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A Better Understanding - Four Core Concerns Humans & Horses Share

It sure is confusing with what seems to be information overload on how to live and be with our horses. Some people say “horses cannot be pets so don’t hug and kiss them” or “your horse won’t respect you if you don’t show them who’s boss, get tough” and then there are those that say “a horse is never wrong”, and “don’t ever reprimand your horse”. Where’s the balance, is there balance?

For all my years of lessons growing up riding dressage and trail riding on the weekends I thought I knew what I was doing when I got my first horse as an adult, but I was wrong! My new horse was out of control at times running off with me down the street, spooking at water puddles and even the occasional shadow of a bird would send her in a bolt. Advice poured in from well meaning horse owners, tack shops and neighbors to try this bit or that device. From curb bits to snaffles, mechanical hackamores to two bitless bridles, as I was told “it gives a new meaning to the word Whoa”, I tried just about everything to control my horse. So how well did the bits, the bitless bridles and all the other devices work when my horse was bolting down the street? **NOT!!!** And where was the friendship and love in controlling with pain, fear, and the fear of pain? Being the BOSS was not working and I didn’t like the path I was on and who I was becoming.

I turned to the internet, my books I had packed around with me since I was a kid, and the library for videos and more books, but it seemed the messages were so diverse from one extreme to the other. There was no balance, no middle ground, no control without fear and pain or no control at all. I wanted my horse to be my friend and inflicting fear and pain was incongruent with friendship, yet 1100 lbs of flesh can certainly hurt me and my horse had proven that when I experienced two concussions in one summer. What I did know is that I deeply desired, yearned and even ached for a close relationship with my horse. Was it just a fairy tale, an unattainable unrealistic dream? My research and

interpersonal quest with my horse led me to find that a **Do No Harm** relationship and deep abiding friendship with her wasn't a fairy tale and YES I COULD have my dream.

My research drew me to natural horsemanship trainers because they appeared close to what I was looking for in the way of communicating in horse language, but the use of bits, spurs, whips and sticks didn't line up with my desire to have a **Do No Harm** relationship. Some NH trainers say "don't kiss your horse because it is an act of aggression" and I witnessed on numerous occasions the first introduction to a new horse by some NH trainers was to hit the horse with a stick when the horse came over to sniff and get acquainted. I have to say horse lips are one my favorite lips to kiss besides my husband's, and my horses know the difference between aggression and affection, so not to express affection and kiss my horse was nonsense to me. In an attempt to not throw the baby out with the bath water I filtered these trainer's messages using my own common sense as I absorbed and learned from every natural horsemanship trainer and traditional trainer that I came across. Finally I struck a balance with my horse that fulfilled her need for a compassionate competent herd leader, and my desire to have a safer horse that was my loving adoring pet too.

It started when I discovered **Four Core Emotional Concerns** that we all share with horses. The 1st Core Concern is Appreciation. I know that I do a much better job for my boss when I am appreciated. When I've worked for employers that pick at every little thing I do wrong and never notice the numerous things I do right I begin to shut down only to offer a minimal job. When I began expressing appreciation to my horse for everything she did right by verbally praising her and stroking her neck she began to light up and look for ways to please me.

The 2nd Core Concern I noticed was Status. Every horse has a position in their herd whether it is the alpha mare or the lowest underling, every horse in a herd has Status. I too have Status, at work, in my home and amongst my friends, a position in the herd so to speak. Learning that horses are genetically wired to require a herd leader at all times whether that is in a large herd or my herd of two, me and my horse, my position in the herd **required** that I be the herd leader at all times. Since horses are creatures of comfort they want to be in the "comfort zone" within the herd, but they don't want to be low man either so they jockey for Status continually with one another shifting position from one day to another, but the herd leader remains the same. My horse required me to be her herd leader so she could be comfortable and when I wasn't behaving as the herd leader it made her uncomfortable which brought

about unwanted behavior like pushing me and knocking me off my feet. As soon as I began applying the simple phrase *he who moves the other's feet first is in control* I invoked my horse's instinct to recognize me as the herd leader she desperately required me to be, and instantly became comfortable and relaxed with me. You can learn my **Do No Harm** training techniques by watching FREE my [Training the Whole Horse® video series](#) on my YouTube channel [WholisticHorsewoman](#).

The 3rd Core Concern is Autonomy. I know that when I'm forced to do something without being asked or given the opportunity to figure out the answer to a question I don't feel respected and therefore I don't give my best nor do I care about the individual who is inflicting their will on me. I discovered my horse responded to me willingly when I nudged her in the direction of the "right answer" instead of forcing. For instance, when I was teaching her to back up with the jiggle of the lead rope I could have jiggled, then jiggled harder, then hit her with the stick stunning and forcing the right answer, but instead I jiggled, then jiggled a little harder and then puffed up my body, gazed into her eyes saying "back up, back up" and jiggled even harder and as soon as she took one step back or even leaned back I dropped my body pressure dramatically by bending at the waist while praising her verbally "good girl". I then walked up with my eyes dropped, shoulder to her and stroked her neck reaffirming "good girl". She drew a deep sigh and licked her lips, a sign of understanding. After a few repeated movements she understood what a little jiggle on the lead rope meant as I respected her Autonomy to come up with the right answer without forcing her. This went a long way boosting her confidence in me that I was going to give her time to come up with the right answer without hurting or and forcing her which made me a compassionate predictable herd leader she could trust. BTW I do not use metal clips on the end of my lead ropes so as not to inflict pain. Consider how a metal clip would feel banging under your chin – ouch....

The 4th Core Concern we share with horses is Role. Every horse has various roles in the herd as I have various roles at work and at home. I'm the bookkeeper, the cook, the laundress, you get the idea. Horses have many roles too. For instance when you observe horses lying down resting there is usually another horse standing guard as Sentry. Roles change throughout the day as those that were Sentry take the position of resting while others are disciplinarians of the younger herd members and so on. I have many roles with my horse from cleaning lady to grocery cart, but I cannot emphasize enough the importance of my role as a trusted compassionate herd leader that my horse can count on for consistent, predictable, competent herd leadership. My horse's role when we are together is follower

and friend who now willingly and calmly carries me through forest trails, riding without bits, or spurs, whips or force. My horse is my pet, my friend and guide incarnate as we trek through life together, a dream come true....

For high res pics contact Info@MissyWryn.com or call 503-630-3744.

Internationally recognized Gentle Horse Trainer and member of the [Association of Professional Humane Educators](#), Missy Wryn provides comprehensive horse training, horse management, and effective communication workshops, clinics, and presentations across the globe and at her Zen Barn in Estacada, Oregon. For more information visit Missy Wryn's website at MissyWryn.com or call toll free (888) 406-7689.