

CHASING MOONBEAMS

How do you deal with setbacks in your life?
Vicky Jayne Maris explains how to use them
to improve your horsemanship

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In horsemanship and life it can be hard to stay motivated. Life has ups and downs, two legs or four, setbacks happen. They are especially part of development of horsemanship as horse and human are on a shared journey of trying new things, growing as a partnership and learning through a meaningful close connection.

When learning something new and it really works, things come together and it can be like stepping into a pool of enlightenment. It is similar to stepping into a small, bright shaft of magical moonlight, you get the feeling and you see things clearly as they should be. If you experience a setback, it's lost or it melts away, much to your frustration, and you are back to your old way of doing things, then it is easy to get trapped into chasing moonbeams. The more

you try to recreate the end result, the enlightenment, the more it is impossible to find. This is because you focus on the end result and not the journey that enables you to discover this new understanding and knowledge. Stop chasing moonbeams and focus on the process that enabled you to arrive at your new learning.

THE SPIKEY PROFILE

Learning for humans and horses very rarely follows a smooth upward curve. You will find you and your horse will have good days and bad days. Sometimes you will feel your progress slip away and it can feel like you take two steps forward and one back. This spiky profile is normal. To help you stay positive and motivated it is best to focus on the total distance travelled. The downward dips are an indication

that you should focus on your previous learning to consolidate it before moving on. Maybe the horse and/or rider needs more time to embed this learning, so be prepared to go back and look at the stages that you and your horse have found easy before working on the area that caused the downward dip. By consolidating your learning you will have a stronger base to build further learning and training upon, so it is time very well spent.

It's how we deal with setbacks that matters. Some people see a setback as failure. This places them in a mental straight jacket. It can cause paralysis. Other people see setbacks as failing their horse. The first thing to embrace is that a setback is not failure. The only difference is a matter of perspective. If we see something as a setback we can

Without setbacks and mistakes, no experience. Without experience, no learning. And without learning, you'll never truly understand the awakening of your heart's desires.

Robbie Vorhaus

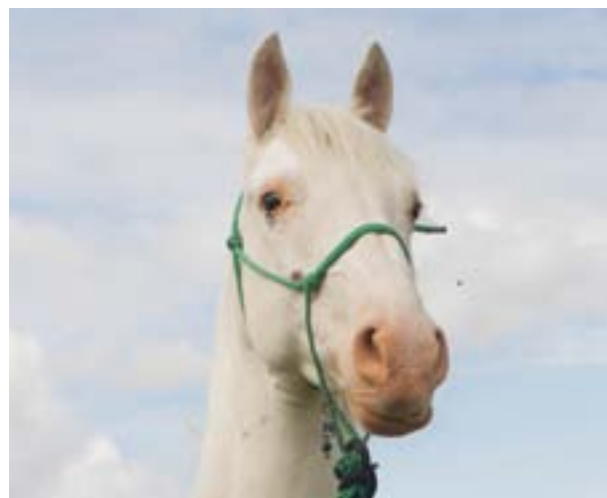
learn from it and try a different approach or start again. Failure has a whiff of permanence and a setback is not permanent. The difference between the successful and the not-yet-successful is the realisation that a setback is simply a stepping stone, not a permanent event. Here shifting your thinking really helps. Who taught you that a setback was a bad thing? It feels bad so it must be bad. Is that really true? What good does a fear of a setback do us? How about if you looked at a setback as a blessing in disguise, or a golden gift for learning? Setbacks are inevitable, they're part of learning. Accepting this is a huge part in achieving your dreams. If you want to live your equine dream, setbacks will be a part of your life, so embrace them as an opportunity for growth in work's clothing. If you lived with no setbacks you would not expand your horizons and at worst end up in a rut.

IDENTIFY THE ROOT CAUSE

When learning new skills, setbacks are bound to happen. However, in my experience, setbacks are sometimes not related to our ability or our horse's ability, they can be linked to life events. Setbacks can be connected to physical and emotional wellbeing. How we feel. Horses are emotional creatures too and no one can convince me that they don't feel a whole range of

complex emotions. The best way to deal with a setback is to oust the demon. When it is out in the open and has nowhere to hide you can take targeted action.

I meet people who regularly beat themselves with the perfection stick. They feel they are letting themselves and their horse down by not being perfect. Remind yourself that all any of us can offer is our best. Strive to improve your best and remember that refining your skills is a journey not a destination. Recognise too that this is all your horse can offer too. Importantly, cut yourself and your horse some slack. Setbacks happen and if you hold the perfection stick you will beat yourself up over the setback and erode motivation as perfectionism fuels the inner critic, providing constant nagging reminders that you are not good enough. It's the wolf dressed in sheep's clothing, a villain masquerading as the good guy and can cut your self-confidence to shreds, kill your motivation and send your performance down the tubes. Perfectionism will



suck every ounce of enjoyment and satisfaction out of your horsemanship.

Having unrealistic expectations will guarantee disappointing outcomes. The key to good self-confidence and maintaining motivation is therefore having realistic, achievable standards and expectations. Swap perfectionism with a burning desire to better your best. Accept mistakes and setbacks are part of the learning process and view them as golden gifts in crappy paper.

Horses are emotional creatures too

DEALING WITH SETBACKS AND STAYING MOTIVATED

- Acknowledge the setback and remind yourself it's an opportunity for growth.
- Remind yourself of your goals, monitor your progress, review and adjust your plan if necessary.
- Be willing to try different approaches and think outside the box.
- Break your action plan down into manageable pieces so you can take small steps.
- Reward yourself and your horse. Make extrinsic positive reinforcement a key part of your horsemanship. If something is fun, enjoyable and rewarding it is the most powerful tool for unlocking potential.
- Don't be hard on yourself or your horse. We are all work in progress.
- Take control of your emotions. Actively focus on the positives and the total progress made.
- Surround yourself with sources of inspiration. People, courses, images, books, magazines, videos.
- Procrastination and distractions are a sure fire way to erode motivation. Once you have identified the cause of procrastination, take action!

www.inspirationalhorsemanship.co.uk