



Horsemanship

What is it?

“It is the human’s ability to create a willing partnership or unity with the horse.”

This is achieved through ***understanding***,

Understanding includes ***Rider*** and ***Horse*** awareness

Rider awareness is being present in the moment.

Horse awareness is knowing your horse like the back of your hand.

A horse is a horse - A Human is not a horse

Forcing a horse or ***making*** a horse do anything is futile, if you wish to win in your chosen horse sport, or just have a meaningful relationship with your horse, the best chance you have is to become a thinking aware horseman and understand how to communicate with a horse in terms of their values.

When a horseman is confronted with a problem he doesn’t rush in and try and fix it with force, he thinks about the problem, analyzes, and then sets about fixing it in a way the horse will understand slowly and quietly. And if he can’t find a solution to the problem he will ask for help.

The first thing a person needs to become a horseman is the ***willingness*** to be taught. A person needs to be open minded about new ideas, also have the ability to be ***humble***. Without ***humility*** riders cannot admit when the horse knows better.

Develop ***self-awareness***; be aware of your body actions, expressions and personality and understand how they affect the horse. Be honest, without honesty you cannot look objectively at mistakes. Develop observation skills; the ability to read you horse’s expression and understand his personality.

Rider requirements towards understanding Horsemanship

Riders should be able to maintain 100% concentration (be present) whilst training a horse.

Knowing how a horse thinks, what makes him react, understanding our own personalities - these are all prerequisites to successful horsemanship.

Horses will act in self preservation through four determining factors

Pain

Fear

Disrespect

Misunderstanding

Determining at the moment of reaction, which factor is engaged will determine your path of action.

Both the horse and rider's personalities play a large part in the training process. A person can learn as much about riding and training techniques as he wants, but until he understands the principles behind this he hasn't learnt anything.

Mechanics, methods, techniques and strategies are all learned experiences but the mental approach is the rider's own personality.

Personality is the deciding factor in the way a rider applies all the things he has learned.

There are predominantly two types of personalities in a horse and rider.

The ultimate goal is to have equal amounts of both, this means balance or equilibrium.

Introvert/Retreative – meaning inwards- or as we say a horse or person that thinks before they act or react (sometimes too much, sometimes they use thought to distance themselves from their body).

Extrovert – meaning outwards acting or reacting without thought.

The best way to understand your horse's personality, the way he thinks and what makes him tick is to spend time with him in his natural environment.

It is important to encourage awareness and presence in both horse and rider.

There are parts of your personality traits you will not be aware of, or we choose not to see them.

There are two ways of discovering them, be courageous and ask people you trust to give you feedback about yourself, how you conduct yourself in society and towards them and others.

When you start hearing the same thing from multiple sources – You will be hearing the truth.

The truth is we all have the same traits, to be able to make a change we first need to own the trait and then see it within us.

The second one is noticing traits in others – simply if you spot it you have got it

If something you notice in another human is bothersome, annoying or makes you uncomfortable it is something that you do now, or will do in the future, or have done in the past

Having a relationship with a horse is no different to having a relationship with a person.

Noticing undesirable behavior of humans shows us we need to change within ourselves; spotting undesirable behavior in a horse also tells us we have to make some changes within to cause a change with the horse.

“A Horse is a reflection of its Rider” Ray Hunt.

Horseman or intimidation artist

There are horsemen and there are intimidation artists. A horseman thinks an intimidation artist uses fear for control; these humans generally have fear issues themselves - fear of rejection, fear of loss.

We should never intimidate, belittle or take away a horse's dignity through pain, fear or exhaustion.

A person who spurs and jerks, has dust flying, sweat pouring or has their horse seeking air, will not have a horse in the future, and will not have an exceptional winner! You see these people they turn over a lot of horses and blame the horse for their shortcomings.

If you are patient your horse will learn patience.
 If you are confident you will have balance, if you are balanced you will have confidence.

Expression

Expression or noticing the signs

The majorities of people are not aware of the signs and do therefore not understand what a horse is expressing. Consequently they run into trouble or create problems. If you read or listen to the signs you can stop, back off, reassess and return to slow preparation in your training so the horse understands. Then he will remember what it felt like when he was right. And you will also remember what it felt like when it was right.

“OBSERVE, REMEMBER AND COMPARE” Tom Dorrance

When he is right you will be able to progress to the next level.

Horses have feelings, thoughts, wants, needs, fears, similarly to humans. Horse’s brains are much smaller but their hearts are much bigger .Small brains free them from the self consciousness and manipulation of an ego. If they are afraid or angry they let us know immediately.

Unlike humans horses never lie.

Horses have a superior survival ability, which has given them the ultimate memory as similar as an elephant. If we let them down they never forget but with their big hearts they always forgive. So if we are going to have a willing partnership with our horses we need trust, respect and love, these three traits create Equilibrium

A horse will telegraph, through his body language, what he is going to do before he does it. You can learn to read a horse by watching and feeling his body language kinesthetically. Once you get good at this you can redirect his mind from what he may have been thinking. i.e. catching a horse before he is going to buck and stopping it from happening can be as simple as changing direction.

Horses have an innate sensitivity. They can read people and if you plan ahead of time they will know it. For example you decide to stop sixty feet away and your horse stops one second before you ask it, he is reading your thought, created through your body language. If you do the same thing the same way every time your horse will be in tune to you.

If you ride with a positive outlook and confidence your horse will be more confident.

Common horse expressions

<i>undesirable</i>	<i>desirable</i>
Ear flicking	Ear flicking
Tail swishing	Softness of the eye
Bracing	Licking of lips
Jaw clenching	Yawning
Lip pursing	Total body relaxation
Hollowing or roaching of the back	Feeling of you
Head flicking	
Rearing, kicking, bucking or biting	
Muscle tightening	
Shoulder dropping	
Bunching in front of the wither	
Lack of attention	

