

## More Big Questions

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Being aware is great. Being aware of our thoughts as they stream through our consciousness in an endless procession at some amazing number during a twenty four hour period can be a bit mind boggling. But it can all make some sort of sense if we detach our selves from these thoughts and just observe. No emotion, no reaction, no feelings. Instead, we just look and learn.

Another question connected to 'our' thoughts is; how do our thoughts affect those around us? 'Those around us' include the horse, of course.

I have absolutely no doubt that our horses are so in tune with our thoughts that they can read us not like a book but like a billboard. "All in your imagination" you might say. Exactly! For example, if we are smiling on the inside, our four legged friends are all over us. They like being with us and they help create magic moments that make us want to shout about it to the universe. Or if we are walking around in turmoil, with dark clouds swirling around above our being and dark emotions sitting deep within us, then where are the horses? Mine don't want to know me when that happens. But I don't take it personally anymore. I take it as a signal that I have 'issues and energy' that I have to fix. Horses read us. They read our thoughts and they react to the quality and intent of those thoughts. Absolutely positively.

Once a teacher asked me; "Glenn, what is your horse thinking about what you are doing"? My quick and typical response (for an unsaavy horse person) was something like "How the heck would I know" (or words to that effect). And she said (and I knew she *really* meant it) "well, if you want to be a horseman you'd better figure it out and quickly!"

What is the horse thinking? What kind of a question is that? How do we humans know what is going on in that rather large head? Where do we start to figure this sort of stuff out? I mean they are horses. They operate in a different realm. They eat grass and don't speak English. How can we figure out what a horse is thinking?

Well it seems that being quiet and listening is a great place to start. It appears as though listening is an important component of communicating. Maybe the most important component. Listening is even more important than reading. Reading the horse used to be the 'go'. And it still is important but listening works better. Yeah, well, the two can be used together for super effectiveness but when push comes to shove, just stop and listen. When we stop babbling on (apologies to any brooks out there) or being busy and listen with not just our ears but with our whole being, we can hear and understand what the horse is thinking. And that can be an experience full of wonderful (and/or confronting) surprises.

'What is the horse thinking'? This *is* a BIG question I often ask myself when I am with them - especially when I meet a new horse or when I am trying to achieve something new with a horse that I already know reasonably well. And then the conversation begins and progresses. I listen, they speak, I speak, they listen, and life is good. Well it is good once you get used to the fact and accept that you are in different waters. Teaching and learning are straightforward, the 'job' gets done easier, the new task is learned, the hoof is trimmed, the horse is moved to another area or loaded in the float, the bot eggs are removed, the drench is administered and so on.

Related to the question above is another big BIG question. This one I find slightly more challenging. It is – “What does the horse think about ME”? Oh oooh. Can of worms stuff, this one. And for simplicity we should, for the moment, just skip over the “what do I think about ME”? and concentrate only on the horse’s thoughts. This can be really uncomfortable territory once you go there. Or it can be very revealing and exciting. So if ignorance is bliss for you and you don’t feel too happy outside your comfort zone, then move on to the next article. But if this strikes a chord with you, go out into the paddock and look your horses in the eye and ask “what DO you think about ME”? Then listen.

Another teacher, when having a conversation with his teacher and friend asked: “People say I’m just having a conversation with myself and not with God at all”. And *his* teacher replied “You are Neale, you are”. And maybe that is truly what it is all about. Listening to yourself; listening to your thoughts or listening to the Universe. It’s all out there according to some creative quantum physicists. Every thought that ever existed is in a great big pool of thought and every now and then we experience or choose one of the thoughts to make our reality. Is it the horse talking or is it just my imagination? Or something else?

Anyway back to reality here. The horse. At a simple level, the horse *will* tell you what he or she thinks about you. They will either walk to you (GREAT!), walk away from you (not so great), totally ignore you (the grass is way more interesting just at the moment thanks), or they may just stand there and look at or through you. Hmmmmmm. Stand and look at you or through you. When they do this it’s the perfect opportunity to have a conversation with them. Just ask yourself (or them) ‘What’? And then listen. If your mind is clear, surprising things can then pass through it. Thoughts and ideas that may seem so left-field just flow through your mind. And you may just be beginning a real conversation with your horse. And when you allow that to happen, all the really BIG questions you ever had about horses (and life) may have answers.

Neat huh?

Another very interesting area we could question and learn about is horses’ moods. Do you know anyone who has the pleasure of owning a horse who always seems to be in a bad mood? Conversely we probably all know someone whose horse/s is/are always a treasure to be with. Might even be ourselves. Do horses get headaches? Do they have off days? Are they suffering from PMT or sexual frustration? Do their bellies ache every now and then and do their feet hurt? And can they feel on top of the world some days? Happy and content as. And how well can we read all these variations in our horses if we can’t even read and have empathy with our partners, children or fellow human beings.

Getting back to horses (again); Say when we are booked in to do a special NH clinic, and the day draws closer, the anticipation builds in us (even though our horses don’t even know ‘cos we didn’t bother to tell them) and the horse has a migraine or is just feeling off. How do we know? What do we do? Load them up, head off, unload them and get into the clinic. And the horse behaves in a way that makes us slightly embarrassed. Do we then sit it out and let the horse have time out to get better? Not usually but it could be just this type of situation that occurs and we haven’t had the empathy, understanding or communication with our horse to know how they are feeling. Time to listen to the horse and understand that they have feelings too. They have their good and bad days just like us.

Asking questions has become a regular feature of my life. From parental accounts, I began doing it at a very young age (normal) and going on recent form I'll be doing it for quite a while yet. I need to understand 'Why'. I want to know if there is a better way. I enjoy discovering 'How'. I am fascinated with understanding and I love learning. Mind you, asking questions often challenges others to explain, and sometimes justify why things are the way they are. Sometimes these 'others' have not asked questions themselves and so find themselves defending something with little understanding of just what they are defending. Understandably they may feel challenged or threatened or even insulted by such an inquisition. Their choice. But I have discovered I needed to learn to back off sometimes, be nicer and more respectful, I try to ask politely and to back off early so not to cause a negative reaction.

The great thing about this polite and respectful approach is that it also works very well with horses. It is almost as if it was designed for horses. So that gets me to conclude that if it works for horses and humans, the next BIG question may well be; are we that similar?

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