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Training the Whole Horse®

HorseMAREship™

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Just Hit Him – Say Again?

Junior was a 2 ½ year old Thoroughbred gelding whose owner was struggling with aggressive and sometimes violent behavior. The boarding facility Junior lived in was ideal for training with a large indoor arena and a paddock that allowed him to roam on sunny days. However he was not allowed with other horses since his aggressive behavior was a danger. My first day of working with Junior it took both the owner and me to halter him as he threw his head into our faces, snapped at us with gnashing teeth and picked us up off the ground once we had the halter on. “What have gotten myself into” I worried?

I had the owner lead Junior into the arena where I was able to get the halter off without being bit only to have him bolt nearly missing my head with his hind feet. I attempted my WHolistic Joining methods using herd language to invoke his instinct, but he simply ran wildly, charging and kicking, and then he side-swiped me knocking me down. He let it be known he didn't want to be worked with and resented me wholeheartedly. I kept at it though three times a week for making some progress that seemed two steps forward yet one step back. This was early in my career as a natural horsemanship trainer, but I had many satisfied clients and horses all ready so why isn't Junior progressing normally I wondered? Junior's owner however was quite pleased with the progress since I was the third trainer in six months and I hadn't left yet.

Three weeks into Junior's training his owner called one morning and said we needed to reschedule because he had coliced in the night. This was the second colic since I had started working with him which was disconcerting. Come to find out Junior had a serious injury at six months old cutting his rear leg down to the bone. In Junior fashion he had attempted to jump a piece of farm equipment after escaping his paddock, but sorely missed and ended up in an equine hospital for a week. Junior's owner was emphatic that he had passed a vet check for training however and that the colics were minor bouts that she was able to treat. I shrugged it off reminding myself that Junior's owner was an experienced breeder and long time horse owner so figured she knew best for him.

That weekend the annual horse expo in our area was coming with a young big name, big star natural horsemanship trainer. I thought if only I could explain Junior to him he could tell me what I'm missing in my training. I was filled with anticipation as I stood in line at his booth hoping to get a moment of advice, a pearl of wisdom that would be my breakthrough with this horse. It was my turn to talk to this new giant of the horse industry and I quickly told my story so not to take up too much of his time. He said two words to me "hit him"! I was stunned not sure that I heard him right and replied "say again?" he repeated "just hit him", and then he got up from his stool and walked off as handlers led him to the arena for his next performance. This can't be, I thought natural horsemanship was about being the herd leader, gaining control and respect on the ground through moving the horse's feet, applying pressure and release, not force and pain. "Hit him" rang in my ears all the way home.

Had I misunderstood natural horsemanship? Had I been wrong to give up my early days of bits and spurs, crank and spank riding and training? My training philosophy is DO NO HARM, how could I "hit him"? My instinct kept telling me there was more to Junior's behavior, there has to be something else, what is it that is causing Junior to be angry and aggressive one day and compliant the next?

The following Monday after the expo Junior's owner called and said he had been in the equine hospital over the weekend due to another more serious bout of colic. The owner explained that the veterinarian could not feel a twisted bowel or make a determination of the colic so she was going to perform surgery. However the vet decided to scope his stomach first on a hunch. Scoping was a life saver for Junior; the vet discovered that his stomach was black with ulcers which were causing the colic and surgery was not necessary. Junior's owner continued to tell me that she had been giving him Banamine regularly since his injury at six months old which caused the ulcers. The veterinarian prescribed medication for Junior and he was back home comfortably with a positive prognosis of healing. Wow there was my answer, Junior's behavior was related to pain! I am so grateful to Junior's owner for being honest and open with me about her misuse of Banamine and how it caused debilitating ulcers. Realizing pain can be a major influence of behavior was a catalyst for changing my training methods from an in-depth intake on all new horses to most importantly the development of my Training the Whole Horse® methods. As a horse owner and trainer it is important to keep in mind that *Problems are not always training issues.*

Missy Wryn's Training the Whole Horse® video series is available FREE online at her website MissyWryn.com [Watch FREE Horse Training Videos](#) and her YouTube Channel [WholisticHorseWoman](http://www.youtube.com/wholistichorsewoman) (<http://www.youtube.com/wholistichorsewoman>).

For high res pictures email Info@MissyWryn.com or call (888) 406-7689.

Internationally recognized horse whisperer Missy Wryn provides comprehensive horse training, horse management, and effective communication workshops, clinics, and presentations across the country and at her Zen Barn in Estacada, Oregon. Missy's [*Training the Whole Horse*](#)[®] video series is FREE for viewing with no sign-up, no membership by visiting MissyWry.com. Missy is also the creator of the [*All-In-One*](#) bitless bridle, founder of IRON FREE RIDING, Sisters of the Saddle, the B Horse Club and the Equine Support Center for Fibromyalgia. For more information visit Missy's website at www.MissyWryn.com or call toll free (888) 406-7689.