

Be the Perfect Horseperson

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Sometimes it's a struggle with a horse. Every now and then I just don't have 'it'. 'It' doesn't come together and the plan for the moment gets waylaid.

It would be so easy, in these sorts of situations, to blame the horse for not getting it. But the reality is that the only thing the horse is getting is confusion from me. If he doesn't understand me then it's not his fault. This truth smacks me in the face like a cold herring on a frosty morning, and that is not that a pleasant experience. The flip side of this realization is that if I want my horse to be perfect then I must be perfect - in whatever way it takes. This concept was happily revisited with my mare Katie in the round yard this afternoon. I took my time and was centred and focussed. We warmed up with some circle games and I established our connection. She and I were on the same page - and that was nice. I even checked the gullet in her saddle and realized that I could go wider by one. We had a near perfect twenty minutes of easing through some basic stuff. But it was nice! Very nice!

I try to be perfect - which has little to do with being a perfectionist -with my horses and when I am close to that zenith the magic is so thick you could carve it. Quite often though I *feel* I am not perfect. When I don't *feel* perfect or centred or not in a space of harmony and peace, I have discovered that it's best if I leave my horses alone. That way we don't corrupt or diminish too much the nice moments and experiences we do have.

A budding horse person I know got me thinking about this concept of being perfect with and for your horse. She has two horses. One is a flighty, petite mare and the other is a rather large, laid back Appy gelding. I think the mare was the first horse and then the big boy came along to much hurrah and fanfare. Two more different horses on the same patch of grass you couldn't imagine. Add to the mix small barbed wire paddocks, a not yet competent (NYC) horseperson, a lot of confusion on all parties behalf, a serious injury to the mare (barbed wire and horse is a great mix for veterinarians), lack of consistency and now even I'm confused. And to top all this off, picking up and picking out the hooves on these two horses is generally a 'no go' activity for this person. Something like 'trust' is missing here. HmMMMMM!

Because the fizzy mare was quite a challenge (and she got injured) the big fella became the object of most of the attention. But he himself was a dominant, over confident and pushy horse, which didn't go down too well with the NYC horse person. The attention was then switched back onto the mare. Some progress was made and the wounds healed up. She (the mare) even allowed me, a man, to trim her back hooves, which was a big breakthrough for all concerned. The mare then became the bees knees and the Appy was somewhat neglected. A level of happiness in the camp - sort of. Then the person and the mare traipse off to a NH clinic at which the fizzy mare begins to fizz again and an assessment is made that she doesn't appear to have been properly broken in. Broken what? You know; broken in. What they do to horses, whoever 'they' are. I thought the horsemanship term for this was 'starting a horse' or 'training a horse' but this little sweet mare wasn't considered 'broken' in and the time at the clinic apparently was not the best.

So now this allegedly unbroken horse is on the outer and the Appy is back in favour. And this raises a couple of sticky issues.

The first one is the concept of 'leadership' and the next one, partnership. Important issues here! Both very essential things when it comes to successful horse and human relationships. Foundation concepts, you might say.

What would you feel if one week someone swooned over you and the next week they didn't want to know you but had moved over to your house mate? Confusion, betrayal, bafflement, let down, deceived even. Or pretty p'd off and angry at the person? Such behaviour smacks of disloyalty too.

Also, how would you feel if you were just getting used to being the horse on the outer and all of a sudden you were number one? Whoa! More confusion! Let's hope it's true what they say about horses - that they forgive - because this horseperson will need forgiveness for not being consistent at the bare minimum and not being perfect for the horse - which is much further up the track. Let's hope anyway.

One thing I do know about horses is that they appreciate consistency. Now if that consistency is consistently inconsistent, then that's ok too. It's still a form of consistency. In the above example though there is nothing consistent. There is perhaps a degree of lack of feeling for the horse and there seems to be lack of skill to do something about it. NYC indeed. And I am not proud to say I have been there too. But we all have to start somewhere.

For this budding horse person I believe that a big dose of self evaluation and honesty would be a great step in a better direction. Just telling both of the horses that she has not all the skills yet and asking them if they will they bear with her as she gets better and more savvy with her horsemanship would go a long way to laying down a foundation for perfection. Horses will wait while we humans get the required skills and knowledge to build a partnership with them. They will be less than impressed when we fudge and pretend and be inconsistent though. And they really can see through human dishonesty in any shape, colour or form.

Even when low levels of human horsemanship skill and knowledge are displayed, if a horse perceives that the person is being brutally honest with themselves, and is really trying to learn and perfect their horsemanship skills and have their heart in it, then that horse will, more often than not, be perfect. How good is that then? It's what some horsepeople call when the horse fills in for you. I know that it's true because of the number of times I have had a horse fill in for me. It is a most horsesome feeling when they do.

But getting back to the idea of 'perfection'. Once I used to believe that there was no such thing. Whatever it was that was being judged or appraised could always be improved upon - it could always be made better, polished shinier, go faster, be more precise and so on. Back then I believed that 'perfect' just wasn't attainable. Now with a few more years and experiences under my belt I hold a different idea about the concept of perfection.

If we, by our choices, create our experience moment by moment then that is all there is and all there can be for that moment. It's perfect! If that is all there is for that moment and in the next moment we create something different, then that is all there is and all that can be too. Our experience fits perfectly with what we have created. It is! If we decide after a moment that we would like to do something differently or do it better or feel another way about it, then that becomes our reality and yes, we created that perfection too. This next concept may puzzle some people; we choose how we feel about an experience. How we feel and think about a situation is entirely up to us. Happiness, love, satisfaction,

power; in fact all our feelings and emotions – good and bad - are our choice and our decision. Moment by moment we are in control of what we feel and what we create. How's that for an empowering statement? And if you disagree, then guess what? That is your choice, your decision, and you created that feeling too.

So how we feel about our horse and our level of communication with him or her is our choice. Unfortunately though, the horse may disagree with us even though we have created our 'perfection' and are pretending to be cool. Or the horse may just 'time out' till we get our stuff together. See, if it's not working with the horse then that is our creation. Maybe the person referred to earlier in this piece hasn't taken responsibility for the horses she has or maybe she hasn't taken responsibility for the on-again and off- again relationship she is creating with them and maybe she hasn't quite figured out what to do to make things more perfect in the next moment. Things may not feel perfect for her in the current moment but what a perfect opportunity to see that things can be different in the next moment by changing the way she feels about things (and the horses), the knowledge she could learn and whether it *really* matters whether the mare has been 'properly broken in' or not. And I'll throw this possibility in (but I don't believe it to be true), maybe this person likes drama and frustration and the feeling of failure and has created that too. Perfection can come in some strange and weird packages at times.

So how does all this relate to horses again? Our life; who we are, what we think, the attitudes we have, the knowledge (or lack of it) we have acquired and use and what we had for breakfast, and much, much more, all have influence on our relationship with our horse - and everything else in our lives. Who we are is what walks into the paddock. Our thoughts and feelings, our emotions and joy or frustrations are all there for the horse to make an assessment of what's in store for him each and every time we approach.

To prove this to yourself try this: First get someone with a video to record the interaction that is about to happen. Then get really angry with one of the kids or the partner or your bank or Telco or the driver who nearly killed you on the way to the horse paddock. Then walk into the horse paddock and say hello to your horse. Then 'Cut'.

Then on another day, or if you are a master of your emotions, on the same day but after a soothing cup of herb tea, give or receive a huge loving hug to or from a favourite person. Throw in a few good kisses if you have picked 'that' person. Even get them to heap a few compliments and a bucketful of praise on you too, and vice versa. Then with the camera rolling again, go and greet your horse again. It shouldn't screw his head too much, your Jekyll and Hyde nature - we hope. The experiment may leave him wondering though.

If nothing else this exercise will be fun. It might be very revealing too. Who you are and how you are feeling has a huge impact on your horse and a smaller but no less important impact on the universe too. Horses are a very clear and uncompromising mirror. Even just doing horse stuff with a smile on your dial (even if you *are* concentrating) can make a huge difference to the outcome – and the crowd will love it too.

The perfection that we create can come in small pieces. Combined and built upon, these small pieces make bigger pieces. Put all the pieces of perfection together and life and everything in it is perfect; even if you think it hurts. It always has been and always will be perfect, even if we don't realise it at the time. It's what we create and it's what we can create next. We are human be-ings first and then horsepeople second.

So be the perfect horseperson (even if you are already) and your horse *will* reflect back exactly what you are.