

# PANNING FOR GOLD

The smallest try is like a fleck of gold which you can use to unlock your horse's potential.  
Vicki Jayne Maris

One of my clients has a horse with a very negative outlook. Working with him reminded me of my time in Montana when I learned to pan for gold. As well as the right tools and knowledge you need to be prepared to put in quality, consistent, persistent, purposeful practice. Intuition, optimism and belief that there is gold to be found in this stream are also helpful.

The smallest try from the horse is like the tiny fleck of gold in our pan. It's easy to miss so you must look carefully in the dirt. Many expect to put in little effort and be rewarded with a nugget of gold but with lots of tiny flecks you can make something of value. These tiny flecks of gold are the ignition. Horses with years of bad experiences need to accumulate more flecks of gold than others to ignite their inner motivational force.

If something is fun, enjoyable, pleasurable, rewarding and meaningful, and our efforts are

appreciated we are more likely to want to do more, try harder and repeat the activity. This applies to our horses too. The key is to know what your horse finds enjoyable, rewarding and fun.

Many factors can block our motivational force. Horses who are micro-managed know they'll not be listened to. Some will express unhappiness with protests and resistance, others become resigned to their fate and perform with a mechanical sadness and a shut down spirit.

There are horses who have been bullied and trained using force and fear. Some just refuse to try any more as the joy has gone from their spirit and soul. Others learn to say no to the most basic, polite or reasonable requests. They become sceptics, just waiting to see if you will revert to the old patterns they associate with humans. I have seen horses who have learned that attack is the best form of defence. A few are waiting to pitch a fight.

There are horses who are not understood. They may have complex emotional issues, physical discomfort or pain. Some have huge gaps in their understanding and training and are confused, fretful and fearful. An unlucky number of horses are owned by people who don't seek to make a connection with them. They are merely vehicles for human pleasure.

My work addresses the issues to ignite the power within. This requires a horsemanship connection, partnership, listening to understand and using the language of the herd.

This is ignition. A spark is not a shortcut to success, it starts the journey. It's how we sustain this inner motivational force that keeps the momentum.

- You need belief in yourself, your horsemanship and your horse.
- See failures as opportunities for learning and growth.
- Confidence in yourself, in your horse and in what you are working towards.

- Strive for what is just out of reach.
- Develop great emotional strength with balanced energy, this will be tested.
- A positive, optimistic mindset produces positive, powerful inner dialogue. Add this to your chosen horsemanship approach.
- Enhanced, positive reinforcement will speed up the process.
- Tailor the training to the mindset of the individual, horse and human. We each have our preferred learning style.
- Tune in to your gut feeling; if it doesn't feel right the chances are it isn't.
- Expand horizons with planned, positive experiences.

A powerful internal motivational force is what unlocks potential and enables us to live our dreams. It is true gold dust. Try sprinkling this in all areas of your life.

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