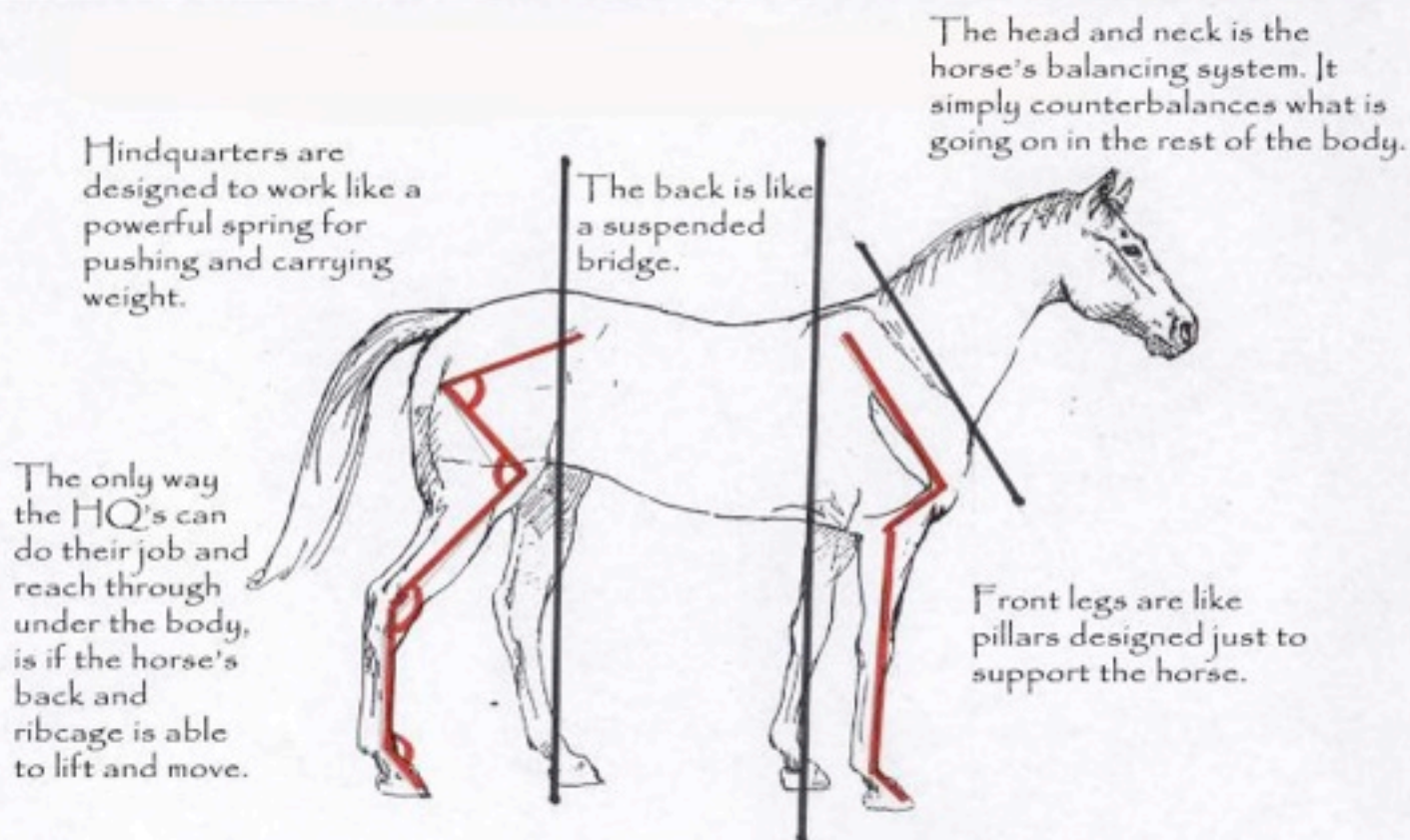


Connecting with Horses and Riding with Synchronicity Course

at 'Alchemy Place' Moonbi, NSW

with

MEL Fleming



The Basic Biomechanics of the Horse



On the seat builder we can simulate and develop the rider's balance and co-ordination by learning to feel and follow motion.

Understanding the biomechanics of the horse is the first essential step in learning to ride in a way that is ideal for the horse. Riding with Synchronicity teaches riding dynamics that can be applied to whatever horse sport that you do because no matter what your sport, a horse is a horse and therefore the basic concepts of balance and biomechanics are the same. The reason that different disciplines have horses ridden in different frames or outlines is due to the fact that the 'shape' of the horse will change according to the degree of collection and engagement of the hindquarters needed for specific manoeuvres or activities. For example the degree of engagement needed for a horse to trot down the road on a trail ride will be different to that needed to jump a three foot fence, execute passage or a canter pirouette, cut a cow or do a big slide stop. As the horse's head and neck is simply his balancing system the height, length and position of the head and neck will change in order to counterbalance what is happening in the rest of the body.

One of the fundamental elements that most people don't seem to consider is that the only way that the hind legs can actually engage is if the back muscles spine and ribcage of the horse can lift and move under the saddle and the rider. Essentially what engaging the hindquarters means is that the horse is reaching a long way forward under his body with the hindlegs. The placement of the hind foot in the weight bearing phase of the stride is the key because the 'push' of the hind leg comes immediately after the weight bearing phase as the foot starts to leave the ground. If the hind foot is behind the stifle in that moment there is no power in the 'push' of the hind foot against the ground to generate propulsion therefore the horse must be pulling it self with the front legs to get along. The further in front of the stifle the hind foot is in the weight bearing stage the more engaged the horse is.

For the hind legs to reach a long way forward and work in this way the back or 'the bridge' has to be able to lift and



Melissa Johnstone in good balance on the seat builder.

that is where the saddle is and where we are sitting. So the fit of the saddle, as well as how we sit is either going to allow the back to lift or restrict it. It is possible to ride in way so that we are not a downward force on the horse's back. It is possible to ride so that we are relatively weightless to the horse and that is how we need to be. This is what you will learn in 'Riding with Synchronicity'.

Getting Respect

A lot of people talk about the importance of having a horse's respect. To me respect is not about simply being dominant over a horse and controlling them. For sure there is an element of needing to be a leader but you earn respect from your horse when your horse realises that you understand his mind and his body. In terms of their body you understand things like the coordination and timing of their feet, the weights shift and the balance they need for each transition and manoeuvre and allow them the time they need to organise their bodies and get themselves set up for each movement that you ask. You understand how things need to flow through the body and the consistency of the rhythm of each gait and the smoothness of all the transitions are the evidence of this. You understand the lateral and longitudinal flexions of the body and how they affect the balance of the horse. As an example, take a simple thing like turning, you often see inexperienced riders not allowing horses enough room to make a turn so that if the horse didn't adjust his stride and his rhythm he would run into the fence or you very commonly see riders putting a backward feel in the rein and blocking the forward momentum of the horse through the turn which also causes the neck to over bend thus getting the horse out of balance.



Adjusting Lynne Weis's position on the seat builder and co-ordination by learning to feel and follow motion.

If riders were to really think about what it means to the horse to be ridden they would probably start to look a lot deeper into their riding dynamics rather than blaming the horse for not behaving. For the horse to be completely obedient to the rider means completely surrendering to the rider. The way the rider sits, his balance and weight distribution, is either going to allow the horse to move easily and effortlessly or it will hinder the horse. When you consider that holding on to the reins with a piece of metal in their mouth, the most sensitive part of the horse's body, means that you are now controlling the horse's balancing system- the head and neck – it should cause you to realise how important it is to really understand the horse's body, how it moves and balances. Especially when the rider is then going to tell the horse how to bend his body and where to place his head and neck and where to take off for a jump, as an example. We for sure better know what is going on in the horse's body and then have very good balance in our own if we expect a horse to 'turn his body loose' to us and let us completely control and direct it.

And yet the amazing thing is, so many horses are obedient and allow themselves to be ridden – to the best that they are able. It never ceases to amaze me that horses allow themselves to ridden even when so much of the time the rider is quite inept at allowing or directing the horse to move with balance and ease. This is by no means aimed at making riders feel inadequate or to imply that riding is a difficult complicated activity but too acknowledge the amazing animal that the horse is to allow us to ride them at all. If you were to truly think about the power and strength of a horse, there is no way that most people would be able to ride them if it were not that horses allowed it. Riding so that you are in balance, harmony and synchronicity with the horse is not hard it is just a matter of freeing up your body and freeing up your body of course comes from freeing up your mind. The horse can only be as free and athletic in their body as we are in ours.

So here we are getting started with some exercises to free up the body and in particular the spine, before simulating on the seat builder. Since the body is directly influenced by the mind getting our minds quiet and ourselves centred is essential. On the seat builder we can simulate and develop the rider's balance and co-ordination by learning to feel and follow motion.

On the ground we need to learn how to get mentally connected with the horse. We can learn how to 'have a conversation' with our thoughts and intention, energy, body language and tools rather than just be mechanical and robotic with our techniques. This is the difference between a horseman and a technician. Through this conversation you will develop feel and timing and balance. The level of this conversation can be extremely subtle and at the same time be detailed and in great depth, enabling you to influence the posture, balance and self carriage of the horse just by thinking and feeling in your body how you want the horse to move in his body. Getting the horse's attention is utmost whether you are on the ground or in the saddle. If you haven't got your horse's attention you haven't got anything, but how polite can you be to get it and how provocative, interactive and connected do you need to be to keep it?



Rosemary Hams and Rocky



Mel with Rocky – Demonstrating how to get connected mentally and physically with the horse and then how to influence the horse's balance and movement on the ground.



Melissa Johnstone and Atticus

We start putting all the pieces together on the horses – incorporating lots of exercises to free up the riders more and get them closer to being able to ‘turn loose’ on their horses. Balance and communication lead to confidence when riding. Trust is the biggest thing. Trusting your self and trusting the horse and it always comes back to what is going on in your head



Isabell Whiteman (10) and Sage



Lynne Weis



Mel and Spirit



We finished off each day with a little trail ride.

Here is what some of the students had to say.

As always Mel takes riding lessons to a new level. Many of her concepts I had not been aware of but Mel has a great knack of explaining things so that not only do they make sense in theory but when put into practice the results for the horse and the rider can be seen instantly. Mel teaches you to experience riding as a partnership not just operating the controls. I hope to see more in the future.
Alfie

Mel's teachings in synchronicity have allowed my young horse and I to have conversations under saddle with clarity, confidence and purity of form faster and easier than I had believed possible. The simplicity in her teaching and techniques have had immediate results for my horse and I, and were easy to learn and apply. I have learned to use my body in ways that make it easy for my sensitive horse to engage his body and mind under saddle, which is pure pleasure to ride. Mel's wholistic approach to the horse's mind, body and spirit helped me understand the deeper needs that my horse and I both have, and by

understanding and addressing those needs help move us forward to the unity I've dreamed of since I first met a horse.

Melissa Johnstone

Thanks for a fabulous clinic. Even though I've attended quite a number of your clinics, I went with an open mind, ready to soak up as much knowledge as possible. I was not disappointed. I now have a number of things I can work on at home and am really looking forward to a follow-up clinic.

Rosemary Hams

One thing I really came away with was the need to be more interactive and play with my horse at his energy level as a partner. To create a connection, and also how to be more subtle and soft.

Jenny Blair

Thoughts about the weekend and what I learnt - the four words that I wrote down when I got home were

- Intention
- Energy
- Connection
- Feel

Karen Giblett

Balance Saddles



BALANCE saddles are designed to be 'horse shaped' using extensive feedback from real experts in horse comfort, namely....horses. These saddles are not just another human being's idea of what is appropriate for the horse! BALANCE know from experience that their Saddles and Saddling System help the ridden horse. They also appreciate that, unless the rider likes the saddle, it is unlikely that their horse will be allowed to have one! For this reason, much time and effort has gone into producing a full range of saddles suitable for all levels of rider and all disciplines.

When the founders of the BALANCE organisation started studying the impact that saddles have on the horse they soon realised that the effect of a saddle that interferes with the natural range of equine movement has alarmingly far reaching consequences. An increasing number of Veterinarians, Physiotherapists, Chiropractors, Osteopaths etc. etc. are becoming aware of how often they get called in to identify and treat damage that is related, directly or indirectly, to the saddle.

The BALANCE Saddling System has a growing reputation for changing horses with poor, or uninspiring movement into horses with generous, and even spectacular, movement. This simple and logical approach simply removes the blocks and obstacles from the horse and allows, with the support of the rider, his natural talents to come to the fore. To learn more about Balance saddles go to www.balanceinternational.com

To book a group saddle fitting demonstration, or private saddle fitting session contact Mel Fleming - The Balance Saddle Test Ride Facilitator for Australia. These saddle fitting sessions are not aimed at necessarily selling you a Balance saddle but may also aid you in being able to improve the comfort for your horse of your existing saddle through a padding system, adjusting the gullet size or understanding more about saddle positioning on the horse.

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The Ultimate

HORSEMANSHIP EXPERIENCE

COURSES 2009

Incorporating

- Connecting with Horses and Riding with Synchronicity
- Universal Energetic Bodywork with Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson

June 1st-3rd Ultimate Horsemanship Experience

Coffs Harbour, NSW - 'Orara Valley House' -
UEM&B -Connecting with Horses - Ground Skills
3 day course with Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson

June 5th-8th - Connecting with Horses & Riding with Synchronicity Course

4 day course with Mel Fleming
contact Glenda Pate glendapate@westnet.com.au (02) 6569-5137

June 15th-19th - Moonbi, NSW (via Tamworth) - 5 day Course

Connecting with Horses (includes ground handling skills no riding)
& Universal Energetic Mind & Bodywork
Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson mel@melfleming.com.au 02 6760 5519 or 0428 385 745

June 22nd -26th - 5 day course

Riding with Synchronicity 1- & Universal Energetic Mind & Bodywork
with Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson
mel@melfleming.com.au 02 6760 5519 or 0428 385 745

10 day Course

The above courses are designed to be combined together as a 10 day course or done individually as a 5 day course.

August 14-16th - Dubbo, NSW

Connecting with Horses and Riding with Synchronicity
mel@melfleming.com.au 02 6760 5519 or 0428 385 745

October 11th-17th - Banyandah, via Howlong, NSW

Ultimate Horsemanship Experience - 5 day course
Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson
mel@melfleming.com.au 02 6760 5519

Macksville, NSW - November 28th-29th

Private lessons with Mel Fleming
contact - Glenda Pate
glendapate@westnet.com.au (02) 6569-5137

Courses scheduled after May go to

www.melfleming.com.au

For all enquiries and bookings contact Mel Fleming
email: mel@melfleming.com.au | phone : 02 6760 5519