

# Be a Winner

Published in the June / July 2012 issue of *Horsemanship Magazine*



The 2012 Equine Olympic Games will be inspirational, our top riders competing on home ground for gold. We will witness polished performances from years of planned, purposeful training and partnership building. For most of us we will never reach these refined heights. However we aspire to be the best we can with our horses.

It sparked me to think about what is success? What is a winner? How do you define an equine meaningful accomplishment? What is a meaningful accomplishment from your horse's point of view? Are you a winner in your horse's eyes? Have you won your horse's heart? To engage in a true horsemanship partnership the opinion of our horse really matters.

We all seek a personal equine dream, a close magical relationship with our horses. No matter our aspirations the road to success is paved with interspecies communication. When you use horsemanship training based on the language of the herd with the relationship coming first you can be a winner in your horse's eyes and heart. This fuels passion and unlocks potential. And just like the interlocking Olympic rings there are five interlinked elements of horsemanship: - Bond, Trust, Respect, Time and Focus, Enjoyment. These are the foundation stones to success.

## **The Five Interlocking Elements to Horsemanship**

- **Bond.** Horses are herd animals that require companionship that makes them feel safe, provides meaningful social interactions and a sense of belonging.
- **Trust.** Can your horse trust your decisions? Without leadership a herd would be in chaos. What type of leader are you? Are you trustworthy, consistent and reliable?
- **Respect.** Is a two way street. Horses thrive on clear respectful boundaries. One example: Personal space boundaries, it ensures harmony in the herd. Does your horse respect your personal space? Do you respect a horse's need for personal space? I often see people expect to be able to touch any horse that they have no pre-existing relationship with. They look puzzled when the horse reacts to defend its space. Respect is earned not given.
- **Time and focus.** Dedicate regular quality time to be with your horse with no distractions from friends, mobile phone etc... Do you give your horse 100% of your attention?
- **Enjoyment.** Discover what makes your horse tick and you will tap into a powerful internal motivational tool. Does your horse think the interactions with you are fun and enjoyable?

If you use horsemanship that focuses on these five elements you will win your horse's heart and be a winner in their eyes. Establishing this relationship is the foundation to building success, harmony and the magical light connection we seek.

### **How can you become a better partner for your horse?**

- Develop your equine compassion. Try to live your life with more empathy and understanding. Tune in to your horse, observe their communication. Their communication is mostly a silent body language and some is very subtle. See the world from your horse's perspective. Learn to read the questions your horse puts to you, to develop communication that is based on dialogue.
- Practice patience. With horses patience goes a very long way in helping you achieve goals. How often do you practice patience?
- Tap into intent and energy. Horses thrive with training that uses intention, energy, direction, and correct timing. Therefore an essential skill to develop when working with horses is the ability to project and absorb intent and energy.
- Consistency. By being consistent with our horses we can greatly help them to understand what is expected from them.
- Be open minded. It isn't as easy as it sounds. There are many pressures that keep us from trying new or different approaches.
- Relax. It is important to recognise the impact relaxation has in the ability to concentrate and learn.
- Make it fun. It is important for both horse and human to look forward to being in each other's company and to enjoy the activities they do together. Often we get hung up on being serious around horses, and forget how to have fun.

There are life lessons to be taken from horsemanship. Take a look at the five interlinked elements: - Bond, Trust, Respect, Time and Focus, Enjoyment in relation to any relationship. When one element is missing or damaged the relationship will suffer. Recognize which ring is weak or broken and you can work to repair and strengthen it.

Treat others how you would like to be treated. We all want to feel a bond within a relationship, to trust, treated with respect and dignity, know that we are given quality time with undivided attention doing something we enjoy. If you want to be a winner, try using the five element approach in all relationships, with your horse, people you interact with, your other pets and notice the many benefits.