

HorseTales



Volume 2, May 2007

SPRING HAS SPRUNG!

The horses are enjoying the luscious new grass in our fields and kicking up their heels in delight. This spring we have a new fox family that has made their home just up the hill. It is

delightful to watch the seven fox pups as they explore their new world, however we are not sure what will happen as they get older. For now, the horses pay absolutely no attention to them and we're optimistic it will all unfold positively.



As more people have come to the private and group sessions, we are amazed at the depth of their experiences. Every day I am reassured of the power and the beauty of the horse and their importance in our evolution at this time.

Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning or FEEL is not a new field or one that can be practiced only by 'horse whisperers' or trained professionals. Human/horse relationships, in which the horse is the teacher, have existed for centuries, but it is only in the last fifteen years that this has been formalized into an actual therapeutic discipline. Horses give people an 'aha' experience and acknowledge intuitive insights and perceptions more accurately than humans could ever do. Horses do not come in with preconceived ideas of who or what this is, or how this person should be in the world. Horses are concerned with an individual's congruence and honesty; in other words, horses really rely on actions being more powerful than words.

No horse experience is necessary to participate and learn from our workshops. The horses are magnificent teachers. All of the exercises are fun and done on the ground with the horse.

We are looking forward to our upcoming Leadership workshop! The horses demonstrate very clearly what kind of leader we are in our lives.

Wendy

JUNE WORKSHOPS

'Discover Your Inner Self' Workshop June 9th & 10th.

- This is our introductory Epona Approach workshop.
- With the horse you will:
- Expand your awareness
- Learn the messages behind your emotions
- Strengthen your intuition
- Learn how to set healthy boundaries
- Reawaken your authentic self

Horse Medicine – June 15th – 17th

This spiritual workshop connects our body, mind, emotions and soul. Horses are gatekeepers to our higher self and the magic available to us all.

Activities will include making a Horse Medicine Shield out of leather (materials provided), Shamanic drumming journey to meet your Horse guide, painting your chosen horse for your Shamanic Horse journey on horseback, Horse dancing and a Sweat Lodge ceremony.

Discover for yourself the mystery of Horse Medicine.

Register online at www.HorseSpiritConnections.com

ANGELINA – OUR WISE OLD MARE

Angelina is a chestnut Paso Fino who is 6 years old. Despite her young age, she displays incredible horse wisdom.

Although we didn't know it then, Angelina came to us for the healing work at Horse Spirit Connections. We had eight horses at the farm at the time but I was not able to ride any of them due to a polo accident. A friend of mine told me about an amazing breed of horses – the Paso Fino. They are a 'gaited' horse, which means they have one foot on the ground at all times. This produces a very smooth level ride, which would enable me to ride again. I set out to find 'my' Paso Fino.

We found 'Angelina' and made the arrangements. She arrived at our farm and I had two perfect rides on her. Then,



she became lame and had difficulty walking. After numerous diagnoses and treatments she became comfortable but could not be ridden.

During this same period of time, I was taking my Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning training with Linda Kohanov in Arizona. At home, the first horse I worked with was Angelina. She was so interested and curious. Angelina became our lead horse for the personal development work. As with humans, she became the 'wounded healer'. Despite her youth, she had an ageless wisdom that she imparted to all who worked with her.

We decided to breed Angelina last year. A horse's gestation period is 11 months! At 7 months, she aborted her foal. Angelina's body had reacted to her hormonal changes and triggered her original condition. She could barely walk and her body rejected the foal knowing she couldn't carry it to full term.

What a valuable gift her experience gave me. Angelina demonstrated how to work effectively through sadness and grief. When we discovered the perfectly formed dead foal on the ground in the paddock, I was filled with grief and started to sob. I rushed to Angelina to comfort her. She ended up comforting me! She knew that the death of her baby was the way nature had intended it to be. In her loving presence, I was able to fully feel and release my emotions in the moment. Being able to express my emotions freely (whether happy or uncomfortable ones) is one of the many gifts the horses have brought to my life.

Angelina is on the road to recovery. Nothing stops her from participating in the workshops or private sessions with people. . . in fact, when she could barely walk, she still wanted to participate! Her experiences have enriched her ability to relate with people and Angelina knows this is her calling!

OPENING UP

I have always loved horses but very much from a distance. My journey this time around didn't present opportunities for more exposure to these magnificent beings; however somehow there has been this dream of mine to one day own a "healing ranch" where people with various disabilities, whether it be mental or physical, could come for therapy work with animals. One day...

And then I met Wendy and Andre. What!? You mean I can do this for ME? I don't have to be disabled? Well, sign me up! That weekend had such a huge impact on me, but I'll just focus on one of those experiences.



Contendor is the beautiful, majestic male of the herd at Horse Spirit Connections. When I first met him I felt slightly intimidated, maybe because of his size, maybe because of his beauty, I'm not really sure. But when it came time to choose the

horse we were going to work with, he wasn't my first pick. Then Wendy pointed out that he chose me during our initial meeting. Hmm, what would that mean? I wondered what message he had for me. So, into his pen I went.

Oh was I scared! I swear you could hear my heart pounding from the next stall over. But my mighty friend just stood there, not moving a muscle, barely breathing audibly, until I calmed down and relaxed. He was very kind and told me, *It's ok, I'm not going to hurt you.* He allowed me to approach him, touch him and hug him. He laid his head on my shoulder, nuzzled my hair and neck with his lips, all the while staying perfectly still with his body. It was a magical, beautiful moment that I've never experienced before.

Then, tragedy struck. I broke the connection. I went straight from my heart and soul and went right into my head, turned to Andre who was just outside the pen and asked, "Am I doing this right?" Needless to say, Contendor felt it....he immediately turned and walked as far away from me as he could, placing his face in the furthest corner from where I was. I was devastated! It felt so familiar. He loved me for a moment, and (for no reason) he took it away! I felt betrayed, I felt like I failed. How could he do that to me?? No matter how much coaxing (aka groveling/ apologizing), I couldn't make it better. (Note to self – was it perhaps something I did??)

It was only with Andre's help that we got him to come out of his corner. I tried talking to him, tried to get close, but every time I approached near his heart chakra he backed up, as if it hurt and he was trying to protect it. Andre asked me a simple question, "Is that his or yours?" Wow. It was mine and Contendor was projecting it. It was only when I acknowledged my feeling did Contendor let me close to him again (and distribute a tear or two on his shoulder). But the lesson wasn't over. He had more messages for me.

As I entered the round pen, my majestic friend was waiting for me. Our eyes met and as I passed him I said, "Yep – it's me again – back for more." Once I arrived in the centre of the pen, I turned and took a deep breath (my intention was to listen to the message, to not control the outcome, and to see what he had to say). Contendor turned and walked slowly toward me, giving me a little hello with his nose. He then turned, immediately dropped to the ground and rolled on his back RIGHT AT MY FEET! I was so surprised at that display of exposure (and not too thrilled that now I had to play with a dirty horse). But when he finished rolling, he got up, walked over to me and said, *There! Did you get it???* *Surrender, be vulnerable, be REAL, be present, stop being so guarded and protected. OPEN UP – LET ME IN!!! Let Someone in!* Ok, I'm yours, now let's play. We walked together, sometimes I led (and he WANTED to walk with me!) and sometimes he led. When I was walking in front of him he would at times reach over and nuzzle my head and my neck with his lips, sometimes he got too close and I had to ask him to respect my space. And sometimes I just wanted him that close. But the funny thing that I learned afterwards is that Contendor is very protective of his personal space and doesn't enjoy being touched. Ha! Could have fooled me!

My majestic, powerful, beautiful, gentle friend, Contendor. He has a lot to teach me. He seems like he's a master at that. Thank you for the experience. Thank you for the lesson.

Annette B

TWO SOULS MEET

Most of my life I have been surrounded by horses, loving their smell, beauty, sounds and most of all their spirit. They have always represented such freedom to me. I have always had a deep connection to them, yet never like the weekend I experienced with Wendy, Andre and their magical and magnificent horses. True authenticity is what embodies these beautiful human and animal souls. And what they shared with me, on this most transformative weekend, cannot easily be described in words. It's something that needs to be experienced.

The moment I saw Paris I knew we had a deep connection. She allowed me to grieve with her, as she was grieving herself. She had only been in the barn for two weeks and everything was so new to her. What an honour it was to be so intimate with one another. We were helping each other heal and release. Later on Paris showed me how to set firm boundaries and stick to them, no matter what. AND to respect and love myself more deeply.



At one point of the workshop, we were to select a horse that we wanted to work with in the round pen. This exercise alone reflected so much for me, about how I make decisions and how they impact my life. This process really opened my eyes about certain decisions I have needed to make and will make in the future.

Angelina was my first horse to work with in the round pen: she was my teacher and reflection for anger. All the anger I have had is about not having my boundaries respected by people and being able to set healthy ones for myself. She definitely hit some nerves within me – so much that the following day (the second part of the workshop) I was filled with huge anger, vibrating under my skin, waiting to be expressed and released in some way or another. And later on I did.

Dusty was my teacher and reflection for grounding and unconditional love. She showed me what it's like to be incredibly grounded, no matter what is happening in my life or around me, and to be loved unconditionally, no matter what I did or said. She was there for me, all the way through! And it was not pretty all the time. All my emotions from the previous day wanted to be released at this point. Dusty created the most incredible sacred space for me in the round pen, a very private session so it seemed. She sheltered me from anything that could possibly stop the flood of emotions coming to the surface. After my release, I thanked her for being so very present through this experience. We connected, heart-to-heart, soul-to-soul. Hugging her and putting my head on her shoulder allowed me to feel her

unconditional love and this incredible grounding was so healing for me. She allowed me to fully soak up her love. Then, slowly walking beside each other to the gate of the round pen, we came to a closure and said our farewells.

What a gift these incredible horses presented me with that weekend. I cannot express my gratitude enough. Since this moving experience in such an authentic environment, all the insights and teachings, and especially the horses and their messages, still keep coming back to me...embodying themselves deep within my core, for (hopefully) everlasting change.

With gratitude beyond words,

Inga ~ Nayana

CONNECTING BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE

When I took Linguistics at university, no one told me that horses are great teachers in paralinguistics - non-verbal elements of communication. In fact, horses are amazing at reflecting our reactions, mirroring our emotions and transforming teams. They can even facilitate effective leadership skills.

My passion for working with horses, people, language and problem solving has finally come together in the round pen after twenty years of facilitating. It started when I co-ordinated an at-risk youth employment program. My intuition told me the Horse Ranch would be a great venue for some team building and communication training. After that successful insight, I began researching and discovering that there was a whole new field of Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning (FEEL) emerging.

Here is a story from one of the groups I worked with – a real example of the impact FEEL can have. A large company attends a two-day team-building event. During the first challenge activity, one of the participants, 'Jo', refuses to come on the other side of the fence with the horses. I step out and talk to him one-on-one and find out he is nervous about horses and reluctant to participate. So I communicate to team members about the task on both sides of the fences. Eventually as the team is trying to motivate a few horses to move to different parts of the arena, Jo adds a few suggestions from the sidelines. By the end of the activity, the horses and I have engaged Jo to step into the round pen reassuring him he can leave at anytime. He eventually is moving WITH the horses and his group.

At the end of Day 2, Jo has played with the horses while sharing ideas, decisions, feelings and meals with his co-workers. We are heading back to the meeting room at the end of the session and he shares with me how his great grandfather knew Buffalo Bill from the Wild West. When we evaluate the experience, Jo admits that his greatest challenge was not being able to have access to his computer and e-mail for so long and that he was anxious about his work. He still didn't like horses, but he admits having a good time collaborating with his colleagues and learning a few things about himself during the weekend. In fact, his whole body posture and body gestures had shifted; he invited others to be around him. He became a team player; while letting go of some of his unrealistic expectations. He had learned to connect beyond his computer – to the people on the other side.

So what have other clients said about running around an arena or round pen with horses? They say they have learned . . .

“.. About being patient and accepting various ideas from team members.”

“To take a step back if something isn’t working, evaluate the problem and agree collectively on a solution.”

“ To listen and approach different people differently.”

You’ll notice these comments are all about people and about interacting. That’s exactly the goal of FEEL. Facilitating Equine Experiential Learning is about FEELing the experience of the majestic horse that whispers to us about our ability to communicate with others effectively and to listen to ourselves authentically.

Maybe one day they will add ‘Horse’ to the curriculum of linguistics. .

Victoria P.

*WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT THE LEVEL THREE
EPONA WORKSHOP IN FEBRUARY 2007!*



“The magic of this workshop was the ability to see my inner elder as the part of myself that is pure, not at the effect of any image makers, a reflection for me to see what is not me, what can be simply discarded.”

Susan C.

“The workshop is structured so that the exercises lead you gently towards your center, so by the end you have connected with your authentic self and found what you needed to discover about yourself.”

Beth J.

“There is always a special gift from the horses, always something that I would never have thought to ask for. I am encouraged that the healing I received in previous workshops have been lasting – not just a one-time AHA! But an integrated change in my life.”

Chrissie G.

“ ‘They’ say the gold is in the edges, out on a limb. The horses together with the Horse Ancestors and Wendy, Andre and Samena have a way of providing a platform allowing me to look over the edge, and then to jump! Thank you.”

Agnes O.



HORSE
spirit
connections

WHERE HORSE INTERACTION LEADS TO HUMAN INSIGHT.