

MEL Fleming

Holistic Horsemanship

Understanding horses
Mind, Emotions, Body, & Spirit

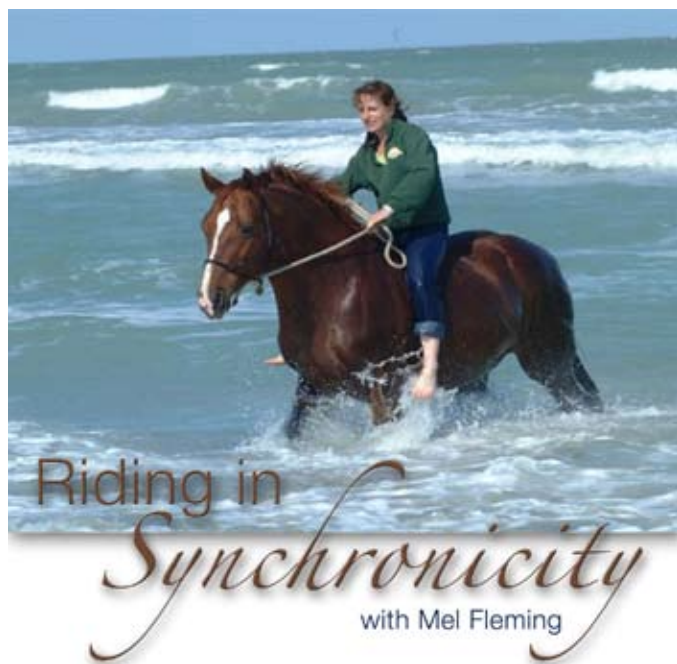


Hi all,

There are a few things to update on in regards to the courses.

Sarah Harris from Balance International in the UK (Balance Saddle consultant) has notified me to say that she is unable to go head with her trip to Australia this year so I have had to make a few changes to the course that she was involved with. For anyone who is wanting to try a Balance Saddle I am very happy for you to try my Balance Saddle at a course

NEW COURSE



When the rider can totally become a part of the horse and they move as one being then riding can feel like magic for the horse and the human.

In this course you will understand and implement riding techniques so horses can be ridden in a balanced, fluid and biomechanically correct posture. In such a self carriage horses will be sound, healthy, happy and athletic. Performance maneuvers will feel effortless.

Participating in body awareness simulations and exercises will develop and improve your mental focus, mental attitude, balance, coordination, feel and timing. These are the keys to experiencing the magic in riding a horse.

Excerpt from an article written explaining some of the concepts and principles being taught in the 'Riding in Synchronicity' Course.

The horse must be ridden in biomechanically balanced way to be sound healthy, happy and achieve peak performance. This means that the hindquarters are engaged and supporting the rider's weight and are used to push the horse forward. The alternative is that the front legs are doing all the work bearing the load and pulling the horse along. The front end of the horse is not designed to do this and down the track their will be serious long term health and soundness issues.

Engagement of the hindquarters physically means that the horse's hind legs reach further underneath the horses belly and can occur only if horses lift and round their backs.

Try this exercise: While standing, hollow your back as much as you can and then see how high you can lift your knee up in front of you. Now allow your back to round and see how high you can lift your knee. You should be able to lift it considerably higher when your back is round and therefore lengthen the whole spine.

It is possible to sit in a way which invites a horse to lift his back underneath you, instead of exerting strong downward pressure on the back, forcing the horse to hollow away.

When a horse is moving optimally there will be quite a lot of movement in the back as the energy flows from the hindlegs to his front end. Hence the dressage terminology of riding your horse 'through' – allowing the energy from the push of the hindlegs to come up through the rider's pelvis, through the elbows and down the forearm and rein to the horse's mouth. To be in harmony our body has to be mobile enough to absorb the motion of the horse and flow with it. It's all in the torso, the hips, pelvis, ribcage, collar bones, sternum, shoulder blades and all the vertebrae of the spinal column from the top of the coccyx to the base of the skull. All the parts that ordinarily we never think about – most people are only aware of their arms and legs. Most riders tend to lock their hips and pelvis in the saddle and brace in the stirrups as they are unable to absorb the movement of the horse through their torso.

The secret is to be sitting in Alignment – ie on the correct part of the pelvis and seat bones and then having Independent Suspension – ie allowing either side of the pelvis, hips and ribcage to move independently of the other just as the horse does.

This position is 'neutral' – because from there you are equally ready to move in any direction. You can never be 'fixed' in a position as that would not be in synch with the horse that is moving underneath you. Think of your position like a pendulum swinging – the pendulum is never stuck in one spot but moves through the centre point, on its trajectory in either direction and always returns home to it. As a horse's balance changes for different maneuvers and levels of engagement the rider needs to adjust his 'point of balance'.

Being in neutral and therefore alignment means sitting toward the back end of our seat bone – not the front of the pelvis (most women sit right on their crotch, placing pressure on the horse's front end) or lounging back on the tail bone (most men sit here), which is behind the motion – both these positions immobilize the rider's joints and interfere with the horse's natural gait and movement.

Try this: In a standing position tip your pelvis as far forward as possible and then alternately lift one heel off the ground at a time. Now roll your pelvis into the opposite direction and try again. Now find the neutral pelvic position where lifting the heels feels effortless and there is no strain anywhere in the body – that's the

balance or neutral point! (Just like everything in life, in order to find balance we have to experience the two opposing extremes!)

To allow the horse's back to lift and the ribcage to expand under our seat and thighs we need to ride with our hips open (ie with the femur slightly rotated outwards), the knee soft and very slightly rotated out. This, in turn, means that your toes will be slightly turned out. If you ride with closed and holding toes, knees and thighs, your pelvis is tight and immobile and your constriction means that the horse can't lift his back and expand the ribcage.

Try getting down on your hands and knees and asking someone else to sit on your hips. Experiment with having them clamp their knee and thigh on you versus having a lightly outward rotated hip and knee. Feel how one technique allows the horse's back to lift and expand and the other restricts it.

Imagine your centre of gravity as a heavy weight down low inside your pelvis. The way keep this weight from restricting the horse is for the rider to have self carriage. **Try this:** Place your fingers on the top of your hips and your thumbs on your last rib. Now lengthen this area. This is self carriage. Now feel where your sacrum is, it is a triangular piece of bone in you lower back, you need to think about stretching down from the sacrum and up from it while still maintaining the soft natural hollowing of the lower back.



Helium playing at Liberty. Here he is really experimenting with lifting and getting more suspension as a result of the engagement of his hindquarters. Notice how far he is starting to reach up under his body with the inside hindleg and how much he is lifting up through the withers. This is what we are looking for in self carriage and it doesn't matter whether you ride English or Western the basic biomechanics of balance are the same for horses. On the ground can often be the place where horses can first start to experiment with this if we play with in a way that stimulates their play and exuberance.

Moving down from the seat, contact with the top and back of the calf encourages the horse to lift the belly, which in turn lifts the back. This contact with the lower leg stabilizes and supports the rider's upper body (especially important for the rising trot) and this calf contact helps to distribute the weight of the rider over a larger surface area so that the weight is not solely directed as a downward force on the horse's back. This also enables the rider to have a relatively light seat.

Finally, the feet in the stirrups. Imagine that the sole of her boot is velcroed to the stirrup – there is no downward pressure, especially in the rising trot. Downward pressure on the stirrup causes the saddle tree and stirrup bars to press into the horse's back which is again going to cause the horse to hollow his back. The ankle should be soft, the heel should hang and not be forced down or forward.

Most importantly: 'The way to ride without restriction is to be in a mental and emotional state of lightness, ease, non-judgement and detachment to the outcome. You

need a feeling of lightness, a soft excitement and energy vibrating continuously throughout your entire body – all through your spine from the coccyx to the base of your skull.

Try this on your horse: Imagine the energy vibrating through you, wriggle your fingers, toes and tongue to make sure that the energy goes all the way to your extremities and there are no blocks or restrictions there.

You are looking for both you and your horse to have a feeling of lightness throughout your bodies– especially in the legs and feet as though you could walk on eggshells.'

Remember horses are intuitive and instinctual beings – if you are tense, hunched, fearful or angry – they will be too. If you are light, joyous, relaxed, happy and balanced – they will be too!

So most of all don't try too hard and just enjoy the ride. Have fun experimenting.

Mel

UPCOMING HORSEMANSHIP COURSES

For details of courses and bookings contact Mel - mel@melfleming.com.au • Phone: 02 666705519

Moonbi	May 26th - 28th	Introductory Course
Coffs Harbour	June 8th	Free Presentation
Coffs Harbour	June 9th -11th	Intermediate /Advanced
Moonbi	June 14th -18th	5 days Intermediate &Advanced
Moonbi	June 14th, 15th	Psychology and Ground Skills
Moonbi	June 16th	Seminar - Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson
Moonbi	June 17th , 18th	Riding in Synchronicity
Adelaide	July 7th-11th	Intermediate/ Advanced
Raymond Terrace	July 13th	Free Presentation
Raymond Terrace	July 14th, 15th	Intermediate
Bangalow	July 27th -30th	Intro/Intermediate/Advanced
Gold Coast	Aug 11th-13th	Intermediate /Advanced
Moonbi	Sept 2nd -13th (10 day course)	Psychology/Synchronicity/Bodywork (Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson)
Bathurst	Sept. 15th -17th	Riding in Synchronicity
Canberra	Sept. 29th-Oct. 1st	Intermediate /Advanced
'Banyandah' Howlong	Oct. 8th-12th (5 day course)	Riding in Synchronicity (Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson)

EQUINE NATURAL FIRST AID FOR HORSES

Presented by Angela Davison (Equine Herbalist and Bodyworker) **June 23rd at Moonbi (Tamworth)**
Inflammation, sprains and strains Cuts, Sores, Open wounds & injuries Coughs, colds and infections Feet, Poulticing and more

OPEN FORUM • BASIC MASSAGE & STRETCHING.

Presented by Angela Davison **June 24th at Moonbi (Tamworth)** ALL PRACTICAL