

HANGING OUT



Julia Felton
doing nothing!

The great Winston Churchill once said, "There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man." What is it about horses that can so profoundly affect us on the inside? What can they teach us about ourselves? I don't know about you, but for me my horses provide me with a perfect mirror of how I am behaving. Their sensory acuity means that they can read us like a book and if we pay attention to their feedback we can apply the

lessons that we learn from our horses to all other areas of our lives.

Through developing a better relationship with yourself you can experience a better relationship with your horse. Working with your horse helps you achieve this transformation.

Over the next few issues I am going to share with you seven simple steps of the Horsemanship from the Inside Out™ programme that will enable you to develop a magical relationship with your horse, one where the

horse is a true partner with you. Whatever equestrian discipline you engage in, investing in a solid foundation with your horse that is underpinned by having a bond, trust and respect is worthwhile groundwork. If the relationship foundations are weak they are likely to fall apart when put under pressure. Just think about it; the strongest relationships prevail even in tough times, but fragile relationships fall apart. In today's society we are not great at forming relationships, in part because

we fail to see things from the other person's perspective; it is the same with your horse. We need to learn how to see things from his perspective and learn his language of communication.

Just imagine going to a foreign country and trying to communicate when you don't know the language. It is hard and often ends up in frustration for both parties. Yet this is what happens time and time again with our horses. Owners get frustrated that their horse doesn't understand what they want

and horses get frustrated that they are not being listened to.

The irony of this work for me is that as you develop a better relationship with yourself and your horse you will see untold benefits in other areas of your life, because how you do horses is how you do everything.

My work is inspired by Carolyn Resnick, who opened my eyes to the lessons that horses could teach me. If only I had listened; my horses had been sharing their wisdom for many years, but I had failed to notice. Carolyn developed her training philosophy, The Seven Waterhole Rituals, through years of observing wild horses. She learnt the secret code of wild horses and realised that if you can learn to speak to a horse in his language then anything is possible. As Carolyn's instructor in Europe I am honoured to share her philosophy with you.

Let's get started.

The first step in developing any relationship starts with you getting to know the other person; their likes and dislikes. In the early stages of any relationship you give each other time and space to see if a connection can develop. The same is true with your horse. As prey animals horses love companionship as it helps keep them feel safe, there is safety in numbers and in knowing that the entire herd is on the look out for any approaching danger. Within the herd a horse's natural instinct is to hang out doing

nothing and hang out doing something. If we want to become a part of our horse's herd we need to work with and respect these natural instincts. However, how often do you spend time doing nothing with your horse, except hanging out and enjoying his presence? Most of us spend time with our horses doing something, often riding, and it is usually based on our agenda for what we want to happen, not what

the horse wants to do. So how can we hang out with a horse doing nothing? One thing I suggest you do is to hang out with your horse in his field. Just hang out and see what happens. It is important to be with your horse in a large area, so that your horse has a choice. He can decide to come up to you or he might decide to stay away. Either is fine. Don't put any expectation on him to approach you or

SAFETY FIRST



The way to ensure that you can move a horse out of your personal space is to walk towards them, swishing a reed or a light, flexible willow branch in front of you. As you approach your horse he should move out of your way. As soon as he does so, you need to turn around and walk in the opposite direction.

This will signal to your horse that you simply needed him to move. If you don't turn away you will start acting like a predator pursuing your horse. This is to be avoided. If for some reason your horse fails to move then you need to up your energy and intention so that your horse does move. If necessary get a plastic bag on the end of a stick and shake it until your horse moves away. For me, a basic premise of effective horsemanship is to be able to stay safe, and if you can't keep a horse out of your personal space, you can't stay safe. Horsemanship from the Inside Out™ means that we need to be congruent and aligned, so if you are fearful for your safety around your horse, you are likely to be displaying incongruent behaviour and that will trouble your horse.



else you end up wanting something from him. A great way to ensure that you don't become needy of your horse's companionship is to read a book or meditate, anything that keeps your mind distracted from focusing on your horse. That said, you must at all time be aware of where your horse is in order to stay safe. Use your peripheral vision; we will talk more about this in the next issue.

You may also want to sit down in the field but please make sure that you can move your horse out of your personal space first. Never sit down in a field with a horse if you can't do this, it is too dangerous.

I hope you enjoy hanging out with your horse doing nothing. Try to spend as much time doing this as your other equestrian activities. Get to know your horse in his surroundings where he feels comfortable. Start investing time in your relationship with your horse by getting to know him with no strings attached. Just like when you meet a new friend, you don't ask them for too much straight away. You wait to learn more about them. In the next issue we will look at ways to help you build trust with your horse.



Julia Felton is Carolyn Resnick's only certified instructor in Europe. For more information about Horsemanship from the Inside Out™ visit www.connect-thru-horses.com