



# MOTIVATION

Vicki Jayne Maris explores the consequences and power of motivation in horsemanship

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In my last article, Panning for Gold, I explored how the smallest try is the ignition to unlocking potential. This series of articles explores motivation in horsemanship. My many years experience within human education includes using a ground-breaking approach that utilised tapping in to internal motivation so that students achieved

higher levels of personal satisfaction and attained full potential. Combining this with my experience as a horsemanship practitioner has led me to an approach that uses methods to tap in to inner motivation for both horse and human.

Motivation is the inner yearning and passion in all species. There are two types of motivation,

extrinsic and intrinsic, and knowing the difference makes a huge difference. Extrinsic motivation is usually stimulated by someone outside ourselves who has set goals and uses methods such as positive reinforcement or negative reinforcement. Many of you are already familiar with extrinsic motivation in horsemanship, there is good, bad and ugly

to be found. Good use of extrinsic motivation will unlock intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation does not rely on being influenced by another. It is often referred to as self-motivation and is a powerful force within us all. Enjoyment and interest that comes from within will fuel action to try out new things and gain skills. Whether we have

## TYPES OF MOTIVATION THAT CAN BE FOUND IN HORSEMANSHIP

Positive			
Extrinsic motivation (from outside the horse, from the trainer or rider)	Positive reinforcement, training using yes, suggesting, inspiring, praising, rewarding, treating, encouraging, appreciating, acknowledging, recognising, offering bonus and comfort.	YES, self-motivated because it is enjoyable, fun, pleasurable. Offering without prompting. Displaying inner confidence, feeling safe with trust and partnership. Positive outlook.	Intrinsic motivation (from within the horse)
	Negative reinforcement, training using no, discouraging, correcting, allowing consequences or discomfort, imposing punitive measures, discipline and punishment.	NO fuelled maybe by fear, anxiety, stress, confusion. Refusal or resistance fuelled by negative past experiences or entrenched thinking. Shut down, disinterested, unmotivated or "what's the point".	
Negative			

two legs or four, we all have personal self-motivational drivers, desires and goals which inspire learning and achievement. Horses and humans are born with a curiosity and a drive to learn naturally through play and social interactions without the need for reward. When we tap into this inner motivational force we make learning a fun and enjoyable activity. We want our horses to enjoy our horsemanship and tapping into intrinsic motivation ensures your horse looks forward to your shared activities.

When intrinsic motivation surfaces in your horsemanship your horse will engage willingly, offer to you what you have been working on and have a positive outlook.

The table on the previous page lays out the dynamics of motivation as they play out in horsemanship. From the horse's perspective, most horsemanship is extrinsic or human led. It certainly helps in difficult situations such as when negative responses surface from your horse. To move from a position of 'no' to 'yes' an individual needs to travel through 'maybe.' With a horse that requires the human to provide appropriate, extrinsic based learning activities, including play, which give the horse time to consider options, explore, think and reflect.

Many people are not aware

which extrinsic approach they are using. Watch carefully and there is bound to be a mixture of positive and negative reinforcement going on. Knowing which to use in a given situation can make a huge difference to the outcome. There is a debate in the area of horsemanship training as to which methods are right and which are wrong and this article does not set out to answer this. For me extrinsic horsemanship is simply communicating 'yes' or 'no' appropriately to the horse using language he understands.

Extrinsic motivation has limitations. If the activity becomes strongly associated with reward, the activity without reward the motivation can decrease. If you use negative reinforcement you can end up nagging your horse or applying more and more pressure which can have serious consequences in the long run. Some horsemanship methods only use extrinsic motivation, micromanaging the horse to do what we request. Tactful extrinsic motivation is very useful in the ignition of positive intrinsic motivation. The key is how to ignite this powerful inner force for our horse and ourselves.

When a horsemanship session allows a horse the opportunity to give without you asking, it is essential that you recognise and treasure it.

**The aim is to ignite the inner motivational forces in you and your horse**

**Vicki Jayne Maris** is an inspirational horsemanship tutor ready to spark your horsemanship journey toward excellence  
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