

Intent and Energy

By Vicki Jayne Maris BA Hons (Now Yates)

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A calm balanced compassionate partner offers their horse stability, safety, security and a relationship built on mutual trust. Horses thrive with training that uses intention, energy, rhythm, focus, direction, patience and correct timing. Therefore an essential skill to develop when working with horses is the ability to read your horse's intent and to appropriate with your own intent.

Horses understand energy states and use it in herd communication, so learning how to project and absorb energy unlocks a refinement level within horsemanship.

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 subtle intent, energy and body language prefix touch in the herd. Yet touch is often the only level many humans are using when training a horse. The layers of refinement are there within intent and energy. That is the key to the magical connection we seek. The starting point for refined 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.

Intent is about our thoughts, feelings and emotions. Horses know if you are feeling passive, assertive, anxious, distracted, etc. Horses are sensitive creatures and they experience a full range of emotions. 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. Then we can read our horse's intent and know what our horse is struggling with. They have emotional needs; seek spiritual harmony and mental safety. 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.



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. And our actions will be different. Our intent will determine our actions.

- 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. So are you aware of the difference of passive, assertive, aggressive and manipulative behaviour and how this relates to human intent?

With intent I don't think it is horses are mind readers, however it can feel like that 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.

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. Horses offer you opportunities to learn about energy, its effects on yourself and your equine partner and in life beyond. 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.

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.

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.

When there is energy imbalance this needs addressing. My work in horsemanship is about restoring this balance and building a strong relationship between the horse and the human. Then I can teach people the refinement of using intent and energy in horsemanship. 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.

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 energy 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 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.



Horsemanship communication is dialogue, prefixing an appropriate request with intent and energy before eye contact, body language 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.

There are techniques you can actively practice. Here are a few to get you 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. Your thoughts are a powerful tool, learn to use them positively.
- Each day give yourself a quiet and peaceful time. Actively relax, there are lots of methods to try, meditation, breathing techniques, visualisation etc...
 - 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 technique you can practice, core breathing. Using core breathing enables you to tap into changing your energy. I teach people to use core breathing techniques to change the energy up or down. Briefly below is an overview.

Firstly know how to use your breathing. Sit upright (comfortably not bolt upright) on a hard chair so you can feel your seat bones. Place your hands so your fingers tips just touch just below your ribs. Then breath in softly and slowly filling your lungs and watch how your fingertips move apart and when you breathe out how they touch again. If you can move your fingers you are using your core when you breathe. If your fingers don't open you are mostly breathing from only the top of your lungs. Work on using more lung capacity and you will discover you can move your fingers and use your core in breathing. Neutral is for relaxed breathing that gently opens the fingers. You can develop neutral breathing when you ride too. Count how many steps your horse takes to an in breath and how many to an out breath and note are you using softly your core?

While on your chair you can learn how changing you're breathing and energy can affect your contact of your seat bones with the chair. For an upwards transition using energy and core breathing practice the following. Change how you feel in your energy say go from a 4 to a 6 then take a breath in using your core gently lifting your chest and when you exhale keep

your chest lifted and imagine you are blowing a plume of breath on a cold day. Note how this lifts your seat bones.



For a downwards transition change how you feel in your energy say go from a 6 to a 3 then take in a breath this time softly inhale and on the exhale take a long soft just audible sigh letting your core become heavy so you feel yourself relax into your seat bones. Note how this causes your seat bones to sink into the chair.

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.