

# What an Adventure!

I have been attending Horsemanship courses run by Mel Fleming's for seven years. I always have a great time and come home with lots of gems to help me on my journey with my horses but this time it was a real adventure...

**THE** weekend started with a seminar presented by Mel Fleming and Tony Robinson. In the beginning we were asked to do a walking exercise for 10 minutes. So off we went, no-one knowing just what it was we were to do or feel but we all participated without question. When we were called back and were asked how we felt, the general feeling was one of calmness.

After this pretty interesting exercise we talked about 'Getting in the Zone' and then did another exercise to help us understand what that meant. This time we had to guide one of the participants through an obstacle course using only our body language and the power of our intention. It was amazing how that person took very little to get the tasks done, almost like we were verbalising the directions.

These exercises gave everyone a sense of understanding about how horses and humans can connect with their minds, just by keeping our minds calm and using our intention. The rest of the day we were shown how we need to look further than just our riding skills to get the most out of our horses. We looked at their bodies and how we could help.

## CALMNESS

Mel showed us how being calm helped a very flighty little filly trust her and become more confident. The filly was very reactive, bucking, leaping, rearing, racing about and being very right brained. Mel remained calm as she worked with her and before too long the little filly was nuzzling Mel and following her. It was a great example of how our intention, used in a positive way, can help the horse trust us.



*Mel demonstrating how a calm approach can help a really scared horse to become confident*

## HELPING THE HORSE

Tony was given a horse to work on that had a lot of difficulty holding his legs up to be shod or trimmed. He just physically couldn't do it which made him 'a difficult horse'. Tony explained that the horse was in pain and then proceeded to work on the horse using energy points. The difference in a matter of 15 minutes was amazing, The horse could hold his legs up without any effort and his eyes softened along with the rest of his body.

Then my turn. My horse, Picasso, had a lot of trouble extending his legs and using his back when I was riding him, he wanted to but physically couldn't do it. As I rode him Tony and Mel explained what they saw and how they were going to help. Tony and Mel both worked on Picasso with energy points and stretching. We gave him a rest and then I rode him again later that afternoon.

The changes were amazing, he was extending his legs, starting to use his back and he was able to get into, and keep, a nice rhythm, something that was difficult for him prior. The other thing I noticed was that he didn't run out of air, another problem I have been having with him. I thought he was taking a long time to get fit but Tony said his lungs were restricted and by doing the work that he did was able to free that as well. I was impressed and very happy with the result.

## SADDLE FIT

The last demo for the day was another horse a lady had bought along that was running through the bit, shaking her head and was very jerky in her movements. The owner was not that confident in her because she felt like she was going to do something dramatic.

As we watched the horse move around and the rider struggle with keeping her from running off, Mel commented that she felt this to be a saddle fitting problem. Mel then tried her Balance saddle on the mare and explained to everyone the importance of having a saddle that fits properly.

Immediately the horse started to walk around much more relaxed and then when the owner

started to ride her she soon got into a nice rhythm, lost the jerkiness in her stride and didn't pull on the bit at all. The owner soon became more confident in the mare and allowed her to move around on a loose rein. It was interesting to see the mare stay in her rhythm even on a loose rein. It was a very clear demonstration of the importance of good saddle fit.

## RIDING WITH SYNCHRONICITY

The following two days we learned about 'Riding in Synchronicity'. So much to learn. It was great fun, we played all sorts of games that made us remember how we used to move and how we have become restricted in the way we move now. We did specific exercises to help free up our bodies. Becoming aware of our restrictions helped us understand how difficult it is for the horse when we restrict his movement.

We talked about the horses posture and how horses move, we looked at diagrams and watched a video so we could discuss what we were watching and what to look for. We did simulations to help us understand how we need to guide our horses and help them understand our intention. We took these skills to our horses and played with them on the ground to see how our thoughts could influence the way our horses understood us. That was REALLY interesting.

On the horses backs we practiced using our bodies in ways that would allow the horse to move easier and encourage them to use their bodies more efficiently. It was really interesting how our bodies seemed to be a lot freer then when we had begun the course and the horses responded favourably to it.

The course finished with a ride up to a gently sloping hill where we worked on straightness in our horses by learning how to move their shoulders and ribs with our bodies. We also learned how to slow our horses down to a stop by using our bodies and not our reins.

All in all it was a wonderful time, lots of fun and very informative. It was a real adventure, one I hope to go on again.