

Horse Tales



Volume 5, September 2008

Greetings from Horse Spirit Connections!

As our name suggests, we connect people through the wisdom of the Horse to their hearts and souls. We have been so touched by this sense of soul connection in each of the interactions with our herd of horses over the numerous workshops this past Spring and Summer.

We watched Dusty and Angelina have infinite patience and love for a courageous woman in a wheelchair. We witnessed Brasita having incredible wisdom facilitating a couple making a major life decision. Aria got her chance to demonstrate her skills as she lifted the wand and made a boundary in the sand. Monty (our Grandfather) was the THE Star with a group of 14 year old young leaders in training. One young man said he would never wash his shirt where Monty nuzzled him. All of the horses have a gift to share with us through a connection that goes beyond words.

Tribute to Samena

Our beloved friend and co-facilitator at Horse Spirit Connections, Samena Jeffery, has taken wings and ridden into spirit. Samena was an instrumental part of the birthing of Horse Spirit Connections. Her wise counseling benefited Andre and myself, as well as the many people she touched in the workshops. Sam's powerful, authentic and inspiring presence touched all that knew her. Her spirit will remain present here guiding us on our journey and Paris, her beloved horse, will continue her teachings.

Mr. Coal – Our Gentle Giant

Our year long search is over. We have been gifted with Mr. Coal – a magnificent black Percheron 17.2 hands who is eleven years old. He came to us with the name Coal. We very quickly added the prefix Mr.. He is such a gentleman with both horses and people.

Andre and I worked with Percherons and Clydesdales at Epona in Arizona. The big draft horses are awesome doing the personal development work with people. We decided that we needed to find our own 'gentle giant'.

We registered with a number of Rescue sites and scoured the ads to no avail. A couple of weeks ago, after a very long workshop, I listened to my intuition and went up on the web to search for our Percheron once again. I found an ad for Coal from a very caring and loving person who needed to find a new home for Coal. Mr. Coal has arthritis in his hock and his 'mom' knew he couldn't be ridden any more. We were the 9th people to apply to adopt Coal. His 'mom' came out and inspected our farm and inquired about his role at Horse Spirit Connections. She was very impressed and thought Mr. Coal would be perfect as a teacher on the journey of self-discovery people take here. *(Continued next page)*



Horse Spirit Connections WORKSHOPS

Join our eleven horses this fall as they teach us about trust, respect, love and leadership. Our intimate personal development workshops are limited to 6 people in order to provide you with the best possible experience.

Horse Medicine Workshop FULL

Authentic Leadership

October 18 - 19

Be a Leader in your life! Using the horses' sound sense and unerring judgment, you can refine your leadership style, personal direction and presence.

Discover Your Inner Self

October 25 – 26

Interactions with the wisdom of the horse offer you new perspectives and insights to move in rhythm with your authentic self.

Discover Your Inner Elder

November 22 -23

Connect with your inner wisdom through the heart of the horse. Opening your own heart will release information and energy about the essence of who you are.

FEEL Certification Program

It is very gratifying to see the response to the Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning Certification Program. We are so excited to bring the teachings and wisdom of the Horse to people who will continue to bring the gifts of the Horses to people across Canada. There are only 2 spaces left!

Visit www.HorseSpiritConnections.com



Samena and her Arabian horse Paris. Sam has left this worldly plane and Paris continues her work at Horse Spirit Connections.



WHERE HORSE INTERACTION LEADS TO HUMAN INSIGHT.

Mr. Coal – Our Gentle Giant (continued)

The Percheron horse originated in the province of Le Perche, near Normandy, France. Arabian horses were crossed with the native Flemish workhorse. Percherons are essentially a draft horse, possessing great muscular development combined with style and action. Today the Percheron is known throughout the world as the breed characterized by a long, aggressive, smooth and true stride that shows determination and willingness. In spite of mechanization and automation, the Percheron breed has survived and has increased tremendously in popularity. Percherons have been used as show horses, hitch horses, pulling horses, sport horses and even dressage.

Despite Mr. Coal's huge physical presence, he is incredibly gentle and friendly. The first picture I saw of Mr. Coal was of a young girl standing on his back! Looking into his limpid black eye, you can sense his huge heart.

Spirit of Leadership

By Victoria Poe, Program Developer & Facilitator

Facilitating various corporate groups this summer at Horse Spirit Connections I witnessed the power and magic of TRUST. I also witnessed the practice of getting out of our heads and FEELing. Horses are amazing teachers and provide instant biofeedback of our actions.

Trust

"Trust is difficult to define, but we know when it's present and when it's not. Leadership without mutual trust is a contradiction in terms."

Warren Bennis

With trust, teams ask for help and admit mistakes or uncertainties. Team members take risks to receive feedback and change.

Horses are large animals and can't be pushed around. One participant who I will call John was very tentative in his approach to try and lead the horse from one point to another. He barely managed to lift the horse's head and finally asked for help. As facilitator I asked, "What do you want to do? Where do you want to go? John refocused and tried again and managed to take one step and then got stuck again. He could not budge the horse and became frustrated and confused. Seeking further help, I asked, "Is there a different way of approach to leading this horse to your destination? After a few



minutes the man's body changed and he literally changed the direction of departure, moved the horse forward, walked with clarity and intention and turned the horse around to where he wanted to go. The horse followed and the man no longer looked down but was looking ahead and the two walked side by side to the point of destination.

He revealed after the exercise that the task was not easy and he had to really focus and be more assertive. He realized as well that at work people get stuck doing the same thing that is not working. A simple change allowed the process to move forward to completion. He had to trust his intention and how much assertion to use to motivate the horse to follow – much like working with others. He had to trust the horse and himself! Later, John also realized that one approach with one horse does not necessarily work with another.

Leadership and Letting Go

"Empowerment is all about letting go so that others can get going"

Kenneth Blanchard

Effective team leaders adjust their style to provide what the group needs to move forwards and reach the collective results. Wow, did Contendor ever demonstrate this in his elegant way!

There were four people in the round pen with the goal to move the horse on the outside of the circle at a walk, trot, turn, walk, and trot. Contendor is a very responsive horse and there were a few outside environmental factors that had increased his energy level. Four very determined men were in the centre all focusing on the task, asking for a walk with great enthusiasm – too much in fact. All the men were being equally assertive in non-verbal requests and the horse was rapidly moving around them in an agitated way. They were not listening to or feeling the outside factors. It took a long time for this group to relax their thoughts and feel what the horse was doing and bring the response down to a smooth process of walk, trot and turn. The team at the end became one working WITH the horse.

Debriefing the exercise, one team member disclosed he had to let go of being the ultimate leader and said how at work he also realized it isn't effective to try and control the situation. Sometimes it is more prudent to share the responsibility.



Messages Behind Emotions

By Wendy Golding

As animals that are preyed upon in nature, horses see all emotion as information. What they feel - must be acted upon quickly to ensure survival. Horses are experts at 'emotional agility' – the ability to get the message behind the emotion, adjust their behaviour accordingly, then let go of that feeling and return to balance.

In each newsletter we focus on a different emotion. In this newsletter the emotion is FEAR.

When someone greets you and asks how you are – what do most of us answer? – fine. Some of us may be feeling angry or fearful underneath the smile. Horses recognize and respond to the true feeling behind what we present to the world, which is why it's difficult to hide fear, anger or sadness in their presence. They are a horse lie detector test when it comes to emotions.

As prey animals, horses are finely tuned to notice and respond to these changes. While we are just figuring this out, horses have been using emotion as nonverbal language all along. They sense at a distance changes in the stance, arousal, focus and intent of other herd members as well as predators – they easily transfer this ability to the people in their lives.

Fear is often the first thing we feel around horses. Fear has a bad reputation in our culture but it IS our inner alarm system. True fear is your intuitive, focused awareness of a potential threat. If we recognize the danger and take action the feeling disappears.

If you don't get the message, the initial alarm intensifies into worry and anxiety. A lot of times we will keep the status quo because it is known and safe. However, if we continue to ignore the warnings, the feeling escalates into panic and terror. These are intensification or 'red alerts' of the original feeling. You are now in a life-endangered situation that results in flight or fight.

Physical Fear: Six years ago I was playing polo with my husband Andre. We had been playing for a number of years; we had a small horse farm with 12 horses. We loved the lifestyle and the game. We had joined a new polo club where the game was much more competitive and aggressive in a very male dominated world. I became physically afraid of playing, but I didn't acknowledge it. I started to feel anxiety in my body before I started to play. This intensified into chest pain, which I went to see the Doctor about. Then another horse hit me and I badly injured my knee. I wasn't able to climb stairs

for 6 months. However, I started playing polo again after 6 weeks. During that week I fell off twice and herniated a disc in my neck. My polo days were over. I kept ignoring the warning signals; until my body was so badly injured it could not play at all.

Fear is not your enemy, it is your friend. When true fear flows through you, it makes you focused and able to respond effectively to your environment.

Responding to Fear: One of the scariest experiences I have had was one winter when I was riding at a friend's barn where Victoria keeps her horse and the three of us were out riding in a conservation area. We did not have a lot of snowfall that winter and this was the first day when the snowmobilers could come out and ride the trails. I was riding an unfamiliar horse with machines whipping around us. We were doing fine until 3 people riding snowmobiles stopped in front of us. The leader was in a full rage and incited his cohorts to 'buzz' all three of us so that we would never come



on the trails again. The horses were reacting to the rage and fear all around them. By listening to my fear, I was able to stay grounded and take avoidance maneuvers. By staying calm I was the leader and the horse followed suit. Fear will help you choose the right option each time.

Flight is how the horse responds to fear. Its natural instinct is to run at the first sign of danger. In fact, if one member of the herd reacts, the rest of the herd automatically

follows. It is their survival mechanism. The horse respects their intuition and responds to fear by taking action.

Feelings are just warning lights – we have all heard the term – gut feelings – your intuition is your gut. This is where the term came from. Emotions help protect and inform us. If we listen to the core message you will be able to sit in uncomfortable emotions without panicking.

Horses don't offer to 'fix' your life, but they're more than willing to take you on a journey of self-discovery and self-mastery.

Linda Kohanov has developed the Emotional Message Chart based in part on Karla McLarin's insights and on realizations gained directly from horses.

The chart is a blue rectangular box with white text. At the top left, the word "Fear" is written in a large, bold font. Below it, the word "Message" is written in a smaller font, followed by the text "Intuitive, focused awareness of a threat to one's physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual well being". At the bottom left, the word "Questions" is written in a bold font, followed by two lines of text: "What is the threat?" and "What must I do to move to a position of safety?". On the right side of the chart, there is a small white square containing a line drawing of a horse. Below the drawing, the word "Intensification" is written in a bold font, followed by a list of terms: "Worry, Anxiety", "Confusion", "Dulling of Senses", "Panic, Terror", and "Dissociation".

Exciting News! Pilot Program Equine Approach to Healing Addiction

Horse Spirit Connections has been invited by Stable Relations to participate in an exciting new research project. Dr. Shoshana Pollack, a professor in the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University became interested in Equine Therapy and has initiated this pilot program as a response to the needs of women struggling with addiction.

Shoshana's previous research with women who had served federal prison sentences found that women with addictions could benefit from alternative supports that are not bound by the mandate and perspective of institutional systems. As Shoshana said, "these women needed supports that tapped into their own wisdom, intuition, and gifts".

Stonehenge Therapeutic Community (STC), an established residential addiction treatment program located in Guelph, was eager to collaborate and provide their female residents this opportunity to heal with our Equine Partners.

Horse Spirit Connections and Stable Relations will be working together to provide STC residents with an innovative 12 week Course called "The Labyrinth: An Equine Approach to Healing Addictions" developed by Stable Relations.

The aim of this research project is not only to provide a service, but to document and evaluate the effects of this Equine Assisted Approach to women dealing with long standing addictions.

During a recent introduction visit with the women at STC, we were all incredibly moved as we shared stories of the healing we have witnessed with the horses. Almost all of the women expressed interest in participating in the project.



Monty, Coal, Brasita, Lady and Dusty, creating some final summer dust!

Heart Song

Inside each heart
Buried beneath the layers of
Rust and neglect
Hidden from unkind eyes
Lies buried treasure.

Waiting to be uncovered
Waiting for the right moment
To show itself
The song of the soul.

Like clouds parting on a rainy day
For a brief moment
The sun shines through
Illuminating beauty

Then swiftly it is gone again
Hidden from the unaware
But not forgotten.

*Written by Beth Jacob during
the July Horse Medicine Workshop*

UPCOMING EVENT

Canadian Employee Relocation Council Conference

September 21 – 23, Vancouver

Victoria and Wendy will be presenting a workshop 'Leading with Horse Sense – Authentic Leadership' to 250 delegates at this 'Leadership for Workforce Mobility' conference. Relocation and human resources managers from some of Canada's largest corporations will attend the CERC 2008 Conference. Through visuals, experiential activities, teachings and video clips, we will bring the horse teachings to life.



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