

# RESPONSIBILITY TO THE HORSE

*By Ray Hunt*

Examining your relationship with your horse ...

Awareness of details:

- In the last 5 minutes of your ride, what would you have kept and what would you have changed?
- It is important to recognize whatever that horse does on the outside is powered by emotions, drives and needs that exist on the inside.
- The most important place to look for solutions to any problem is inside yourself.
- A rider must be committed to practicing for improvement – working for perfection ... perfecting the true basics, the fundamental skills that are the basis for every movement or performance on horseback.

The FOUR Basic Skills – Pillars of Horsemanship.

## **FEEL**

Riding is both a dance and a conversation between horse and rider.

The rider who has feel is aware of themselves and their horse:

- The mind remains in the present moment.
- Awareness is at two levels:
  - External (physical).
  - Internal (mental/emotional)

Feel for the horse.

Feel of the horse ... and let him feel back to you.

Feel works by means of “life in the body”, like a fluid that can be moved or move from one body zone to another:

- It is also the energy that causes the body, as a whole, to be able to move.
- “Raise the Life” or “Get the Life down into those feet” are admonishments for sluggish, unresponsive horses.

## **TIMING**

Pay close attention to movements of the horse’s jaw, poll, neck, back and legs.

- “Reach into the Energy” to time their aids to accelerate or redirect the horse’s hooves.
- Being able to state with precision when a particular hoof is picked up or down.

## **STRAIGHTNESS**

Straightness means the horses head, neck, back and croup – therefore legs – fluidly track whatever line, straight or curved.

- When turning you want an even rhythm with all four legs working equal.



## **BALANCE**

Feel and timing work to get a horse calm and confident from the inside, out. Straightness works from the outside, in.

- Horse and rider appreciate the feeling of being in the sweet spot – the positional dynamic in which perfect balance is maintained.
- It is the rider's job to "fix it up" – to position the horse's body so he can find the sweet spot.
- The rider offers suggestions, direction and support – the horse does 100% of the physical execution.

*It is my responsibility to fix my mind and my body to where I want them to be, and then my horse will be able to understand me.*

- *Pretty soon the horse understands so well, he'll start to fill in for me.*

## **ACHIEVE SUCCESS**

You have to try, make mistakes and learn from the mistakes.

You don't get discouraged, blame others or your horse or get angry.

You have to think about what happens – what caused it OR why you did it and what happened as a result.

Every experience is all a part of a great life.

Don't make the same mistake twice – be too busy making new mistakes.

The way to make fast progress, is slowly.

To those who have practiced, everything will be given as a gift.

Live up to a standard of performance – as high as your ambitions.

