

Equine Communication



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What is Communication?

You can look up the definition of communication in the dictionary. Depending on which dictionary you choose you may well get different definitions. The word communication originates from Latin word *communicare*, which means "to share". Communication a two way process of passing information and understanding from one to another.

Communication relies on a mutually understood language, be it words, signs, symbols, body language, behaviour, tapping into intuition, intent shaped by feelings and emotions, energy, rhythm, using all our senses of sight, scent, taste, hearing and touch all shaped by cultural rules and etiquette. Communication boiled down is the transmission of information between living organisms.

How humans communicate is a vast topic and how equines communicate is another vast topic. What enables us to be effective in communicating with our equines is an awareness of how effective we are in communication within our own species and recognition of areas of personal self-development. As when we cross the species divide to communicate with a horse we also step into learning the language of the herd as well as being an effective communicator. So before we look at how to communicate with equines let us examine what skills are needed from us to be good at communication within our own species. Because without being good at these you will struggle when you step into the language of the herd.

Listening and Observing to Understand.



With communication everyone likes to be heard and understood. To be able to effectively communicate we need to put our needs, wants, desires or agendas to one side and open up to truly listening and observing to understand. An interesting one to ponder, how good a listener are you? Do you help others to express openly and honestly what they are thinking or feeling? Do you give them space and time to say what they need to say? Are you able to put the other person at ease so they feel safe to express themselves? Are you able to be non-judgemental and compassionate? No one likes to be judged or criticised and it is sure fire way to close down communication. Are you an active listener who pays attention to what is said and the body language? Are you able to spot if the words and body language don't match and the incongruence? Often a lot of information is also about what was not said, do you check out this? Do you ask open questions to encourage the flow of more information? Do you check with the other person to see if you have understood what they are telling you?

Listening and observing is about giving yourself to the other person, paying close attention to them, giving them the spot light. You need to not only listen to the story and what is said, but how it is said, the tone, expression, inflection, feeling, emotion, the energy, the use of language, and body language. Communication is not just words, verbal, it is non-verbal too. (With horses their language is mostly non-verbal so really learning to give space, listen and observe are essential). We need to listen with all our senses engaged. It is not a passive process. You need to be fully present and involved in listening. You must really concentrate and care what the other person has to say. Getting distracted with our own thoughts, feelings or things going on around can greatly interfere with effective listening. As communication is a two way process the person you are engaged in a conversation with will notice your lack of attention in your body language.

What is really interesting is if you are not good at listening and observing to understand others you are going to find what has just been expressed here very difficult to understand or apply. However just like any skill you can learn. It requires is for you to put into practice being an observant and active listener, and being more aware and playing closer attention to those you engage in conversations with. Think of all the daily golden opportunities you have to practice this skill on your fellow humans, your horse will thank you.

Before we move on let us explore listening as a skill, how to nurture and develop our listening skills. Did you know there are three different listening types we may be one or more of at any given moment? They are:-

- Listening to Learn
- Listening to Evaluate and Analyse
- Listening to Understand Feeling and Emotion

Listening to Learn

Listening to learn happens in many aspects of our lives: When we study at school, college, in lessons, workshops, at work, listening to the news, being talked through a technical problem, in meetings, etc.... It requires us to concentrate and put our minds in a deliberate state to learn and understand. When we are in this state we are taking information in to absorb it and at this stage we are not analysing or criticising the information. This is a different state of being, which we will come to. Listening to learn may even involve taking notes to review later. Which in turn may prompt questions to gain more clarity and roads to explore for more information gathering. If we think about listening to learn from our horse, how often are we quiet enough to allow our horse to talk? Ethical horsemanship is dialogue not monologue. Do we allow space for our horse to be listened to and understood? Are we open to being the student to the horse?

Critical Listening



Engaged in critical listening requires us to question and evaluate what is said. For critical listening to help us it needs to be informed and educated listening. Gaps in our knowledge, cultural bias and traditional thinking when we engage in critical thinking can cause us problems. As critical listening often about decision making and problem solving. It requires the listener to analyse information against existing knowledge and beliefs. Therefore a lack of knowledge here can lead down a path towards flawed judgement. For us to make great judgement it pays to be educated, hence why listening to learn is so important, especially when we look across the species divide to the horse. For who is a better expert on being a horse, than a horse. They say when the student is ready the teacher arrives. Some teachers have four legs, some have two. How can we

become better at critical listening? We can ask questions, open questions, encourage others to open up and elaborate. Ask ourselves questions what is the horse or other person trying to say? How does what I hear differ from my opinions, what I believe or know? For critical listening to be effective it is best to come with an open mind. This is not as easy as it sounds as there are many reasons why open mindedness is not easy, especially with equestrianism.

There are many pressures that keep us from being open minded or to try a new or different approach. Peer pressure is one, if you are on a livery yard you will find people are always happy to offer their advice and help. What you may find in short supply is people's understanding and tolerance to approaches they know little or nothing about or disagree with on principal. You may even be unlucky enough to have a non-professional "yard-pert" "expert" or "experts" on the yard who will expect you to follow their advice as clearly they know it all and know what is best for not only your horse but you too. Using a different approach to what they expect you to use can then cause you further problems. You may even be seen as a maverick for going against the norm. All pressures for open mindedness.

Tradition is another pressure that can hold you back from trying a different or new approach. If something has always been done that way then it can be hard to open your mind and try going in a different direction. Still today there are people who are very rigid in their traditional thinking and will only work within one method and approved guidelines. However consider this: There is a big wide equine world out there outside these guidelines.



There are also people who will only work within one horsemanship approach too. By narrowing your thinking you will not allow yourself to open up to trying another approach, or something new. As with all things there are fashions and fads within the horse world. It is easy to get caught up in this, to jump on the latest band wagon / try the fashionable training method / be attracted by the media and marketing / and use the latest training gadget that promises to fix your problem etc... All of these are barriers for you to being open minded and trying something that is not in the spotlight or fashionable.

Assuming something will not work before you have even tried it is another barrier. I love the word ASSUME as to assume makes an ASS out of U and ME.

All of the above and more effect critical listening. As a horsemanship practitioner I see this in many shapes and forms when there is a problem in the relationship between horse and human. As bringing beliefs, bias, value systems always colour critical listening to the horse.

True critical listening needs an open enquiring mind, with the passion that learning is lifelong. It is about asking questions, and recognition that sometimes we don't ask the right questions too.

Compassionate Listening to Understand Feeling and Emotion



Compassionate and Empathic Listening is understanding the feelings and emotions of another. Close empathy feels like a blurred line between one's self and another. It is about the ability to put oneself into the mental shoes of another to understand their emotions and feelings. You cannot convince me that horses are not sentient and feel a wide range of emotions. Learning how to read your horse's emotional state is essential in equine communication. If I asked you to reflect and gave you a sheet of A4 paper and a pen and asked you to write all the things your horse is capable of feeling and the horse's emotions I am sure you would be back to ask for another sheet of paper? Your horse can read your emotional state too. Trying to hide your feelings creates incongruence and it rattles them. Communication is emotional.

You need to have a certain amount of empathy before you can feel compassion. Research shows that compassion and empathy take place in different parts of the brain. So we have to move from our empathy to compassion to move forward. A main characteristic of compassion is wishing that others be free from suffering. A lack of compassion, by contrast, can in extreme result in cruelty. So empathy helps us to identify feelings of another, and compassion is what we do. Taking compassionate action is the key to success. If you get caught in empathy and sympathy you and your horse will get stuck and not be able to move forward. Without compassion you can get stuck in the emotion without positive action. This can lead down a very unhelpful path and pull you and your horse down. So let us not confuse compassion with sympathy. They are very different. And will create different outcomes. Having sympathy, you will understand another's situation even without feeling it yourself. Compassion is led differently as you feel and know what another is experiencing and want to step in to help and take action.

How to Change Your Empathy and Sympathy into Compassion

1. Take note of your feelings and the feelings of your horse, they matter. Do not dismiss them. In an equine world where most training is monologue remind yourself your horse's feelings and opinions really matter. Give yourself and your horse time to engage in honest open two way dialogue.
2. This may pose questions, ones that maybe you don't have the answers. Remind yourself this is an opportunity for development and growth. So seek out someone who can teach you, and inspire you on your personal development with your horsemanship. Reflect on how you can respond to what your horse is telling you. How can you help your horse? Remind yourself it isn't about changing everything, it is often about looking for a small step in the right direction.
3. Take action, it is far better than no action. People fear trying something because of it going wrong, we miss the opportunity to discover when we get it right. When communication is honest open dialogue with our horse we can put forward a suggestion of trying something different with respectful mindfulness of feedback from our horse. Our horse will tell us if we are on the right path. All the time while doing this we need to stay open to our emotions and those of our horse. Sometimes it can be too big, you can feel daunted, a great place to start is just being with our horse with love and kindness.

To have compassion and an open mind, we can see other view-points. You need an enquiring mind, ask the right questions, try to learn as much as you can from another view point. Empathy and compassion is a skill you can develop. In our fast paced world empathy and compassion is often in very short supply. We have all experienced feeling like we are just another number, the impersonal processing of our requests, and not being listened to. Many people live and work in relationships where there is very little empathy and compassion. Worse there is the damaging blame culture. So many of us know what it feels like to feel a lack of empathy and compassion. Sadly many horses suffer this fate when interacting with humans, many accept and work for their human and you can see in their eyes a resigned expression, the joy is not there. Some develop a learnt helplessness. Others horses fight against the injustice. These horses are often labelled as dangerous or naughty. Once a horse has a naughty label it can be slippery slope for harsh training methods, gadgets, or at worse punishment or abuse. These horses are the ones who need a compassionate caring owner to bring out their talents and for them to see a joy in a partnership with a human.

To become more effective with your horse why not practice empathy and compassion on everyone you meet? How compassionate are you? How often do you actively practice empathy? Think about how you interact with other people....How often do you find the need to cut across what someone is saying? Or finish their sentence for them? Have you fully and clearly understood what they are trying to say? Do you help people to open up and tell you what they need to say? Have you picked up on the other person's non-verbal communication? What does their body language tell you about how they feel? How often have you really connected with another person so deeply that you can feel another's pain, fear, joy, etc?

By developing this skill with our own species we start to understand the qualities we need to be more effective in communication before we add the dimension of developing equine compassion in which we have to learn the language of the herd. With horses we need to tune in to what they are saying and learn to listen to their communication. Horses communicate differently, it is mostly a silent language of intent, energy shift, breathing patterns, rhythm, body language and some is very subtle. (More about this later).



Developing your equine compassion helps you to see the world from your horse's perspective. Equine compassion is about taking the focus from yourself and imagining what it is like for your horse in his reality. Humans and horses live in separate realities. The way we see and interact with the world is very different to that of our horse. It is a question of understanding, respecting and honouring these differences. By understanding his reality you will know when he is in his comfort zone and see his emotions, fears, pains and frustrations. This in turn greatly helps you to help your horse.

Listening is Not Just What is Said....it's Far More

We should listen with all our senses, as communication is not just what we hear. Horses do. Visually we can pick up messages from body language. (More later on this). Horses use scent in gathering information and their communication with each other. Humans do not have the same degree of sensitivity to the sense of smell, yet we do use it in our communication to some degree. Taste too is something horses use in their communication and humans to a much lesser degree. Touch is also something both species have in their communication. Horses telegraph out to us all the time, the key to being able to “hear” them is to use more than just our listening skills and the five senses. Here I will share with some insights and knowledge that horses use in their communication.

We have already touched on how vital emotions are in communication. How we pick up emotional messages is often via a number of ways. Empathy and compassion are essential to pick up these messages, so too is intuition and access to an emotional dictionary. 2 legs or 4 an emotional state will fuel our intentions. When you can read an emotional state you will then see intention and drive, you are operating at a finesse level in horsemanship.

For more information on intuition and an emotional dictionary please check out the articles that I wrote for Horsemanship Magazine:

- Intuition
- The Emotional Dictionary

You can read them for FREE in the resources section on my website

<https://www.vickijayneates.co.uk/horsemanship-resources.html>



We aim to be a calm balanced compassionate partner for our horse. Offering stability, safety, security and a relationship built on mutual trust. Without this we cannot progress. Horsemanship for me is one based on open honest two way dialogue that taps into the language of the herd. This I understand to be: emotions, intention, energy, breathing, rhythm, body language and last voice and touch.

Therefore an essential skill to develop when working with horses is the ability to read your horse's emotions that will shape intent and to appropriate with your own emotions and intent. Horses have evolved to read very subtle signals of intention and energy both within their own species but from other species, their survival and wellbeing was dependant on getting this right. Horses are very fine tuned far more than humans. Watch and notice that emotions will shape intent, which alters the energy and breathing patterns in turn this will bring body language all way before any noise or touch in the herd. Yet voice and touch are often the only level many are using when training a horse. The layers of refinement are there within emotions, intent, energy, breathing and body language. That is the key to the magical connection we seek where we can really hear our horses.

Calm Centred Balanced Energy



The starting point for being able to hear your horse and to refine horsemanship is to learn how to achieve a centred balanced energy along-side a quiet mind that is self-aware of intent, before technique is applied. There are many barriers and challenges that prevent people achieving this centred calm energy. We live in a fast paced world with stress, pressure and responsibilities. We often arrive with our horse in the wrong state of mind and energy. No wonder we struggle to hear and communicate with our horses. Relaxation is the key to success in achieving a calm centred energy. And there are many methods and techniques you can use to achieve relaxation. Many cross the species divide and you can use them with your horse so you can both enjoy a centred relaxed energy state together. Do not confuse relaxation with being lazy, it is not, relaxed centred horses and people can be

super achievers. I run workshops and one to one sessions to teach many of these techniques. If one technique isn't right for you try another, however just like any skill it takes time, practice and dedication to be successful with learning any new technique.

Myth - Gentle Relaxed People Can Not Be Super Achievers.

- Culturally we are encouraged to think being hurried, competitive and being able to handle more and more stress is the sign of a super achiever. Have you noticed horses don't sign up to this thinking? Have you noticed how horses react to people who rush and are stressed?
- There is a fear that becoming more peaceful, relaxed and calm, achievement of goals will be compromised. Not true, especially in horsemanship.
- People confuse relaxation with being lazy and apathetic. Relaxation is totally different to being lazy and apathetic. They are miles apart.

Benefits of Being Relaxed

- It allows you to connect with what really matters in life, inner peace. Inner peace is what is magnetic to horses, because it brings safety, harmony and balance to their world, something they crave. If you want to connect and communicate with your horse relaxation is the starting point.
- Centres your energy. Being able to handle more and more stress, uses up a huge amount energy. It drains you. Do you bring this with you when you spend time with your horse? Do you know how to release yourself from this energy state? Being relaxed will re-charge you, so being relaxed with your horse will pay in other areas of your life too.
- Relaxation can enable higher achievement, better communication, open minds and fuel creativity.
- It enables faster, clearer learning plus easier problem solving.
- It takes the drama out of situations.
- Relaxation leads to better understanding, control of emotions, and a balanced state of mind and energy.
- With relaxation you become more aware of everything around you.

What Stops You Relaxing?

Each of us has some personal inner struggle which prevents us from relaxing. These blocks are what we bring unwittingly to our horsemanship and we see the effects in the partnership with our horse. These blocks are what prevent effective dialogue communication with our horse. Here are a few reasons...of what stops people relaxing.

- Switching off from lives packed with fast paced stimuli, heavy responsibilities, never ending to do list, etc....
- High levels of anxiety, stress, depression from non-equine matters affecting their state of mind and energy.
- Lack of confidence or self-esteem. There are many factors that cause a lack of confidence...that is a huge topic. One I do run workshops on and provide one to one help, guidance and support.
- Lack of skills. Over horsed. Fear of failure. Perfection paralysis. Fear of lack of control. Peer pressure. Social expectations. Media pressure. Poor relationship with your horse. Health issues. Etc...

Some of My Observations



People feel the strong urge to always be doing. We are human beings not human doings....when was the last time you were content with just being with your horse? Do nothing except just be? I see in their horsemanship they are unaware of the impact their busy energy has on their horse. As horse will often reflect right back at you what is going on in your life. Many of us have lost touch with simply being, slowing down, doing nothing, relaxing being calm and finding inner peace.

Identifying your inner struggle and what prevents you from relaxing. Here is some simple homework to practice away from your horse: Being bored. I am not talking about being lazy. To sit still until boredom helps you notice your own thoughts, feelings, breathing pattern, inner struggles and your energy. The beauty of this it teaches you to recognize your personal blocks. You can then take personalised targeted action to address these.

People and horses can actively practice relaxation to get in touch with their mind and balanced energy. It is not easy, it takes time, dedication and seeing it as a priority in life.

Relaxation is a technique you can learn and master.

- There are many techniques you can try.
- You should try a few so as to find one that suits you.
- Don't worry if you find it difficult to relax at first.
- It's a skill that needs to be learned and it will come with practice.
- All relaxation methods help a person to relax, to increase calmness, reduce anxiety, stress, etc... and once centred you can enter into clearer communication with your horse.
- Learning to relax has many health benefits including decrease muscle tension, lower the blood pressure and slow heart and breathing rates etc....

Today we will just focus on one example relaxation technique as a taster.

Relaxation Breathing Technique.

Why this is good for horsemanship: Horses read each other's and our breathing patterns, it is part of their language and communication. They are very finely tuned to pick up a change in breathing. As a prey animal it is part of their language for communicating when it is safe to relax and when to get ready to run. It's a very early warning system that something is wrong. Breathing is an involuntary response. You are not aware most of the time of how you breathe. It's the most natural thing to do. Relaxed people and horses breathe softly and slowly. When we are tense, anxious or fearful our breathing pattern will reflect this. If you do become aware how you breathe and that your horse reads it you can use it to both relax and to enrich your communication with your horse. Refinement of horsemanship involves using core breathing. To be able to do this you need to first develop a neutral breathing pattern and energy.

The relaxation breathing technique is simple and powerful. It's easy to learn, can be practiced almost anywhere, and provides a quick way to get your stress levels in check. Deep breathing is the cornerstone of many other relaxation practices, too, and can be combined with other relaxing techniques.

The key to deep breathing is to breathe gently and deeply from the abdomen (your core), getting as much fresh air as possible in your lungs. When you take deep breaths from the abdomen, rather than shallow breaths from your upper chest, you inhale more oxygen. The more oxygen you get, the less tense, short of breath, and anxious you feel.

How to:

- ✓ Practise deep breathing at a regular time and in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.
- ✓ Make yourself feel completely comfortable. Sit in a comfy chair which supports your head or lie on the floor or bed.
- ✓ To find your lower part of your lungs. Place both hands on the lower part of your chest just at the top of your stomach fingers tips gently touching. When you breathe deeply into this part of your lungs your fingers will be moved slightly apart.
- ✓ Once you know which part of your lungs you are going to fill place your arms comfortably on the chair arms, or flat on the floor or bed, a little bit away from the side of your body with the palms up. Get comfortable. If you're lying down, stretch out your legs, keeping them hip-width apart or slightly wider. If you're sitting in a chair, don't cross your legs.
- ✓ Fill up the whole of your lungs with air, without forcing. Imagine you're filling up a bottle, so that your lungs fill from the bottom.
- ✓ Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- ✓ Breathe in slowly and regularly counting from one to five (don't worry if you can't reach five at first). Your stomach should rise.
- ✓ Then let the breath escape slowly, counting from one to five. Your stomach should move in as you exhale.
- ✓ Keep doing this until you feel calm. Breathe without pausing or holding your breath.



If you find it difficult breathing from your abdomen while sitting up, try lying on the floor. Put a small book on your stomach, and try to breathe so that the book rises as you inhale and falls as you exhale.

Practise this relaxed breathing for three to five minutes, two to three times a day (or whenever you feel stressed). Once you have mastered this at home you can do this while with your horse. I get people to quietly walk with their horse using the counting their breathing technique. What they notice as they relax using their breathing exercise so does their horse. Breathing is invisible unless it's a really cold day. So a huge benefit as you can practice it and nobody will know what you are doing. Once you are relaxed, centred and calm you can start to "hear" your horse.

Now let us explore how horses communicate. Many practitioners will say it is body language. And yes horses do use body language. However they also communicate in much more subtle ways that is often missed. We have explored equine emotion, feelings and yes we pick these up by reading body language, and our gut feeling and our intuition help with us understanding the messages. The layers that are more subtle really help us to "hear" our horses much clearer. These are what I am going to share with you.

Intent

Intent is shaped by thoughts, feelings and emotions. Both equines and humans are emotional sentient creatures. 2 legs or 4 we have feelings, emotions, thoughts these are the seed to intent which fuels action or not. The quality of intent matters, if intent is appropriate, positive, calm, confident and clear chances are we set ourselves up to achieve more. If intent is unclear, negative, fearful etc...the opposite will most likely be the outcome. We can get stuck in a downward spiral. Success starts with the quality of intent, thoughts, feelings and emotional state. We can read intent in our own species. I am sure you pick up vibes from other people. Do you get that gut feeling? Good or bad, your instinct to read intent is there. Have you ever had an uneasy feeling about someone? Nothing needs to be said, but you can pick up the silent message of another's intent. How often has your gut instinct and intuition been wrong? You are also able to read your horse too. Have you ever thought how powerful this natural skill can be when we tap into using it? Consider this do we let our thoughts and feelings control us? Or do we control our thoughts and feelings and use them to fuel our actions? Most people never consider this, as we have thousands of thoughts a day, most subconscious, popping into our heads from nowhere. But we can also control our thoughts, feelings and emotions. Becoming more aware of your thoughts and how they shape intent and then action is the first step. Our mind is a powerful tool you can learn to use positively. If you catch yourself coaching yourself with negative inner dialogue you can take steps to address this and replace it with positive inner dialogue. You can catch your mind when it starts to take you into a position that is not helpful and put the brakes on, and change course. Learning to develop a baseline neutral for your mind is essential, this you can achieve via relaxation. There are many techniques you can learn.



Your horse can read intent not only in their own species but in other species. Horses know if you are feeling passive, assertive, anxious, distracted, fearful, happy, sad, tense, etc. Horses are sensitive creatures and they experience a full range of emotions no one can convince me otherwise. Horses pick up on our intent, feelings and emotions very quickly. So stepping into a training context with human negative emotions will not help the training. Your horse will reflect right back at you your emotions, and life issues. So if we are focusing on positive progressive training, and building confidence in our horse it is our responsibility to turn up balanced emotionally, spiritually and mentally. Leaving our issues at the gate. When I say leave it at the gate I do not mean being false or wearing a mask. You can't fool your horse, they will know, they are astute. They will look for any sign of incongruence in you and it will rattle them. I am saying deal with your own root cause of your issues. That is your true responsibility to yourself and your horse. Your horse will thank you. Then we can read our horse's intent and know what our horse is thinking and feeling. They have emotional needs; seek spiritual harmony and mental safety. Horses telegraph out to us all the time, we just need to learn how to connect.

Food for Thought:



When have you spent time just being, not doing with your horse? Have you spent time just observing your horse in its world? Have you ever dedicated time to reading your horse's intent, objectives, motivations, emotions and knowing what it is feeling? It's easy to see when your horse has intent to do something and you thwart that intent. Your horse will have something to say and you may not like it. It is very interesting to see when horse and rider have polar opposite intents and the potential for a battle of wills to start. Do you allow your horse to contribute to the training / schooling agenda? How effective are you in listening to your horse? Do you look for feedback from your horse? On the agenda how high up do you prioritise your horse's agenda items? Our horses may have intent, emotions, objectives that stretch our

horsemanship, giving us opportunities for development. These golden opportunities turn up in work clothing, or as negatives. Horsemanship is to read these, appreciate and acknowledge your horse for bringing this forward. How many of us thank our horse? When you know what your horse's intent and motivation are there is an opportunity to tap into this strong internal motivational force.

So you understand how hard wired intent is in every horse check out the questions below, hopefully it will trigger thoughts for you in relation to your horse reacting to intention.

- Have you ever experienced your horse doing something when you only thought it? Maybe he stopped while you were riding and all you did was think about stopping.
- Have you noticed how if someone has the intent to load a difficult to load horse onto a lorry at any cost how the horse will react compared to how it will react if the human has the intent to help a horse overcome it's fear and anxiety about loading? The horse is reading the human intent. Our actions will be different. As

intent will determine our actions. It will look different to those who are watching. And the chances are the results will be different too.

- How often have you seen someone try to trick a horse into doing something with no luck? You may get away with it once when the horse's guard is down, for sure though he will be ready for you next time. Horses can read your true intent.
- Have you ever experienced how your horse responds when you change your intent? For example how does your horse react if you change from being passive to assertive?
- Watch a group of horses and how do they react to each other's intent? Have you ever seen a lower ranking horse use his intent to get on and be passive with higher ranking horses? How do higher ranking horses use their intent to communicate with lower ranking horses to assert their leadership? You need to watch for very subtle cues, spend time looking and you will see horses using intent in their communication.

There is a scale of passive to assertive that you also need to tap into when using intent. Do not confuse assertive with aggressive they are very different and poles apart. Aggression has no place in horsemanship. We will look at the difference of passive, assertive, aggressive and manipulative behaviour later.



With intent it can feel like a horse is a mind reader, it can feel like that when you have a very close bond with a horse as you will also be able to read his intent too. When developed intent in horsemanship is dialogue. It is far more likely that when we think about something / intent we give away very subtle cues that the horse reads. For example science has been able to measure the electrical impulses that travel from our thoughts / intents to the muscle groups we will use to perform the task, so horses maybe feeling this. From my own experiences I know intent plays a very big role in how horses react to situations, learning to tap into this opens up horsemanship to a much more refined level of communication.

There is always a gap between intention and action. While intent is the seed of growth, you must plant the seed, nurture it and action is the water that nourishes the seed.

INTENT reveals desire; **ACTION** reveals commitment. Intent without dedicated action is simply not enough. Action without a clear intent is a waste. Your actions must reflect your goals in order to achieve true success.

Many people operate at a subconscious level and only see the result of their intentions in their horsemanship. The first step is to become self-aware of your intentions. Tune into intent, yours and your horse's intent. It is a dialogue. This dialogue is horsemanship. It's a conversation between you and your horse. As with all new skills it requires time, learning from a tutor, guidance and practice.

Energy

Now to consider energy in relation to horsemanship, energy is something horses pick up on very quickly, they evolved to read this within the herd to run from predators and when it is safe to relax. With energy, have you ever noticed how excitement is infectious with horses? Have you ever noticed how some people have a calming influence on horses? Not only do horses read equine energy they read our energy. Being aware of your energy and learning to use appropriate energy makes a huge difference. You only have to look across cultures to see how energy is embedded in every-day life: health, religion, martial arts etc.... It is dynamic in all living things. The magical connection with our horse is found in harmony and peace. This starts with centred balanced energy along-side a quiet mind, body and voice before natural horsemanship technique is applied.

So let us think about how to get in touch with our energy. 2 legs or 4 an energy state is a reflection of our emotional state. So if we have a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being low energy and 10 high energy we can start to get in touch with our energy state moment by moment. What number are you at right now? Mostly people are blissfully unaware of their energy state or what is flavouring it. Your horse too has an energy scale from 1 to 10 that is flavoured by emotions. There is also environmental energy and the energy other people and animals can bring into your world. Did you know you can choose to alter your energy state? Did you know you can use it to communicate with your horse? Did you know you can change the energy state in your horse? And did you know add your energy and your horse's energy it is best it is never more than 10.



Energy in us and our horses is not unlimited. Many things place energy drains upon us. Often we are unaware we simply see the effects. Balance of energy is not just physical it is emotional too. Horses and humans can struggle with energy imbalance. Every living being, human, animal or plant has a life force or life energy flowing inside, around and radiating from it. This energy is known as Ki or Chi (pronounced key and Chee). In order for the human, animal or plant to function well, this energy needs to be balanced and flowing freely around the body. When the body does not seem to work properly, illness is evident, or there is simply a lack of well-being, it is believed this is due to the 'energy' being depleted or not flowing around the body as it should. Many factors can affect the smooth flowing of this energy in horse and/or rider. Our Western life styles can have a negative effect on energy or Ki. Stress, environmental factors such as damp housing, excess cold, excess heat, poor diet, life style choices, alcohol, recreational drugs etc...Many people that I meet are excellent horse people, clearly skilled, yet struggling with their horse. Some find it hard to switch off from their lives packed with fast paced stimuli, heavy responsibilities, never ending to do list, etc....they feel the strong urge to always be doing. You see in their horsemanship they are unaware of the impact their busy energy has on their horse. Others it is the high levels of anxiety and stress from non-equine matters affecting their state of mind and energy, in turn it becomes highly damaging to their equine relationship. There are many blocks people unwittingly bring to their horsemanship. Many have lost touch with simply being, slowing down, doing nothing, relaxing, being calm and finding inner peace. Many riders only see the resulting energy blocks in their horsemanship such as an unbalanced relationship with their horse, lack of communication, poor understanding, mistrust and lack of unison with horse and rider etc... In short a problem they want fixing.

When there is energy imbalance or energy block in either horse or human or both it will show up in the horsemanship. Energy balance creates harmony, balance and opens up the magical connection we seek with our horse. My work in horsemanship is about restoring this balance and building a strong relationship between the horse and the human. Many of my clients start at the opposite end of this spectrum with fear, lack of confidence, riding or handling problems, or I am a last resort call. Their journeys are personal and their training bespoke. I do not have a one size fits all approach.

However once balance is achieved I can teach people the refinement of using intent and energy in horsemanship. You can connect and communicate using intent and energy shift and it feels like a magical connection. It is not magic it is real.

To introduce this I send different intents and energies which they can feel down a rope held between us. It is a revelation for them to feel it and understand how infectious and powerful it is to a horse. You can learn how to read, apply, absorb and project energy. It isn't magic. Once you can master using intent and energy in horsemanship you can achieve a very close connection with your horse. You will hear and feel your horse, there becomes a blurred line between you. I am also a Reiki practitioner. In Reiki we work on restoring energy balance. More about Reiki and horsemanship a bit later....

How to Get Started to Balance Your Energy

Horsemanship communication is dialogue, prefixing an appropriate request with intent and energy before eye contact, body language, voice, a soft light physical touch. Given practice touch is often not required. Harmony is what everyone is looking for with their horse and the key to unlocking this and realising potential is for you and your horse to work together with calm relaxed balanced energies.

Here are some tips to help you get started:-

- Live in the moment. Let go of past and future concerns. When not checked they can lead to energy blocks such as anxiety, stress and frustration.
- Practice being patient. Think of all the daily opportunities.
- Use cognitive behavioural techniques to re-shape your thinking and quiet your mind. If your mind is quiet you can provide space to “hear” your horse. Your thoughts are a powerful tool, learn to use them positively.
- Each day give yourself a quiet and peaceful time.
- Let go of the need to prove yourself to others.
- Stop focusing on the imperfections, flaws, or what needs fixing.
- Stop blaming yourself, others, or your horse and cut yourself some slack.
- Lighten up and learn to have fun.
- Redefine your equine meaningful accomplishments. Remind yourself it is only your horse's opinion that matters.



Here is another exercise - Learn by watching horses and how they react.

Observe their energy levels and their body language. When you can read energy within horses you are half way to being able to use it in training. The other half of the picture is learning about your own energy levels and how to use body language that horses understand. So being self-aware of your energy and learn how to change it then you can learn how to use it with horses.

With all skills it requires regular, purposeful and planned practice. You perfect what you practice. Learn how to actively practice a calm balanced energy and a peaceful mind. Notice how horsemanship can be transformed but other areas of your life will benefit too.

Breathing Patterns



Emotions, thoughts and feelings shape intent, that then effect energy state. The next layer is breathing. An emotion and energy state will be visible and noticeable in our breathing patterns. And it is honest because breathing is an involuntary response, it is subconscious. It tells us a lot about our emotional state. It is the same for the horse. 2 legs or 4 when we are relaxed we breathe softly and slowly. Anxious, tense, fearful we will grab the air and shallow breathe rapidly. Horses are hardwired to read breathing patterns within their herd, it is their language. It will change due to emotions and

energy state. It is part of how your horse communicates and sometimes it happens before it moves, gives a body language gesture or changes facial expression. It is closely connected to emotions, intent, energy and body language. They will also be aware of how you breathe. Hence why I selected a breathing exercise early on, so you could centre yourself. Did you know your horse can feel you breathe when you ride, they can sense your breathing from a distance? It really matters in equine communication to become aware of what we are communicating to our horse when we breathe. We use core breathing to communicate with horses. So it matters to notice how our horse breathes, as it is part of how they communicate. So the breathing becomes dialogue between horse and human. It is a beautiful exchange that when practiced you can communicate with your horse, and it is invisible unless it is a cold day. Did you know by thinking slow, having the intent to slow in yourself, lowering your energy to 1 or 2 and breathing slowly your horse will “hear” and slow down? Without a word said or body language gestures or pressure or equipment? It is their language, and is hardwired into their DNA. When I teach people how to use intent, energy, and breathing it transforms their communication. Remember communication is dialogue....so what is the horse “saying” with its intent, energy and breathing pattern? Have you spent time tuning in to your horse breathing? What would happen if you pick a nice still day, quiet no one to disturb you and spend time with your horse slowly breathing? Still quiet peaceful time....see if something happens that feels different?

Body Language

2 legs or 4 we use body language in our communication. Body language includes gestures, facial expressions, body postures, body movements, eye movements, and how we interact in our environments. No matter the species researchers have found that body language accounts for a high percentage of the information transmitted during communication. Because body language is subconscious, when what we are told doesn't match the body language there is an incongruence and we get a gut feeling that something isn't right.

So let us first reflect on our horse, it has emotions, feelings thoughts that shape intent, and in turn energy and breathing pattern and then body language. So we need to be aware of the layers behind body language to truly understand our horse's communication. Just as one word can have several meanings so can a body language gesture. What gives a word meaning is how it is used in a sentence. The same applies to a body language gesture, it is how it is placed with feelings, emotions, thoughts, intent, energy and breathing patterns and other gestures.

We can learn to read body language in our horse and step into their language. Horses are great at reading our body language too. Lots of horsemanship approaches use this to create a shared language.

The Eyes are the Windows to The Soul



2 legs or 4 our eyes don't lie, because they're the most sincere part of the face. Our eyes and the muscles around our eyes the messages we send are subconscious. The eyes are very expressive, in the horse and can tell us a lot about how our horse is feeling. Their eyes can convey a wide range of feelings: happiness, sadness, anger, trust or distrust, attentiveness, security, contentment, fear, etc. A worried horse will have wrinkles above his eyes. A fearful horse will have wrinkles and tension with his eyes pulled wide open often with the whites of the eyes visible. A relaxed horse will have soft relaxed muscles around his eyes. A horse that is shut down in learnt helplessness will have a blank eye. A happy horse will have bright attentive eyes. An attentive horse will give you a penetrating gaze. Sadness, the

eyes will have wrinkles above the eye and maybe slightly closed. Anger, the horse will arch it's upper eye lids and the gaze will be completely serious. A soft blinking eye is thinking. A wide open unblinking eye is worried. A half closed soft eye, sleepy or relaxed. However I remind you that one eye gesture alone, like one word alone can have more than one meaning. The meaning for a word makes sense in a sentence. So we must look at more than the eyes, intent, energy, breathing patterns and other body language gestures.

The Face and Ears



Just like humans, horses can and do make facial expressions to communicate with other equines and to us. Horses can make 17 facial movements and humans about 10 more. Some facial expressions and gestures have been linked to messages. Horses are great at reading our facial expressions too. Remember one gesture alone can mean many different things, so we are mindful to include intent, energy, breathing patterns and other body language gestures.

Here are just a few examples:

The Foal Face: When a horse pulls the corner of his mouth upwards and mouths, it is a gesture foals are seen to do in order to appease other horses. I call it the foal face, and one horses continue to use throughout their lifetime in social etiquette with each other as an appeasement or submissive gesture.

Pinned Ears: When a horse pins its' ears back it is usually a sign the horse is not happy. It could be feeling angry, aggressive, frustrated or upset. It is a clear warning.

Swivelling Ears: If your horse is getting unsure, worried or anxious all his senses will switch up a gear and swivelling ears are a good indication your horse is trying to locate the source of something that maybe a cause for concern. This is often alongside widened nostrils as horses take in information via scent too.

Soft Relaxed Ears: Are a good sign of a relaxed content horse.

Pricked Ears: A horse will use its' ears to focus its' attention. Often a horse will have one ear turned in your direction giving you attention and maybe the other pricked in another direction with attention on something the other side.

Tightened Mouth and Jaw: A mildly angry, worried, fearful, tense or anxious horse will tense its' jaw muscles and its' mouth. And even stop the flow of saliva and become dry mouthed. And once the tension has past and relaxation resumes you will often see licking and chewing. This is because the saliva flow resumes and the tension has released from the horses' jaw muscles.

Wrinkled Muzzle: can be an indication the horse is nervous or worried, if coupled with flared nostrils and a wrinkled eye it can be an indication of physical or emotional discomfort or pain.

Tightened Lips and Teeth Exposed: A horse that also has an angry eye could be giving you warning and if ignored could lead to aggressive behaviour. Nostrils sometimes appear elongated, it is definitely a message to watch out.

Extended Wiggling Nose: The horse has a very expressive nose, scratch your horse on his favourite sweet spots and watch how your horse will extend his nose and wiggle it in bliss. Your horse may also do this to ask for treats, or to gently nudge and search your pockets.

Nostril Wrinkling or Pulling up a Nostril or Both: A sure sign of mild annoyance, or frustration, or irritation, discomfort or pain. If it is alongside the ears back it is giving you a warning and is a mild threat.

Soft Relaxed Jaw and Lip: When a horse is relaxed he may well drop his lower lip (I call it a polo pouch, just enough room to pop in a few treats into the loose soft lip). It could also mean a horse is tired, or bored. However if you see a drooping lip and saggy mouth coupled with flared nostrils and wrinkled eyes it could be pain or discomfort.

Flehmen: When a horse smells something it will raise its' head and curl its' top lip. It is pulling the scent into a structure into the nose to analyse the smell. Horses communicate via scent so this gesture is about decoding messages in scent particles.

Pinched Nostrils: Horses that are in discomfort, be it physical or emotional will often have a pinched look round their nostrils. A pain face will also have a pinched look and wrinkles round the eyes and a tighten jaw. The ears may also have a tight or fixed look.

Yawning: Horses don't dress things up for us. If you see your horse yawning it is most likely tired either physically or mentally. If you are working with a horse, teaching it something new, it can get mentally tired. So if your horse starts yawning, you are done for the day.



There are lots of combinations of how a horse uses its' eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, and facial muscles to communicate. I have only listed a few combinations. The more you study your horse the more you will see how the emotional state arrives in the horse's facial expression. And remember your horse is very skilled at reading your facial expressions and body language gestures. Often we try to hide our emotional state and our body language gives us away and the incongruence rattles the horse. Interesting that within our own species we pick up vibes when interacting with others that something doesn't feel right. Nothing bad was said, but your gut feeling is telling you something doesn't add up. What is going on at a subconscious level is you are picking up the messages from the intent, energy, breathing and body language. The incongruence rattles us too. The good news is horses are very authentic and appreciate us engaging with them authentically.

Body Language

2 legs or 4 body language makes up a big part of our communication. Within our own species you cannot beat face to face in person communication. As so much meaning is in what we read from another's body language. Horses use many body language gestures too to communicate with each other and to us, if we are observant enough. Again I remind you that just as one word can have several meanings, it is how it is used in a sentence that gives it meaning, so too one body language gesture alone can have more than one meaning.



Muscle Tension: If we look at a horse and note how the muscles look and feel. A relaxed, content, happy, pain free horse will have soft muscles and no tension. A horse that is either in physical discomfort or pain, or is emotionally worried, stress or anxious will carry this information in its' muscles as tension. It is there to see when the horse is static and in motion. A horse will read your muscle tension, so think about where you carry muscle tension and why.

Now let us look at how horses use certain parts of their bodies to communicate.

The Tail: A beautiful tail has so many uses for a horse. And it can tell you a great deal about your horse. A content, relaxed horse will have a tail that is relaxed that moves in rhythm with the horse. So pay attention when it is used to do more than flick away flies. It will be no accident if a horse swats you with his tail, they have very good spatial awareness. For example horses use their tail to communicate to other horses to keep their distance. Think about if you have been out riding and your horse gets too close to the one in front. The horse in front will swish his tail in an upward direction, to tell the other horse to back off. They can use it to pair bond gently flicking flies off each other. They can use it like a flag lifted, when excited, feeling playful, or if surprised or alarmed. An angry, annoyed, frustrated or irritated horse will tail swish or use it as a lash....you will have been warned. A clamped or flattened tail is a sign of fear, anxiety, tension, fear or apprehension.

Head and Neck: The height and tension in the head and neck carriage of a horse can be useful to note when reading equine communication. High: your horse maybe trying to see something at a distance, check out the energy and tension and facial expression as it is also a good indication the horse maybe worried, anxious, fearful or just alert and assessing the environment. Low: the horse is most likely relaxed, content and accepting, however also check energy, tension and facial expression as it could be shut down, learnt helplessness, exhaustion, depressed and stressed. Level: The horse could be in a neutral and focused state, again check against intent, energy, breathing patterns, and other body language gestures. As some horses will lock up their neck muscles and with the head level or slightly lower brace to go where they want to go. Head turned or tipped to one side: Often horses will try to turn away with their head if they are trying to communicate the situation is stressful, or are looking to calm a situation. Others will tip their head to one side when stressed, often with their jaws crossed or mouthing gestures. Head weaving and crib biting are a result of prolonged stress.

Shoulders, Barrel of Body and Quarters: The way a horse is using its body can tell



you a great deal. Muscle tension in these areas should be noted a relaxed, calm and happy horse will have soft muscles. A worried, stressed, fretful horse will tense his muscles. A horse in pain will flinch or be tense or have uneven muscle development. If a horse presents his quarters to you and has tension in his muscles and his facial expressions show fear, anxiety, stress or anger this is a strong warning not to be ignored. The rhythm of how a horse uses his body should be noted: a relaxed horse the shoulders, barrel and quarters will gently swing and sway as the horse moves. Any tension or bracing or uneven rhythm during movement is either an indication of discomfort, pain or emotional distress.

Legs and Movement: Watch how horses move, you can learn a great deal. Horses watch each other carefully and us. And movement and the interplay of who moves who is part of their language. It is often very subtle and easy for us to miss. For sure your horse doesn't miss the information about this. Watch how two horses ask permission to enter each other's space to mutual groom. Watch how a higher ranking horse moves a lower ranking horse. Do we observe herd language when approaching a horse? Do we have permission to share space? How does our horse feel about us entering his space? Let alone do we have permission to touch? Can the horse move it's human without the human realising? And did you know your horse will be taking in information about how you use your feet? Your state of mind can be read in how you move. For example a calm relaxed human will walk in a relaxed way, and a tense anxious human will be hurried.

Dancing Around: Nervous, excited, frightened, tense horses will need to move their feet. Thwart this and the anxiety is likely to rise. For some horses the urge to move their feet is so strong we must be able to allow this behaviour so the horse can calm and start to think.

Hind Hoof Resting: A relaxed snoozing horse may well cock a hip and rest a hind hoof, so we look at the other body language gestures for confirmation. If the other body language gestures and breathing patterns, energy and intent is different the horse may be not happy about something and the hoof that appears to be resting may in fact be ready to take a step and go, maybe even at speed.

Hind Leg Lifted: It is essential to really know what the rest of the communication is saying, intent energy, breathing other body language as it could mean the horse feels he has to defend himself, it could be a warning to stay away, especially if the quarters are swung towards you. Or the horse could be in pain or discomfort.

Pawing: A frustrated, annoyed horse may well paw the ground or dig. Again the one gesture can have several meanings as it could also be an indication of pain or colic or it can be a learnt behaviour in response to an anticipated reward such as food arriving.

Legs Alert but Stationary: Sometimes this is attentive, thinking, assessing a situation, the tension will be a good indication if the horse is preparing to take flight from something it perceives as scary.

Foot Stamping: Horses find flies annoying, and horse will stamp to rid themselves of flies. However they may also foot stamp due feeling irritated and annoyed, check out the intent, energy, breathing pattern and other body language as that will give you the full meaning.

Striking Out: A horse that is anxious, angry, or is giving a warning, or wants to threaten, or is preparing to fight may well strike out with a front hoof or both hooves. You will often see this behaviour when 2 horses first meet, they will sniff, squeal and strike out but never with the intent to make contact with each other, as a warning about boundary space. Herd etiquette and boundary crossed may see escalation. However mostly horses settle things without escalation.

Feet and Legs: These are precious to the horse and it takes great trust for a horse to let us pick up and handle his hooves and legs. A good ethical approach to permissive handling of their hooves and legs is a must.

Vocal:

Horses do use vocal signals in their communication. However compared to intent, energy, breathing patterns and body language it is not used as much. However one we must sit up and take note. As horses are excellent at understanding our vocal language, it is humbling when you consider the capacity of the amount of our words and sounds a horse can learn that have a meaning.



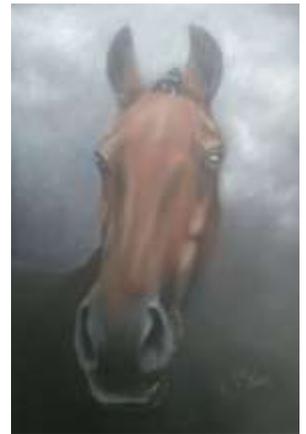
Here are just a few examples of vocal signals horses use:

Breathing Patterns: We have already discussed this in this resource. However a reminder that horses read and use it in their communication. Breathing can change in a split second and reflect the emotional state of a horse. I can be almost silent to a distinctly heard breathing pattern. All have meanings. And once you learn how to use core breathing you can start to communicate with your horse in the most amazing and gentle way. Breathing is something our horses tune into instinctually and they note how we breathe.

Neigh: Even a neigh can have differences. Some are soft and gentle, some almost ear piecing. The meaning will depend on the emotion, intent, energy, breathing patterns before and after the neigh and body language behind the neigh. A happy low energy neigh can be a greeting or one of recognition. A horse that has separation anxiety will have emotions of being upset or distressed, high energy, grabbing air when breathing, tense body, often pacing or sweating and the neigh will sound completely different. I remind you that just as one word can have many meanings and the sentence it sits in gives the meaning, so too does a neigh have many meanings look for the rest of the sentence.

Nickering: Can have many meanings and here we have to factor in the relationship the horse has with who it is nickering to. If a horse nickers to us it is likely one of a friendship greeting, or an expectation we will arrive with a tasty treat. Horses nicker to each other and it can be a friendship greeting. However stallions use it in courtship to a mare. A mare will maternally nicker to her foal.

Squealing: Mostly done in excitement, or when meeting a new member of the herd. Usually when 2 horses are in very close contact with each other. It can be sexual.



Snorting: There are many different types of snorting a horse can do. Again it is about looking at the emotions, intent, energy, breathing patterns before and after the snort and body language. A deep high energy snort is an alarm call, the horse will often be tense, high head carriage, eyes wide open and facial expression tight. A snort can be a challenge to another horse, the intent will show the emotion and the energy will be raised, the horse will body posture to the other horse and often stamp or paw the ground. Some horses will snort out of excitement, during play, their intent will be playful, their energy up, their body language will be one of play, often dancing head tossing, prancing. Soft snorting or can be thought of as nose blowing or clearing to clear their airways. Check to see if the emotions and energy are relaxed and happy then you will know all is well. Some snort to remove dust or pollen and may rub their nose on their legs. If a horse has been exposed to a stressful situation he may well not only lick and chew he may well snort too.

Screams and Roars: This is when a horse is in an extreme emotional state, anxiety, rage, fear. It is distress. The horse will be very agitated. They are not safe to handle in this state, and if ever you are faced with a horse that screams or roars at you it is not safe to try to interact with the horse. You could get hurt.

Grunting: Horse will grunt for many reasons so it is worth reminding yourself to look for the meaning in the emotion, intent, energy, breathing pattern and body language. A grunt is often when a horse is physically exerting himself at his limit, it is a big effort, maybe too much? Horses may grunt if they are engaged in challenging each other or fighting. It can also be a signal of discomfort and pain.

A Blowing Noise: When a horse moves, especially when cantering you will hear the breathing pattern as a noise, it should be rhythmic. This happens because as the horse canters his intestines move about and push on the diaphragm and the breathing changes so you can hear the exhale. If a horse canters and is shallow breathing because it is tense you will not hear this.

Sniffing to Smell: The language of the horse uses scent. A horse may well want to sniff you. That is ok. It is one way they connect with one another. It is often a greeting, if you like a hand shake. You will see horses sniffing noses. Horses love to smell people, objects, and food it is part of how they gather information to evaluate and determine if things are safe, good or bad.

Touch: In communication humans and equines use touch in their own languages. And we use touch in a shared language of horsemanship. Touch for aids and cues for requests from equipment and our bodies. Horses are far more sensitive to touch than we are. They can feel a fly land on their skin. They are also into pressure animals. For example horses don't pull carts they push into the harness. Horses will lean into pressure. If we consider how we feel about touch within our own species when we communicate with other humans. It is mostly only with those we share a close connection with and trust. If a stranger was to touch us we would be at best uncomfortable or feel it was inappropriate and in extreme we could feel abused. Horses also have rules and etiquette around touching each other. Watch how 2 equine friends will share time mutual grooming. For certain they would not allow an unknown horse to mutual groom until a friendship was established. So if we reflect on this how uncomfortable must it be for some horses where humans who have no relationship with the horse expect to be able to walk up and touch the horse. Do we seek permission? Do we have a right? And people wonder why the horse gets grumpy? Some horses don't mind others do. Sadly the ones that don't like it often get labelled. Often in the equine world touch is the level people work at with horses in their training. When you consider all the other ways of communicating it seems to me to be a bit strange if the training is mostly pressure release and not much else. Sad too that pressure is often way too harsh. Tack acts as an amplifier to our pressure requests, the harsher the tack the louder it shouts. And the tack that doesn't instantly release to neutral at best makes training fudgy and at worst will feed the need to move into the pressure and the horse will brace and fix.



If you tune into emotions, intent, energy, core breathing, body language and rhythm training is possible to be done with very little touch and when needed the softest suggestion. There are ways we can use touch in a very positive way when communicating with our horse. Horses love sweet spot scratches, and once you can find a touch your horse finds pleasurable you have a way in to pair bond and use it as a reward.

How horses use touch is interesting: The whiskers on their muzzle, lips and nose are part of their touch information gathering, so should never be cut off. They use it to test out their environment way before using their lips or nose. A horse will never risk his feet on an unknown surface without checking it out and the first contact will be with the whiskers, then the lips, and nose. So teaching your horse a cue to target touch is so useful to help your horse understand it is ok to check out unknown objects.

Taste and Tasty Treats: The horse loves to explore new tastes, sadly most live in environments that don't provide opportunities to explore tasting the many different types of food they would find in the wild. And horses use taste in their communication licking to test for chemical messages. Horses are very motivated by high value rewards so clicker training / positive reinforcement is a fantastic ethical way to engage in a shared language of communication with equines.

Salient Points, Recap and Key Messages:

- Good communication is about us being a good listener and being observant. Ethical horsemanship is honest open dialogue not monologue.
- Silent and listen have the same letters.
- Horsemanship is a partnership between 2 emotional sentient souls.
- 2 legs or 4 emotions shape intent. Which is the seed for action or inaction.
- Become more aware of your own feelings and emotions, and learn to control and shape your thoughts.
- Be authentic, trying to mask your true feelings will cause incongruity and rattle your horse.
- Energy is a reflection of emotion and intent and can change in a split second.
- You will “hear” more if you have a still calm centred energy.
- Learn how to have centred energy and how to read use energy in communication and it opens up a new world of refined communication with your horse.
- As crazy as it sounds, breathe. Breathing patterns matter in horsemanship in refinement of communication. Become aware of how you breathe, practice core breathing. Become aware of how your horse breathes.
- Rhythm, everything has a rhythm, heart beats, and the seasons, how we walk and talk, how our horse moves....become observant on the rhythms around you. Horses read our rhythm it's their language.
- Body Language, the whole horse is talking to you, tension, expression, gestures, postures, etc.
- Vocal, we are a vocal species, horses not so much. Become more aware of what vocal cues and language you use, your horse understands far more than you think. Listen when your horse is vocal.
- Touch, the one we all should aspire to use the softest suggestion, using equipment that provides instant release to neutral. A horse can feel a fly land on his skin, so think about how little we could use.
- Taste, tap into using food rewards in positive reinforcement and you will have a wonderful tool to use in your horsemanship.
- By being alert to your horse's facial, vocal and body language signals, understanding and communicating with your horse will take on new and effective dimensions.
- Horse's telegraph out to us all the time, learning to “hear” them and engage with them in dialogue is refinement of horsemanship. It will improve the relationship with you and your horse. You will be safer as your horse will know he is heard and listened to. 2 legs or 4 we all love to be heard and understood.



Food for Thought:

As a horsemanship practitioner and a Reiki Healer I see a cross over in horsemanship and healing. There is a spiritual dimension. I leave this to last as this in essence will be personal choice if you decide to explore this path.

Horsemanship & Reiki Fusion



Reiki is Japanese for universal life energy. Reiki was founded by Dr Mikao Usui. It is natural healing using energy. Energy is all around us and in all living things. To achieve balance and harmony energy needs to flow uninterrupted. Reiki can help restore energy flow to achieve balance and harmony physically, emotionally or spiritually. This enables us to experience a sense of well-being. Reiki is not a religion and is open to any belief system. Reiki is taught by Reiki masters / teachers who have trained in the tradition passed on in person from master to student. My Reiki master is Sara Coppin. Reiki is commonly divided into three levels or degrees: first degree, second degree and third degree (master). I am qualified to second degree.

Reiki can be useful to both you and your horse. Reiki is great for horsemanship. Horses are fine tuned to read emotions, intent and energy their evolution hard wired them to embed this in their language of the herd and to read the intent and energy in other species. Their survival was dependant on getting this right. I teach horsemanship along the principles of tapping into this language of emotions, intent, energy, breathing patterns, rhythm before voice, body language and touch. Reiki is a great tool to use in refinement of horsemanship. Reiki can remove energy blocks and clearing energy helps you and your horse experience that magical connection, harmony and balance. You and your horse don't need to have anything wrong to have Reiki and to enjoy the benefits. However, if you and or your horse are struggling physically, emotionally or spiritually Reiki can greatly help. Reiki can be used alongside other conventional or complementary treatment and often helps to provide emotional support during recovery.

Each person and horse experiences Reiki differently depending on their individual needs at the time. You may or may not feel sensations during Reiki. Benefits reported by recipients include deep relaxation promoting a calm, peaceful sense of well-being on all levels. Some sensations include heat, tingling, or experience seeing colours, whilst others can have an emotional response, indicating that shifts are taking place, allowing harmony to be restored.

Reiki creates deep relaxation and aids the body to release stress and tension. This triggers the body's natural healing abilities, and improves and maintains health. Great for both horses and humans as it accelerates the body's self-healing abilities. Plus aids better sleep. For behavioural issues such as nervousness or lack of confidence, Reiki can help with relaxation and reduce stress, fear and anxiety.

If your horse has emotional problems such as those due to a traumatic situation such as abuse, neglect, or a riding accident, Reiki can help release and heal those emotions. It's great for humans too who are struggling with emotional problems. It promotes health and wellbeing of the entire physical, emotional and psychic body. It helps spiritual growth and emotional clearing. It is great for both horses and people that are struggling emotionally and spiritually. Therefore it is truly a system of attaining and promoting wholeness of Mind, Body, Spirit and Soul.

Reiki clears energy blocks and helps with horsemanship communication. Strengthen the relationship and bond. Reiki healing is a natural therapy that gently balances life energies and brings health and wellbeing to the recipient. Removes energy blockages, adjusts the energy flow of the endocrine system bringing the body into balance and harmony. Raises the vibrational frequency of the body and clears energy enabling clearer communication between horse and human.

Please Note: This resource pack is designed to be used alongside professional support. Please seek tutoring and guidance from a professional horsemanship practitioner. If horses are stressed, tense, anxious, fearful, etc...they can react unpredictably and become dangerous. Refinement of horsemanship and equine communication can be taught. It takes commitment to learn. Seek out a local horsemanship practitioner to help guide you and your horse into finding the connection you seek.

I have retired from teaching. I share this resource with you as a gift. It is to be used alongside support from a professional of your own choice.

