

REACHING OUT:

Asking for Help Can Lead to Your Next Breakthrough

BY STEPHANIE LYNN

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“LIFE’S HIGHEST ACHIEVERS ARE FOREVER THE STUDENT.”

Enough with the resolutions, self-appraisal and evaluation, can we just move on? Yes, it is the beginning of the New Year, but haven't we been assessing our horses, our programs and ourselves since we returned from the last big show of the season? It's time to get on with it—to dig into the stack of stuff that has piled up since our return—to carry on.

SO WHAT IS PREVENTING YOU FROM GETTING AFTER IT?

If you are at a loss for motivation or feeling stuck in a rut, perhaps it is time for you to take a look at the job from a different perspective. When was the last time you got off the farm? We sell it to our clients all of the time. “Your two-year old needs to see the world” we tell the owner, and pack

the student off to a show to further his or her education. Yet seldom do we do the same for ourselves.

It is easy to see the importance of acclimating the young horse to the show scene that he or she will inevitably compete in. Yet somehow it does not seem important to do the same for ourselves. Whether an accomplished winner or just getting started, horse trainers and riders of all levels need to get off the farm.

At the judges conference recently held in Dallas, Texas, D. Wayne Lucas, a legendary racehorse trainer and a four-time Kentucky Derby winner, spoke to the judges about his life and involvement in horse training. He offered to the audience that when training a horse, he has found there is a fine line between fitness and staleness. He has spent his life learning to read horses, and said horses teach him something every day. Every day he learns something. How can we take this information and incorporate it into our own life?

Often the simple act of watching how someone else manages a situation is enough to spark an idea. But actually asking for help is another thing altogether. Many people find it difficult to ask for help—especially in our world of tough cowboys. They may fear exposing themselves to their peers or perhaps seeking help makes them seem vulnerable.

In reality, asking for help does quite the opposite. It does not show weakness, nor does it undermine authority or knowledge. Asking for help sends a message to others that you admittedly do not have all the answers and that you are willing to find the answers that will make your program better.

The most successful people are those who are curious, ask questions and seek guidance from others. Understanding your strengths and weaknesses is the key to building success. It lets you fill in the gaps and plays on your strengths while using someone else's strengths to improve your overall output. It's all about finding answers—building a successful team. Allowing someone else to show you the way puts you on the path to success.

For years I thought I worked best as an underdog. As long as I could make an excuse for why I shouldn't be at the top of the judge's card, I had a way out. I found the horse in a field of chickens; I didn't have the fanciest rig, saddle or outfit, I was not an insider. Whatever—there was a list of excuses.

Until, I had the horse, knew I could be at the top of the judge's card and wanted to be at the top of the card—bad enough to admit the panic I felt riding the potential winner. Dropping any false bravado, I sought the advice of a carefully chosen peer: someone I had deep respect for, someone who rose to the top of the card consistently yet was never arrogant, conceited or presumptuous. It was easier than I imagined, incredibly helpful and helped me earn my first world championship title.

To this day, I use the knowledge I gained. And to this day, this colleague is a member of my team—someone I converse with regularly for guidance through any

number of perplexing situations. She remains a loyal cheerleader, someone with a vested interest in my success—a significant benefit that results from soliciting help from another person.

We are all students and we are all teachers. Every time we put our foot in the stirrup, we take on the role of the teacher. With each individual we introduce to the horses, each horse we take out of the stall, each person we come into contact with, we act as teachers to one and all. Our every action and reaction teaches those around us. In return, we come to expect a certain behavior as do others from us.

The most successful in any arena are those who live life as if both a teacher and a student. They always want to know more, continually ask questions and are eager to discover new methods. They have made it to the top of the judge's card and they are the perfect choice to ask for help. They understand success is owed to the help of others—no one gets to the top alone.





Each of us has enjoyed the flattery that results when someone asks our opinion. Do you remember the first time someone asked you your opinion about a horse? It may have been the very reason you decided to train professionally, to continue showing or perhaps it was just the boost you needed to keep you going. Regardless, the very question buoyed your spirit. You received as much as you gave...

In all my years, in all the times I have asked for help, I have yet to be denied. The answer may not have been exactly what I wanted, but perhaps I did not know the correct question to ask. But with each answer, the correct question became more clearly defined and I gained much needed knowledge.

Success is driven by motivation. All the talent in the world won't bring victory without hard work, tenacity and a willingness to be wrong. Being able to recognize and ask for help when needed can fast track your success in any arena. Still, it is often difficult to ask for help—yet the best way to find answers is still to ask the question.

The grandmaster of horse racing, D. Wayne Lucas, said that horses teach him something every day. Every day he learns something new. It is a way of life that clearly keeps him young at 79 and a serious player in his industry. Winners, in life or in the show pen, continually strive to train for an edge over their competition. They succeed by learning from others.

Asking for help humanizes us to others. It unites people, promoting an atmosphere of openness and makes it easier for others to ask for help from us. Ultimately, it creates an expert: the person who asks the most questions becomes the person with the highest degree of skill. It's really that simple—and horse trainers love to tell you what they know!

We must take what others have to give. It is disrespectful NOT to take what they are offering. Horsemen around the

world over have tremendous knowledge—and nothing gives them greater pleasure than to be asked their opinion. They respect those who dare to ask and cheer the success of those who take their advice.

In fact, the best horse trainers in the world are waiting for you to ask their opinion. They have knowledge and would like to share it—knowledge they wish they had when they struggled with a similar situation.

Honor the wishes of these masters. Ask questions, seek knowledge and learn from those who are anxious to teach. This month, make a plan to get off the farm, to call a friend or to schedule time to ride after the show to work on a training matter. You have a new year in front of you. Make this the best New Year by learning something new every day.

ABOUT STEPHANIE LYNN



Professional horseman, coach, trainer and world champion, Stephanie Lynn coached her first world champion in 1988. She has since coached, trained and shown World and All American Quarter Horse Congress champions across disciplines. She is an NSBA, AQHA and APHA judge and has judged world championship shows for each association. Stephanie is the author of *A Lifetime Affair: Lessons Learned Living My Passion* and the recent publication *The Good Rider* series. The complete *Good Rider* series includes *Equitation 101*, *Horsemanship 101* and *Showmanship 101* with each title accompanied by a separate corresponding homework book.