

MEL *Leming* Horsemanship



Connecting WITH HORSES

CONNECTING - 'Getting in the Zone'

Horses want to feel connected. They don't want to just be a number or an object. They don't want to be 'trained' as such, they are looking for a relationship, a friend and companion. This doesn't mean that horses can't be used in sports or competition or for work. When we are working with them and interacting with them in ways that accommodate their needs mentally, emotionally and physically then they can enjoy doing things with us and it gives them more purpose to their life.

They want to be understood and listened to; it is the relationship that is important to them. Well known international motivational speaker and psychologist Anthony Robbins states that having a feeling of 'love and connection' is one of the highest human needs, this is also true for horses whether this be the love and connection of a herd and or a human. Horses have evolved to be with humans like cats and dogs have, so looking for a connection with humans is natural for them. They have been associated closely with humans for a long time now and have served man probably like no

other animal in many aspects of human history, for food, transport, pulling, farming, warfare, stock work, and now primarily for recreation.

Our horses want to communicate and interact with us. It can be pretty frustrating for them when we just don't get it. Animals communicate through body language, vocal sounds and through thoughts in an energetic or telepathic way just as humans do.

The emotions in horses are deeper and cause more problems than most people realize. Horses can feel all the same emotions that people do, love anger, frustration, joy, sadness they can even cry. If you took the time to look into their eyes and ask how they are feeling you will feel and see the emotions that they have. The brain of an animal is different to ours in that the frontal lobe of an animal's brain is not as developed as the human's brain. The frontal lobe is the reasoning and strategizing part of the brain, because this is less developed in animals, then other parts of the brain which are connected to and governed by the emotions are often more widely used.

Many horses feel very anxious, confused, or lost when they cannot connect and communicate with their human as they would like to. Others are suppressed and depressed because they feel like they are not being heard.

These emotions manifest themselves through the body as behaviour, posture, conformation and health. Behaviorally horses with the tendency to be more introverted will start to physically shut down and the more extroverted horses will physically hype up. All horses can display introverted states and extroverted states they are never purely one or the other.



To get more connected with horses, which is what will lead to safer interactions with horses and better levels of performance, we need to start connecting, asking questions and listening to our horses more. Ask the questions to yourself or the horse it doesn't matter you just have to be in questioning mode and you will get the answers by using all of your observation skills and all of your senses including your sixth sense.



If you were to talk to any athlete at the highest levels you would discover that when they are performing at their best they are 'in the zone'. Rather than analyzing and thinking with the left side of their brain they are intuiting or feeling with the right side of their brain. If you were to imagine a racing car driver, things are happening too fast to think through every move they have to intuit, feel and follow their instincts.

This 'intuitiveness and feel' is what makes a horseman really good with horses. This is what gives them the feel, timing, harmony and smoothness that horses love – without this everything feels mechanical and stilted to the horse. Because these qualities are so intuitive often talented people in their fields are not always good teachers because things become so innate or natural they cannot logically explain it.

Learning to 'get in the zone' can be easier than you think. All you need to do is slow down and quiet your mind and body and listen for a change. Allow thoughts to come in instead of continuously sending them out. We block most of our intuitive processes because we incessantly send thoughts out. Breathing deeply and inhaling in through your nose and exhaling out through your mouth will help you get quiet, centered and connected. Try an exercise of walking slowly, very slowly; this will get your mind to slow down and your perceptiveness will increase. We are often racing around so we don't have

time to listen and perceive. When we slow down we can actually hurry up. When we are going flat out we are often just going around in circles although it feels like we are achieving a lot because we are putting a lot of effort out. We have been trained that effort and a lot of activity is good and necessary and often feel guilty when we are not always 'doing'.

When you approach your horse walk up to him slowly and ask him how he is feeling today or what he would like to do today. Then be quiet and listen, the answer might come to you as thoughts either in words or pictures as well as coming through his body language.

Other things that you can do to get 'in the zone' or get connected to your horses are:-

- Just sitting with them and not actually doing anything. Don't even touch them wait until they might choose to touch you. When a horse reaches out and touches you with their nose it is a sign that they really want to connect with you – they might want to sniff your face, hair or hands.



- You can walk with them and synchronise with their steps, allow them to be the leader and see where they want to go and what they want to do.
- Grooming is a very good way to start getting your communication better with your horse. See how they choose to be groomed and where they like to be groomed. How hard or soft do they like it? Some horses may not want to be groomed in certain areas because they are too sensitive there e.g. on the chest or under the belly. If this is the case this is a sign that the horse has some physical issues there which may

need addressing. Horses will really feel that you are listening to them when you can groom or massage them in their favorite spots and they can show you where these spots are and then you lighten up or move away from the spots that are too sensitive for them.

When you start tuning in asking and listening you may not always like the feedback or the answers. It is quite possible that the horse will not give you the answers that you would like to hear. That is OK. When a horse says 'no' the next question that you need to ask is 'why'? Once you find out why then you can take whatever action that you need to take to 'lead that to a yes'.

There are many reasons that horses may say 'no' ranging from confusion and misunderstanding to physical discomfort in their bodies, teeth, feet, backs, badly fitting saddles, riders giving incongruent or conflicting signals, fear, resentment or boredom. Without knowing what the cause of the problem is it is

impossible to fix the situation. You will again have to use all of your resources and senses to figure this out. What I have discovered is that horses have many physical restrictions and issues in their bodies that can cause them a lot of problems and are the root of poor performance and behaviour problems. These could be caused by diet, injuries, genetics, the posture they are ridden in or emotions.

Some emotional problems in horses are at such a deep level and they have become so physically entrenched in the muscles, tendons, bones and cells that the way to resolve them is through healing the body and physically releasing them.

So to start getting more connected and listen using all of your senses ask questions, get quiet, slow down your thoughts, words and actions so you can begin to see, hear, feel and intuit more.

Until next month

Mel

UPCOMING HORSEMANSHIP COURSES

For details of courses and bookings contact Mel - mel@melfleming.com.au • Phone: 02 67605519

Moonbi (near Tamworth) NSW (Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson)	September 2nd -13th	(10 day course) Psychology/Synchronicity/ Bodywork
Bathurst, NSW	September. 15th -17th	Riding with Synchronicity
Raymond Terrace, NSW	September 22nd-23rd	Introductory Ground skills
Picton, Sydney, NSW	September 29th - Oct 1st	Intermediate / Advanced courses
'Banyandah' Howlong (Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson)	October 8th-12th	(5 day course) Psychology/Synchronicity/ Bodywork
Bellingen, NSW	October 26th (TBA) October 27th-28th	Introductory ground skills day Intermediate 2 day course
Moonbi, near Tamworth NSW	October 20th	Natural First Aid for Horses with Angela Davison
Moonbi, near Tamworth NSW	October 21st	Basic Massage and Stretching Course with Angela Davison
Moonbi (near Tamworth), NSW	November 3rd &4th	Introductory Ground Skills
Maryborough, QLD	November 10th -12th (TBA)	Intermediate & Advanced
Equitana - Melbourne VIC	November 16th-19th	Presenting with Equus College Is it in the Mind or the Body ?
Moonbi, near Tamworth, NSW	December 15th-16th	Lower Limb and Hoof Care Course with Tony Robinson
New Zealand, North Island (Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson)	November 24th- 28th	(5 day course) Psychology/Synchronicity/ Bodywork
New Zealand, South Island (Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson)	December 1st - 5th (TBA)	(5 day course) Psychology/Synchronicity/ Bodywork
Raymond Terrace, NSW	December 8th-10th	Intermediate & Advanced