certified ARIA riding instructor helps my students learn quickly and safely.
- 2 I specialize in youth instruction and

- 3 know when to push students and when to help them relax if fear arises.
- 3 Group instruction helps reduce lesson expense and allows students to benefit from watching classmates learn, too.
- 4 Punctuality is important. I start on time and end on time—everyone is busy.
- 5 You will quickly recognize my commitment to students having fun learning how to ride and spending time with horses."

No doubt you've found naming your price a challenge at times (maybe all the time). It could be because of the following reasons:

- You are uncomfortable talking about, you know, shhh. . . money.
- You worry that the customer may object to your fee and you won't know what to say next.
- You feel you don't have the experience or correct qualifications to charge that kind of fee.
- You have a fear of rejection over price.
- You think your fees are too high compared to your perceived competition.

Don't feel like you are the only person troubled with naming your price. Everyone has tripped over setting price at one time or another, including me.

Here are some tips for getting through *the money talk* with your prospects and customers:

- 1 Have a pricing strategy. Know what the competition offers and what the price is. Evaluate what you offer in comparison and raise your fee if you have more to offer.
- 2 Make a "Standard Fees and Prices Sheet." Start with a single sheet of paper. At the top, print your business name and directly underneath print "Standard Fees and Prices." Then list all of the services and products you offer and the fee you ought to charge. Congratulations. You now can say, "My standard fee for a private one-hour lesson is ___, my standard fee for trucking horses is ___, my standard fee for schooling at a horse show is ___" and so on.

Once you have standard fees on your price sheet, it will be much more professional than saying, "How does one hundred bucks sound, is that fair?"

- 3 Talk with your customer or prospect about what her expectations are before quoting your fee. Suggest to the customer that before you talk about money, the two of you should see if you can deliver what she needs. This allows you to more fully understand what the customer wants and needs. Then, charge appropriately.

Answering the question, "How much do you charge for . . .?" without knowing the details is a rookie error that often results in undercharging.

- 4 Be confident. Deliver the price, and then stop talking. That means don't talk even if there is a long, uncomfortable period of "dead air." As the seasoned salesperson knows, he who speaks first, loses.
- 5 Avoid discounts, they just lead to more negotiation. Instead, offer different levels of service at different fees.

If the money talk and your standard fees scare off some prospects, don't be discouraged. Be thankful that those prospects were quickly eliminated, allowing you to concentrate on the prospects who will enjoy working with you and pay you what you're worth. ■

About the author:

Doug Emerson, the Profitable Horseman, consults, writes, and speaks about the business half of the horse business. Visit www.ProfitableHorseman.com.

► *Riding More Than One Horse, continued from page 5*

sitting trot the smooth-gaited horse will encourage the student to relax; the upright-shouldered “sewing machine” trot variety will test even the most independent seat.

For jumpers, every horse jumps differently. The stride to the fence can be influenced but larger-gaited horses may “bound around” in Tigger fashion, whereas those with stiffer backs may hollow. Some horses bascule perfectly, some take more encouragement to the obstacle than others. Every horse has a different level of suppleness and athletic ability, and it is important that the rider learns to work with all types.

You get the idea. You don’t learn much if you don’t constantly challenge both yourself and your students.

Happy Teaching! ■

About the author:

Nikki Alvin-Smith is an international Grand Prix dressage trainer/clinician who has competed in Europe at the Grand Prix level earning scores of over 72%. Together with her husband Paul, who is also a Grand Prix rider, they operate a private horse breeding/training farm in Stamford, NY.

Words of Wisdom

“... we must never forget, every time we sit on a horse, what an extraordinary privilege it is: to be able to unite one’s body with that of another sentient being, one that is stronger, faster and more agile by far than we are, and uncommonly forgiving.”



“No throne can compare with the back of a horse, and there is no way man can come closer to nature than by becoming one with a horse.”

William Steinkraus (1925-2017) rode in five Olympics and took the first individual equestrian gold ever won by an American rider in 1968 in Mexico City.

► *Learn About Riding to Hounds, continued from page 13*

can see what’s going on and get used to the pack. Any horse can get a little excited or momentarily spooked, but a horse that kicks out at hounds is one that likely will not be invited back.

It’s important to let the staff work; riders in the field should resist the temptation to speak to hounds or staff, even if they think they are being helpful. It’s hard to resist saying hello to those cute hounds!

Drag versus live

“What about the fox?” you might ask. In this country, foxhunting is more correctly called “foxchasing.” It is all about the chase. In a drag hunt, a human “fox” lays a line of scent for the hounds to follow. Drag hunts are generally out for a shorter time, allowing folks who work a better opportunity to get out and follow hounds.

Live hunts go to great lengths to ensure the general health and well-being of the quarry in their territory, and are a strong force for maintaining and protecting habitat. Live hunts may be out for several hours, so make sure you and your horse are fit enough to handle it. Ask in advance if there will be an opportunity to “retire,” or head back to the trailers early.

Here are a few tips:

- Arrive early. You’ll want time to check in with the Hunt Secretary, and remit releases and fees. Be tacked up, mounted, and with your Field Master at least 10 minutes prior to the official “start” time.

- At the start of the day, find the Masters, and introduce yourself. At the end of the day, be sure to thank the Masters, any landowners who are present, and your Field Master.
- A horse that kicks must have a red ribbon in its tail and stay at the back of the field. A green horse should wear a green ribbon, and is best partnered with an experienced horse.
- When hounds are working, there should be silence, and other than during a “check,” or pause, talking should be kept to a minimum. If you need to adjust tack or dismount for any reason, always ask permission of the Field Master.

From attire and tack to protocol in the field while out, hunts are very safety conscious. Learn the rules, follow them, and you’ll be doing your best to ensure your own safety and that of others. The Masters, staff, and members all want you to have fun and enjoy their sport. They will do their best to look after you. Above all, smile, say “Hello” to everyone you meet, and you’ll be invited back. ■

About the author:

Kate Selby is an ARIA Level III instructor in Dressage and Hunt Seat and winner of the ARIA Instructor of the Year. When she’s not teaching, coaching the Middlebury College Equestrian Team, or hunting the hounds for Green Mountain Hounds, she generally has her nose in a book. She lives in northern Vermont.



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... in which Cameo Miller stirs her thoughts and ideas to see what rises to the top.



Write Your Story

By Cameo Miller

Illustration by Bethany Caskey

WORDS HAVE POWER. It is said in the Bible that God created everything there is with words. “In the beginning was the word and the word was God.” “And God *said*, let there be light, and there was light.” If I understand correctly, Islam believes the same—Allah *said* the word “BE” and created the universe from that. Why do you think invading armies burn books and destroy libraries? Because the words in those books provide knowledge and understanding that invaders do not want available. People avidly read fantasy and comic books because those books allow people to see what might be. And we all know that words can tear people to shreds or give them hope and confidence. All around us, for our entire lives, we have others telling us (using *their* words) what they think is best for us—society, family, friends, advertising—it’s everywhere.

What I am proposing, is that rather than letting someone else dictate how your life will go, you write your own story. You have already lived the beginning, and are now somewhere in the middle. Think of the story lines of your favorite books. There is certainly struggle against huge odds, but the

hero(ine) always finds the missing piece, the strength to persevere, the way to make it to the happy ending. Whomever is writing the story gets to decide what that happy ending will look like. Because *you* are writing this one, you get to describe the difficulties, define what ways you might deal with them, and what the happy ending will be. Many of us do this for our students and horses as we outline goals and training plans to help them achieve the goals. But most of us do not do it for ourselves as we slog away at dealing with whatever comes at us. And, as you all know, you must define that goal first so you know the path to take to get to it.

You can write the beginning of your story if you want—what has happened to you so far. You can begin with where you are now. But the important parts are what is to come. How do you want your story to read from here on? What are the difficulties you struggle against, and how are you going to surmount them? What do you need to set in place to get you to your end goal? There are incremental steps you take in your training goals: What are the steps that will help you achieve your happy ending goal? How many of you have truly thought about what the happy ending to your story might look like? How can you hope to get there if you don’t know where you are heading? And not just in general terms—“they lived happily ever after.” But specifically what *your* happily ever after looks like. Do you want to live in a gated community where someone else does all the work and you just get to ride for pleasure? Do you die of a heart attack on a quiet trail ride at 102 years old? Do you live in a little bungalow somewhere with former students coming by to share their stories and pictures—of themselves and their kids riding? Each of these has distinct steps needed to get to those different happy endings. There is a different bottom line focus on 1) income, 2) your own health and not taking unnecessary risks, and 3) your clients.

I can hear you saying that you don’t write articles and books, you train horses and teach students. I can hear many of you saying, “I don’t have time to do all the neces-

sary things that need doing, I certainly don’t have time to do anything this frivolous.” But it’s not frivolous. Words have power and these are *your* words and this is *your* story. Carry a little notebook in your pocket, or write it on your cell phone and save it to the cloud, to add to and revise a bit at a time. This doesn’t have to be a 200+ page tome, it can be as succinct or detailed as you choose. Write a couple of lines or a few sentences as you soak in a hot tub of Epsom salts and baking soda with a glass of wine next to you at the end of a long day. Write a bit as you sit in the barn with the horses fed and watered and the aisle swept while you relax to the contented munching around you. Words, whether written or spoken, have power. I am suggesting that you use this power to create the life you want for yourself.

Your story might look like:

- A clear, precise end goal
- Interim goals specifically outlined to achieve that end
- Possible problems related to each goal and targeted solutions to each

If you just think about it, it may not be as detailed as if you actually write it out. And the thoughts may get lost in all those things you need to do all the time. If it is written, it will be clearer, and be there to review. Once your story is complete, put it away. Decide on a date to bring it out and reread it each year—the date you finished it a year ago, your birthday, whenever feels right to you. How are you doing with working towards making the story you wrote a reality? Did you start to slip out of the story line in places over the year that you need to get back on track with? Does it need any revision? Just as with your students’ and horses’ training goals and plans, it may need adjusting at times, or you may have forgotten an important piece that the plan will remind you of.

Use the power of *your* words. Write your own story and may you each reach your happy ending. ■

About the author:

Cameo Miller is a Masters-level clinical psychologist and a Level IV ARIA Certified Instructor based in Michigan. She is a member of the ARIA Evaluation Panel and National Riding Instructors Convention Staff.



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Date

Location

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| Apr. 14 Columbus, Ohio (held at Equine Affaire) | Jun. 20 Bonita Springs, Florida (SW Florida, between Ft. Myers and Naples) |
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