

NATURAL HORSEMANSHIP

By Author Unknown

*With horses, the natural attitude is to be as gentle s you can , but as firm as necessary.
When you are gentle, be gentle without being a “sissy”. When you are firm, be firm without being mad.
Do things for the horse and with the horse rather than to the horse.*

PRINCIPLES OF NATURAL HORSE-MAN-SHIP

Horse-man-ship is three words linked together. It is a horse and a human going willingly together. Horse-man-ship is for horses as well as humans, and the horse comes first.

- horses are programmed by nature to act like a prey animal.

Horses are easily recognized as prey animals because of three distinct characteristics:

- they smell what they eat.
- their eyes are set on the sides of their heads which means they have bi-lateral vision. This gives them the ability to see predators sneaking up behind them. It also gives them the disadvantage of having poor depth perception.
- as a prey animal, the horse is perceptive to danger, people, places, changes, and things, particularly dangerous people, places, changes and things.

People are easily identified as predators because of three main characteristics:

- they smell like what they eat.
- human has eyes on the front of their faces, like predators. Humans have great depth perception and the ability to focus on a moving object. But humans lack good lateral vision.
- the human is sometimes not perceptive to danger, people, places, changes and things.

When Horse-man-ship happens ... humans become half horse and the horse becomes half human. Our job as the horse's leader is to get him to be braver, less claustrophobic (less fearful of tight places), and more willing to stand his ground rather than panic at what he perceives to be danger. And the human needs to become assertive enough to be viewed as the “alpha” member of the horse's society, rather than being viewed as a predator or a wimp.

- a horse lives moment to moment.
- teach your horse “not to assume” ... mix it up and keep the horse guessing.
- in order to obtain horsemanship through communication, we must learn not to assume.

FOUR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HORSE

1. learn to act like a partner.
2. don't change gaits.
3. don't change directions.
4. look where you are going.



FOUR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HUMAN

1. learn to act like a partner.
 2. develop an independent seat.
 3. think like a horse.
 4. use the natural power of the mind and the natural power of focus.
- you should cause your ideas to be your horse's ideas but understand what his ideas are first. Then it's up to you to cause the undesirable things to be difficult and the desirable things to be easy.
 - you need to be assertive ... do something about a situation when it needs to be done.
 - assertive is somewhere between being aggressive and wimpy.

Be as firm as you necessary without getting mean or angry and be as gentle as you can without being a sissy.

- you must be mentally, emotionally, and physically fit so you can be just at all times ... take away your emotion (the Clint Eastwood approach ... "make my day.").

The horse has three systems:

- respect.
- Impulsion.
- Flexion.

This all has to do with getting your horse's respect so he will give you his impulsion, which is controlled forward energy. Then you learn how to keep him flexible in the mind and body.

- body language is universal:
 - if he's blinking ... he's thinking.
 - if he licks his lips ... he's probably digesting a thought (he understands and accepts the situation).
 - if he's cocked a hind leg ... he's relaxed.
 - but if his ears are back and he lifts a hind foot ... he's ready to kick.

HORSES ARE GREAT TEACHERS

The horse needs to learn what he's expected to do from an experienced rider. The child needs to learn what it takes to cause a horse to move properly and also gain confidence from a steady mount. Green riders on a green horse does not make sense. It can be a deadly combination.

On the other hand, it's important to learn from the horse who knows his job well. There are many things he can teach you, and then you can become a teacher of horses.



THREE SYSTEMS – RESPECT, IMPULSION, FLEXION

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RESPECT

Respect for the human is one of the most important qualities a horse can have. Respect has no fear in it.

- for a horse to respect you he must yield to you and from you in the “six ways”, whether you are on the ground or on his back.
- if you horse doesn't respect you on the ground, he won't respect you much in the saddle.
- respect is hard to get and easy to lose.
- when mounted , you get the horse to respect you by having an independent seat, controlling his hind quarters, and riding with a focus.

IMPULSION

Impulsion is controlled forward energy that comes from behind.

- impulsion is when the horses harnesses the power of his mind and body and uses it to perform.
- a rider uses impulsion when he asks a horse to perform. If he can't get impulsion from his horse it's because the horse is emotionally out of control. The horse is emotionally out of control because he does not respect the human.
- impulsion comes from respect.
- impulsion is controlled forward energy in the physical sense but in the abstract sense it it can be viewed as emotional collection.
- it should take no more than 4 ounces of effort for a horse to yield ... forward, backward, left, right, up and down.
- ask-tell-promise ... an ask starts with 4 oz on your part. If there is no yield you increase the effort until you achieve the yield.
- the secret is to match the horse's resistance.
- The idea in natural horse-man-ship is to get the horse to yield in all six ways equally, 4 ounces a piece.

FLEXION

There are two types of flexion: mental and physical.

- mental flexion comes directly from the human. Humans who are rules-oriented usually do not have flexible horses. Humans who have attitudes that adjust to fit situations usually build flexibility into their horses.
- there are two type of physical flexion: lateral or vertical.

