

A GUIDE TO DEEP CONNECTION



*Lessons I've learnt &
Continue to Learn e-book*

Casey Evans

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INTRODUCTION

I often get asked how do you get your horses to do xyz, or that they wished that they had a stronger connection with their horse.

BOMBSHELL HERE

It is not a certain training method.

It's the inner work on myself, its being present, it's noticing the little things, it's showing attunement to our horses and allowing our horses to have a voice. That is what strengthens their connection and trust in us.

This is hard, as we live in a modern world where it is so busy. We're always looking into the future wanting more; more money, more things, more achievements, more time, it's rush, rush, rush.

Just so busy, now i'm not saying that it's not ok to have aspirations but I often find that it takes us away from the present moment. On top of this we are often riddled with anxiety, battling fear or self doubt.

When it comes to horses we may have trauma, fears or worries and that are triggered when you are with your horse. You find yourself thinking of the horse from that time or even the horse that was yesterday but not necessarily the horse that is right in front of you in this present moment.

We tend to let our minds get away on us. When in actual fact we should be sitting with these feelings and getting back into our body. The mind -body connection is crucial to helping us feel and connect. When we are only in our mind, we have more worry, more stress and anxiety. This causes us to miss signals and signs from our own body, our environment and also from our horses.

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Best selling author, researcher and professor Brene Brown has dedicated two decades into studying vulnerability. She believes that vulnerability is the “birthplace of things like love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy and creativity.” All the attributes to developing connection.

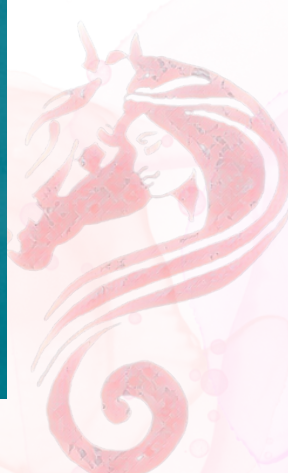
This e-book is an introduction to true connection, first with self and then to our horses. I endeavor to share some techniques for getting us out of our busy minds and back into our bodies. So we can connect with our physical self, where we feel more calm, have clarity, or find focus among many other mental and physical benefits. Then later in the e-book, we investigate different theories around the horse human relationship and I share with you some exercises for you to try with your horses.

I’m going to leave this section with a quote from Brene Brown that sums up what this whole e-book hopes to share.

“CONNECTION IS THE ENERGY THAT EXISTS BETWEEN PEOPLE WHEN THEY FEEL SEEN, HEARD, AND VALUED; WHEN THEY CAN GIVE AND RECEIVE **WITHOUT JUDGMENT;** AND WHEN THEY DERIVE SUSTENANCE AND STRENGTH FROM **THE RELATIONSHIP.”**

BRENÉ BROWN

THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION
10th Anniversary Edition

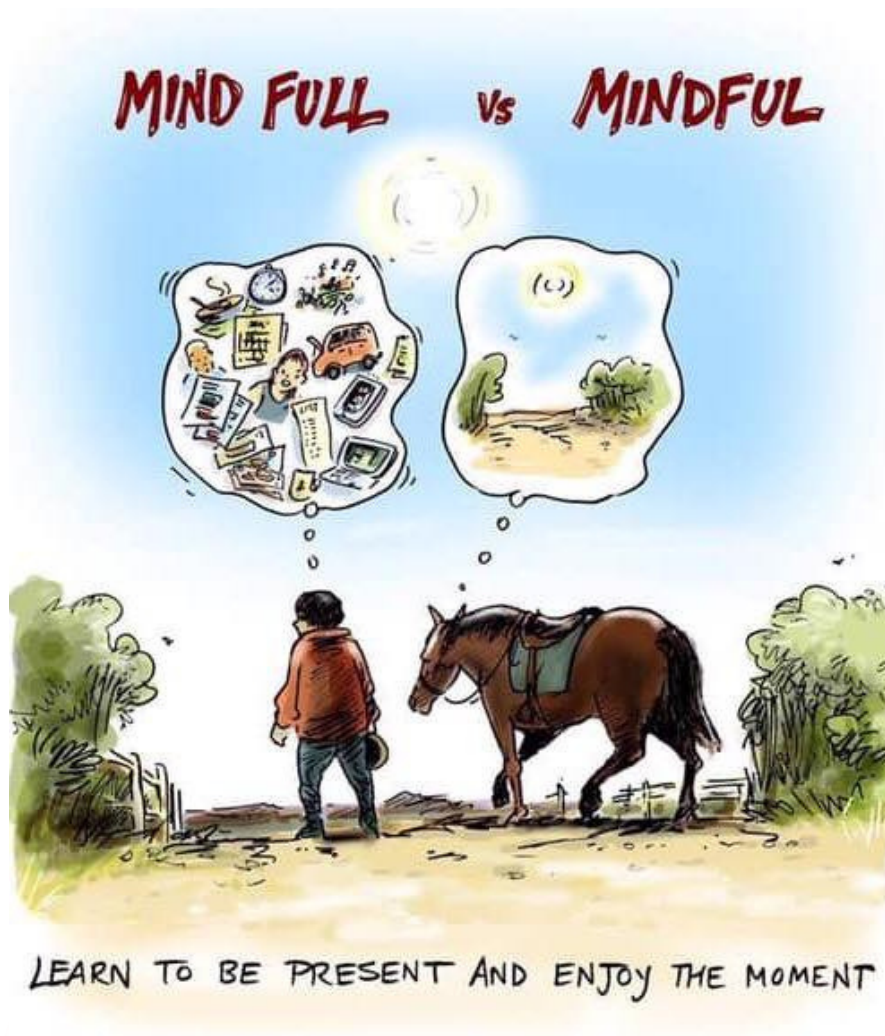


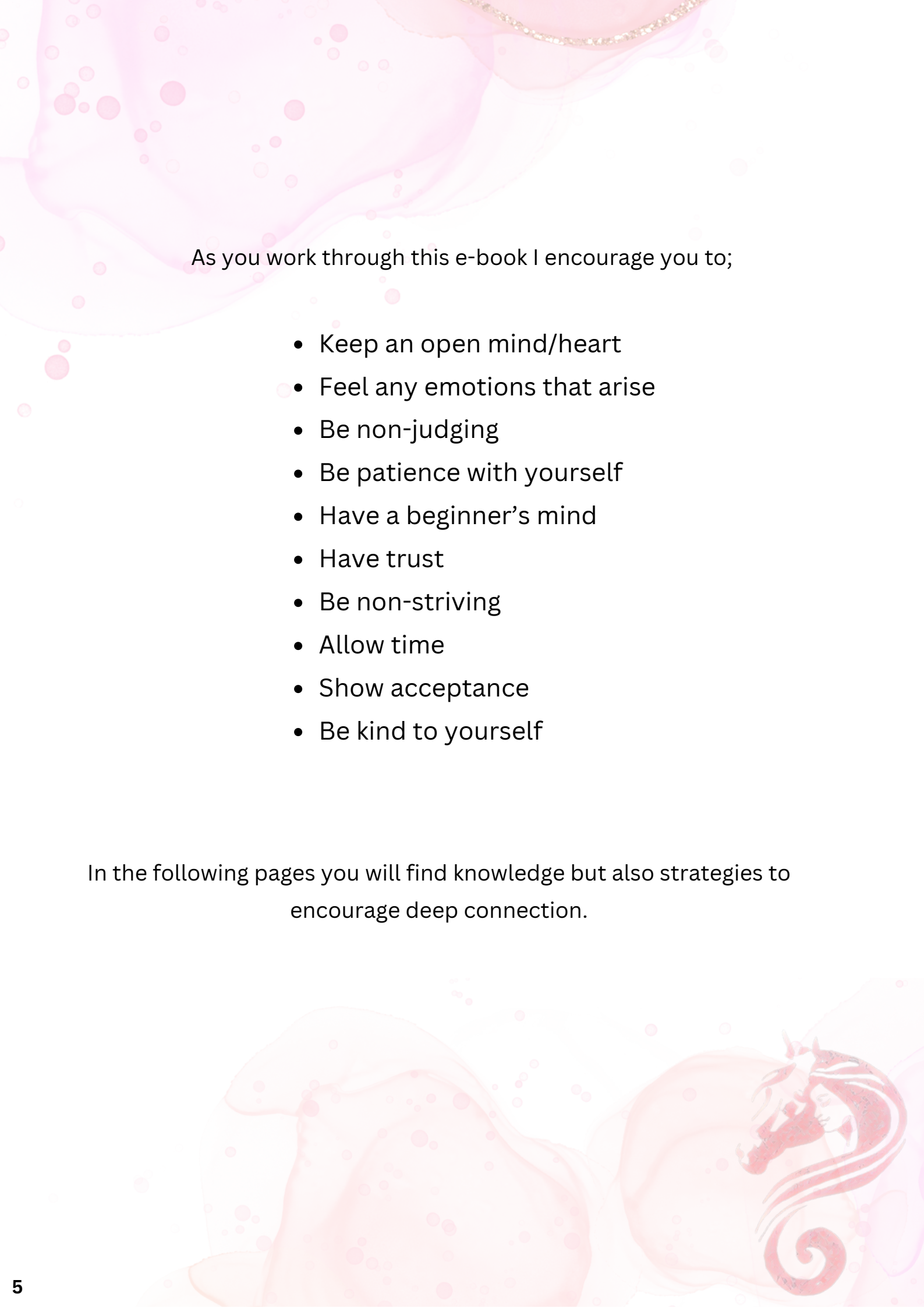
MINDFULNESS

How do we become present or live in the moment?

MINDFULNESS - Be Mindful

Mindfulness involves being in the present moment, without judging or being distracted. It brings our awareness to where we are and what we are doing. Mindfulness can help you feel better emotionally and physically. It also is a useful technique that can help you deal with difficult emotions and situations.





As you work through this e-book I encourage you to;

- Keep an open mind/heart
- Feel any emotions that arise
- Be non-judging
- Be patience with yourself
- Have a beginner's mind
- Have trust
- Be non-striving
- Allow time
- Show acceptance
- Be kind to yourself

In the following pages you will find knowledge but also strategies to encourage deep connection.

CONNECTING WITH SELF

UNDERSTANDING OUR BRAIN

Let's dive into our beautiful brain and how it works so we can better understand its effects on us.

John Hopkins Medicine defines the brain is a “complex organ that controls thought, memory, emotion, touch, motor skills, vision, breathing, temperature, hunger and every process that regulates our body, together the brain and spinal cord that extends from it make up the central nervous system”

It is a hugely complex organ.

When looking at the brain we must identify our different brain waves.

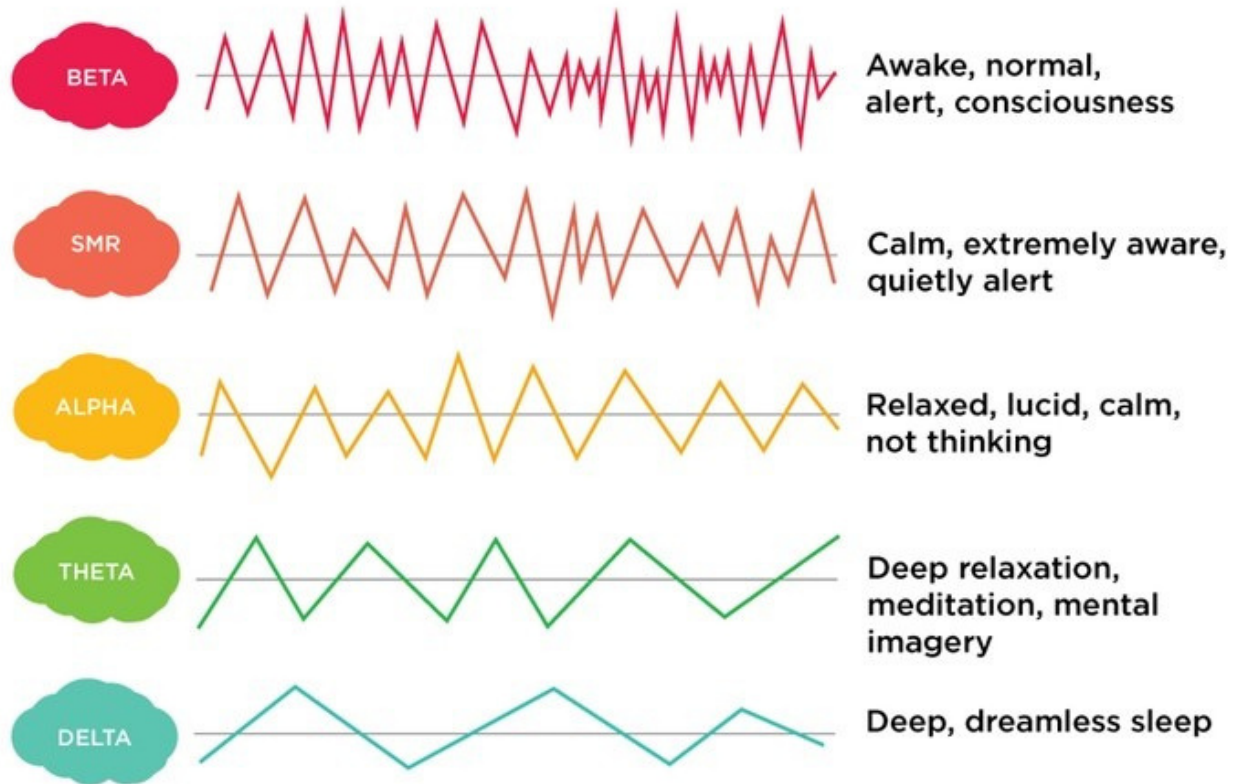
According to Neurological Foundation the root of all our thoughts, emotions and behaviours is the communication between neurons within our brains.

Brainwaves are produced by synchronised electrical pulses from masses of neurons communicating with each other. Brainwaves are detected using sensors placed on the scalp. They are divided into bandwidths to describe their functions but are best thought of as a continuous spectrum of consciousness

Electrical impulses between neurons are brain waves, they communicate actions, emotions, and ideas. The 5 brain waves are;

Alpha, Beta, Delta, Gamma and Theta.

UNDERSTANDING OUR BRAIN CONTINUED



Research suggests that meditation or even mindfulness practices can lead to an increase in the production of theta and alpha waves, which are the brain wave frequencies associated with enhanced learning abilities and overall mental well-being. When we are concentrating, stressed, anxious or experiencing psychological tension we are in the brain wave of Beta.

Understanding our brain waves and how they affect us is crucial to helping us in this journey of connection.

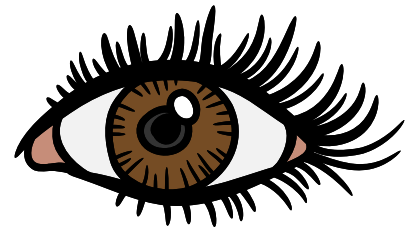
CHANGING THE LENS

When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.” – Dr. Wayne Dyer

Our perception of the world is determined by how we look at it. We need to be mindful of the thoughts, judgements and words we tell ourselves.

“The more grateful I am the more beauty I see”

Mary Davis



This is easier when things in life are going well, but much harder when challenges arise.

A strategy I use in hard times for an example;

Let’s say I have a bad tooth-ache. Rather than dreading going to the dentist I change my thinking to how lucky am I to have access to a dentist that can help me. There are many people in this world that do not, it takes me away from dread to a place of gratefulness.

A saying that I often find myself coming back to when things are tough, I try and change my thinking from.....

I HAVE TO.....

TO

I GET TO.....

LAW OF ATTRACTION

In a similar realm as gratitude is the Law OF Attraction. Now I dont think this is the be all and end all but I do believe in the power of the mind. Definitely it's something to be aware of.

WHAT IS THE LAW OF ATTRACTION?

The main theory behind the Law of Attraction is we create our own reality.
(Losier, 2006).

Very Well Mind describes it as a “philosophy suggesting that positive thoughts bring positive results into a person's life, while negative thoughts bring negative outcomes. It is based on the belief that thoughts are a form of energy and that positive energy attracts success in all areas of life”

Advocates believe that there are 3 central universal principles that make up the law of attraction:

Like Attracts Like

This law suggests that similar things are attracted to one another. It means that people tend to attract people who are similar to them

Nature Abhors a Vacuum

This law of attraction suggests that removing negative things from your life can make space for more positive things to take their place.

The present is always perfect

This law focuses on the idea that there are always things you can do to improve the present moment.

CONTINUED

If im thinking of the brain, I have to share Dr. Joe Dispenza. He is revolutionary in the field of quantum physics.

Dr. Joe Dispenza is a chiropractic doctor, neuroscientist, and best-selling author who brings real research and science anto this area of
' The Power of the Mind'

“Life is about the management of energy, where you place your attention, is where you place your energy.” Dr. Joe Dispenza

He believes we need to bring the body from the past to the present to experience higher states of consciousness when we do we are able to heal and transform our lives.

I highly recommend reading his books

You are the Placebo
&
Becoming Super-Natural

I hope these sections are given you an insight to just how powerful our thoughts, the picture we paint and the words we tell ourselves are.

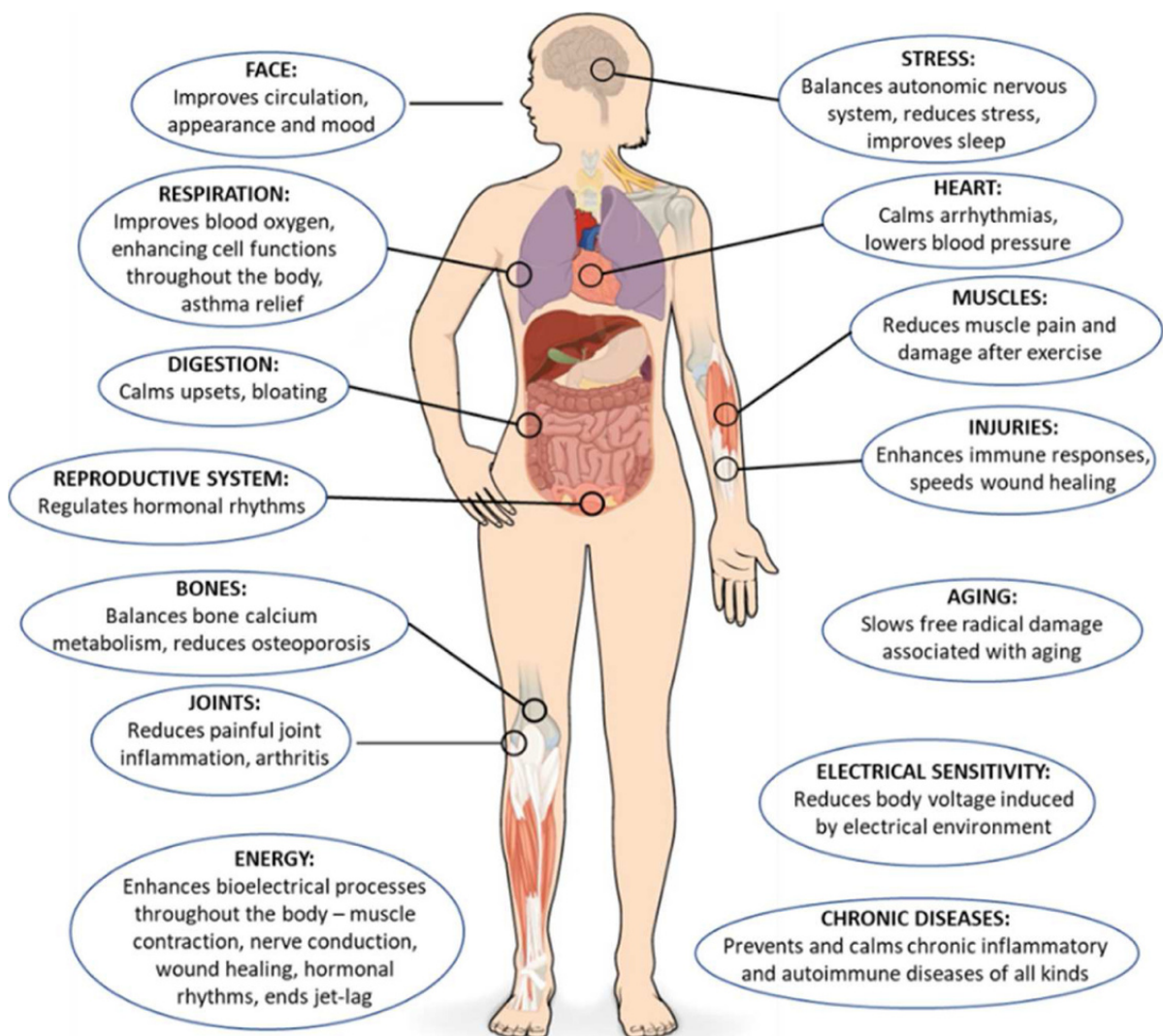
So;
Be kind to yourself
You grow when you place your attention & energy
Look at life with empathy and understanding
Practice Gratitude - Be grateful even in the hard times

GROUNDING

Coming from a Physics stance we are merely 'energy living a human experience'. That everything in this world, including humans are energy mass particle form. A practice that helps us get back to connecting with our energy is GROUNDING.

GROUNDING refers to the discovery that bodily contact with the earth's natural electric charge stabilizes the physiology at the deepest levels.

GROUNDING FOR 20-30 MINUTES ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK has been shown to..



ENERGY

Knowing that we are energy living a human experience brings us to energy centres. When I think 'how do I become intune with my energy?'

Chakras are what I turn to.

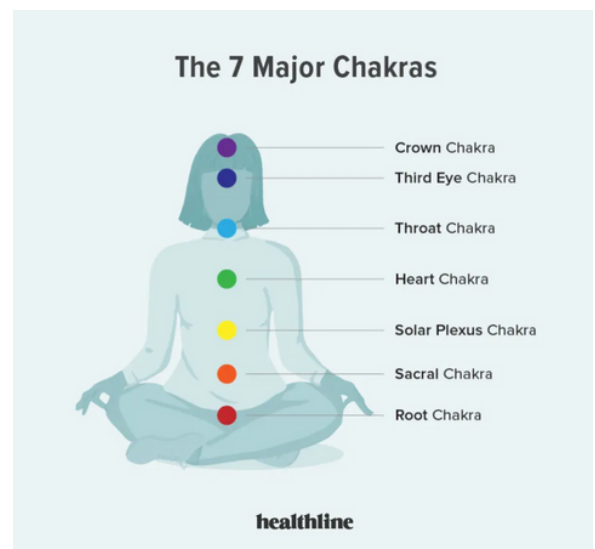
WHAT ARE CHAKRAS?

The chakra system refers to the energy centers we have in our bodies. Chakras are thought to provide subtle energy that helps your organs and mind to work at their best

Depending on whether these energy centers are healthy or blocked, you may experience different attributes of your physical, mental, and emotional health.

The 7 main chakras as they appear in the body are:

- Muladhara Chakra – Root Chakra
- Svadhishthana Chakra – Sacral Chakra
- Manipura Chakra – Solar Plexus Chakra
- Anahata Chakra – Heart Chakra
- Vishuddha Chakra – Throat Chakra
- Ajna Chakra – Third Eye Chakra
- Sahastrara Chakra – Crown Chakra



In promoting balance in a chakra create alignment in your physical body through;

Yoga postures
Grounding
Meditation

Breathing practices to encourage the flow of energy



BREATHING EXERCISES

Stress and anxiety are just some factors that can have an impact on not only our mental state but our breathing.

When anxiety hits or I am under pressure I often find that my breath becomes fast and/or shallow.

In this section I share my top breathing exercises from bring myself out of my MIND and back into my BODY.

These breathing techniques can help trigger the parasympathetic nervous system which we explore later in the book. It's believed that incorporating breathing exercises can increase blood flow, can restore energy in the body, help us become more centered and help with many other health conditions.

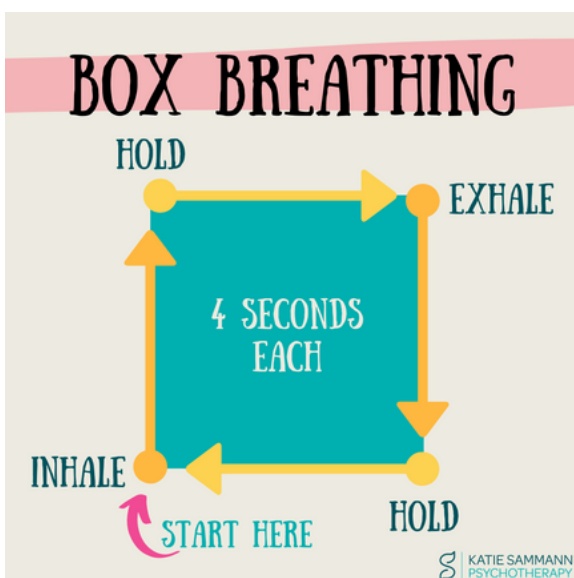
BOX BREATHING

Step 1: Breathe in, counting to four slowly. Feel the air enter your lungs.

Step 2: Hold your breath for 4 seconds. Try to avoid inhaling or exhaling for 4 seconds.

Step 3: Slowly exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds.

Step 4: Repeat steps 1 to 3 until you feel re-centered.



CONTINUED

ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING

To try alternate nostril breathing, Sit down in a comfortable place, lengthening your spine and opening your chest.

Rest your left hand in your lap and raise your right hand. Then, rest the pointer and middle fingers of your right hand on your forehead, in between the eyebrows. Close your eyes, inhaling and exhaling through your nose.

1. Use your right thumb to close the right-hand nostril and inhale slowly through the left.
2. Pinch your nose closed between your right thumb and ring finger, holding the breath in for a moment.
3. Use your right ring finger to close your left nostril and exhale through the right, waiting for a moment before you inhale again.
4. Inhale slowly through the right nostril.
5. Pinch your nose closed again, pausing for a moment.
6. Now, open the left side and exhale, waiting a moment before you inhale again.
7. Repeat this cycle of inhaling and exhaling through either nostril up to 10 times. Each cycle should take up to 40 seconds.



CONTINUED

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING aka Belly Breathing

1. Lie on your back with your knees slightly bent and your head on a pillow.
2. You may place a pillow under your knees for support.
3. Place one hand on your upper chest and one hand below your rib cage, allowing you to feel the movement of your diaphragm.
4. Slowly inhale through your nose, feeling your stomach pressing into your hand.
5. Keep your other hand as still as possible.
6. Exhale using pursed lips as you tighten your abdominal muscles, keeping your upper hand completely still.

You can place a book on your abdomen to make the exercise more difficult. Once you learn how to do belly breathing lying down, you can increase the difficulty by trying it while sitting in a chair. You can then practice the technique while performing your daily activities.

Belly breathing

Automatically slows the heart rate, helping to relax & calm

The most efficient and relaxed way of getting enough air into your lungs.

Supports the life skill of relaxation

Can boost energy levels with a few minutes of relaxation throughout the day

Emulates breathing during the regenerating processes (sleep, digesting food or resting)

Increased awareness of the breath & its effect on the body



MEDITATION

MIND BODY CONNECTION

A body scan is one of the most effective way to begin a mindfulness practice. The purpose is to tune in to your body to reconnect to your physical self and notice any sensations you're feeling without judgement.

Please feel free to download the Guided from myself of this Body Scan.

Meditation Begins,

Start by making yourself comfortable, once comfortable simply close your eyes or just let your eyes half close.

Bring your awareness to the breath. Here we are looking to relax and extend our breath. Slowly inhale through your nose to fill your belly, then chest. Pause for a moment, and release through your mouth in a long drawn out sigh.

Breathing in..... then out
IN And out

Listen to the silence at the end of each breath.

If you find your thoughts wandering, gently come back. Thoughts are okay. They will come. Gently let them go, let them drift away. Be kind to yourself and let go of any judgment.

Now let your breath fall into its natural and relaxed rhythm

Bring your attention to the top of your head. Move to your forehead and soften it. Soften the eyebrows, the eyes, your ears, and your cheeks.

Let your jaw relax, your tongue, your lips.

Bringing your attention to the throat. Allow the muscles surrounding it to relax. Soften the back of the neck. Moving your attention now to your shoulders and soften.

CONTINUED

Now focus on your LEFT shoulder, take a breath, pause, relax as you go. ...

Continue down to the elbow... Down to the wrist, then hand.

Move & Relax each finger, thumb, index finger, the middle finger, your ring finger and pinky. Relax the palms of your hands. Now back up through.

Now focus on your RIGHT shoulder, take a breath, pause, relax as you go. ...

Continue down to the elbow... Down to the wrist, then hand.

Move & Relax each finger, thumb, index finger, the middle finger, your ring finger and pinky. Relax the palms of your hands. Then back up through .

Bring your attention to your chest, feel the chest expand and deflate with each breath.

Bring your attention to the top of your back. Relax the muscles around your shoulder blades, the middle part of your back, and the lower

Moving now to your left thigh, the muscles around your left knee, the front of your left leg, your calf, your ankle, your foot, and toes then back up through your ankle, calf and thigh.

Moving now to your right thigh, scan down to your knee, the front of your leg, your calf muscle, your ankle, right foot and toes then back up through your ankle, calf and thigh.

Bring your attention to your whole body. Notice any sensations you feel. Bring your gentle attention to any area that you would like to relax further. Stay in the breathing pattern for just a moment longer here.

When your ready gently open your eyes.

GRATITUDE JOURNALING

According to research Gratitude Journaling has huge mental and physical health benefits. I believe it is also a great tool for connecting to our true authentic self.

Jotting down what you're thankful for can;

Improve the quality of your sleep

Reduce stress

Increase positivity

Strengthen self-worth

Help you celebrate the present

Possibly lower the risk of heart disease

HERE ARE SOME PROMPTS

Describe a fond memory you have?

Name one thing/success you are most proud of?

Name 5 things that make you smile?

List 3 qualities you admire about yourself?

Define Gratitude?

Horse Prompts

What was your first memory of a horse?

Describe a time that you felt most connected to your horse?

How did you feel when your horse came into your life?

What are some lessons your horse has taught you?

Name 3 things you love about your horse?

If your horse could speak english to you what would they say?



THE HORSE



UNDERSTANDING THE HORSE

Horses are sentient beings who have feelings and emotions just like us.

They can sense everything that's going on with us, our mood, thoughts and emotion, our energy and body language, The horse knows when we are not ok. They can sense if we are scared, anxious or frustrated as soon as we enter the paddock or stall.



Photo Credit - Andrew Kennett Photography

There's a quote from Ray Hunt "The horse knows when you know and knows when you don't". I hear this alot when in the horsemanship circles but I believe it is also true for how we interact them and in our relationship. Horses do not live in future nor in the past, they live in the present moment, this making them high tuned in beings.

In the wild horses have needed to be highly in tune, noticing the slightest change in the energy especially focusing on the other horses in the herd and their surroundings to survive. They use all their senses to determine if there is any possible threats, they do this to keep them alive and to determine if they are safe. They still have this ability.

We need to continue to work on noticing everything about them. When we do, we give sense of true connection.

Warwick Shiller introduced me Daniel Siegel who is a professor of Psychology, He named this 'attunement'.

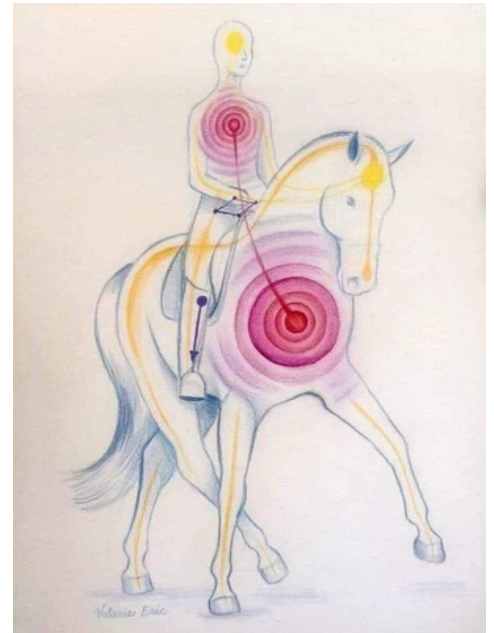
"The sense of being seen, being heard, feeling felt and getting gotten",

HEART MATH

“There’s nothing better for the inside of a man than the outside of a horse,” Winston Churchill

Id go even further and say the ‘Inside of a Horse’ Earlier in the book we looked at energy and how we are just energy in a human form.

We “are just a giant electric field which holds our atoms together, which uses other electric fields to talk to other bits of ourselves. Each person and animal has their own electric field”. Michelle Davy.



According to HeartMath Institute:

"...the heart is the most powerful generator of electromagnetic energy in the human body, producing the largest rhythmic electromagnetic field of any of the body's organs. The heart's electric field is about 60 times greater in amplitude than the electrical activity generated by the brain. This field, measured in the form of electrocardiogram (ECG) can be detected anywhere on the surface of the body. Furthermore, the magnetic field produced by the heart is 5,000 times greater in strength than the field generated by the brain and can be detected a number of feet away from the body in all directions."

Since horses heart is five times bigger than a humans their electromagnetic energy field is enormous and when in a horses’ presence, the human’s nervous system automatically syncs up with the horse.

POLYVAGAL THEORY

The Polyvagal Theory encompasses the horse's nervous system. Stephen Porges, a professor of psychiatry and bioengineering, first put forward Polyvagal theory in 2011.

To better understand Polyvagal theory, we need to dive into anatomy and physiology for a moment.

The vagus nerve is the 10th cranial nerve (there are 12 altogether) and starts out at the medulla oblongata where the brain connects to the spinal cord. While it's spoken about as being one nerve, it's actually two that come out either side of the brain stem.²

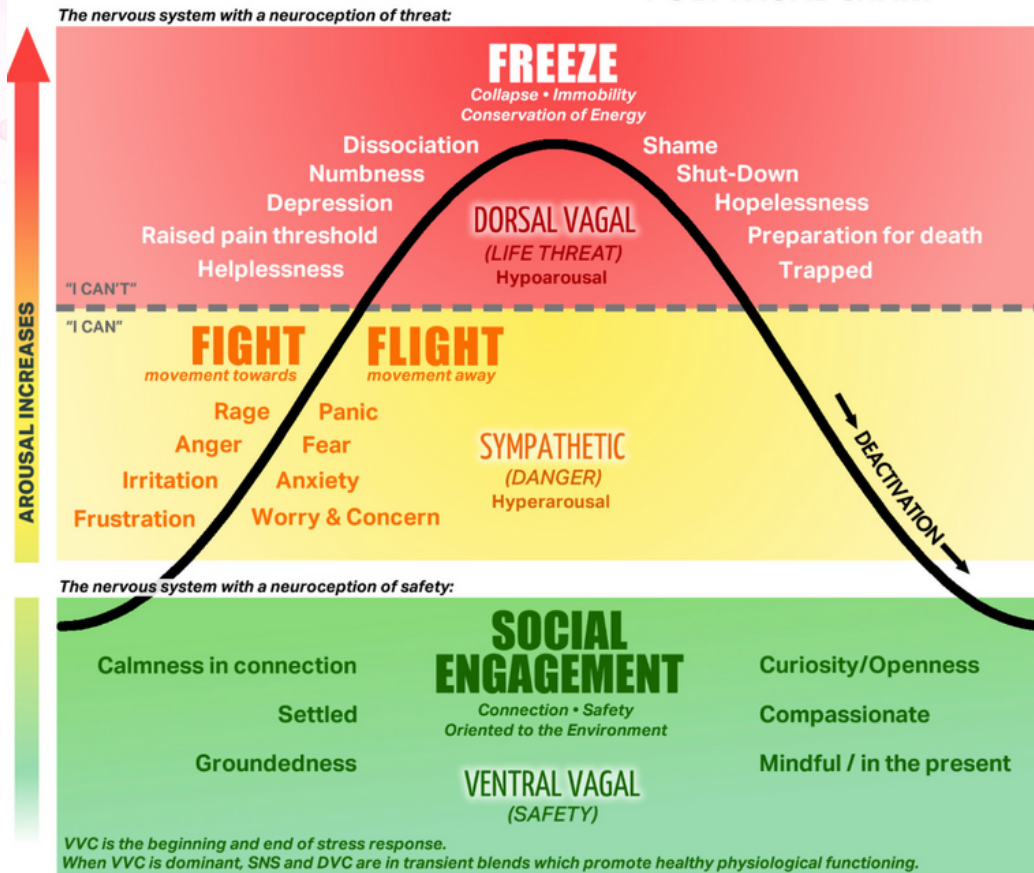
'The vagus nerve is sometimes referred to as the body's 'superhighway' because of its capacity to shuttle important data to the internal organs and let the body know when it's time to rest and digest, or fight/flee as the case may be. It's involvement in the function and regulation of body systems is widespread – from the digestive and respiratory systems, to the heart, and all the nerves and fibres involved in the daily process of being human – from unconscious facial expressions to general wellbeing.

To put simply, there's practically no system of the body that isn't impacted by the vagus nerve' - Anthia Koullouros

The following page describes the 3 states more in-depth. Keep these in mind when you are working with your horse.

CONTIUNED

POLYVAGAL CHART



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Adapted by Ruby Jo Walker from: Cheryl Sanders, Anthony "Twig" Wheeler, and Steven Porges.

PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

DORSAL VAGAL COMPLEX

Increases

Fuel storage & insulin activity • Immobilization behavior (with fear)
Endorphins that help numb and raise the pain threshold
Conservation of metabolic resources

Decreases

Heart Rate • Blood Pressure • Temperature • Muscle Tone
Facial Expressions & Eye Contact • Depth of Breath • Social Behavior
Attunement to Human Voice • Sexual Responses • Immune Response

SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Increases

Blood Pressure • Heart Rate • Fuel Availability • Adrenaline
Oxygen Circulation to Vital Organs • Blood Clotting • Pupil Size
Dilation of Bronchi • Defensive Responses

Decreases

Fuel Storage • Insulin Activity • Digestion • Salivation
Relational Ability • Immune Response

PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

VENTRAL VAGAL COMPLEX

Increases

Digestion • Intestinal Motility • Resistance to Infection
Immune Response • Rest and Recuperation • Health & Vitality
Circulation to non-vital organs (skin, extremities)
Oxytocin (neuromodulator involved in social bonds that allows immobility without fear) • Ability to Relate and Connect
Movement in eyes and head turning • Prosody in voice • Breath

Decreases

Defensive Responses

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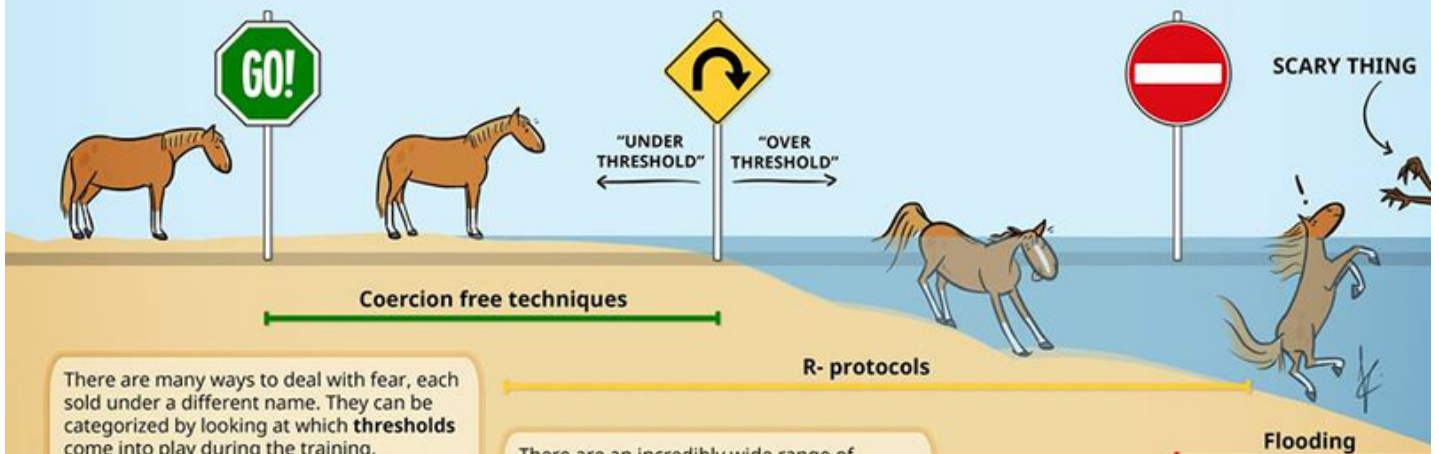
THE THREE THRESHOLDS And how they affect our training

www.fedupfred.com

Threshold of stimulus perception:
The horse notices the scary thing

Threshold of stimulus aversiveness:
The horse is beginning to feel uncomfortable because of the scary thing

Threshold of fear response/reactivity:
The horse tries to flee, fight or freeze.



There are many ways to deal with fear, each sold under a different name. They can be categorized by looking at which **thresholds** come into play during the training. The thresholds mark the level of reactivity from the horse in response to the stimuli.

Coercion free techniques employ methods that will strive to stay "under threshold", creating a **safe, ideal** and most **effective** learning environment for the animal. They utilize **Desensitization (DS)** and **Classical Counter Conditioning (CC)**.

This will pair a neutral or aversive stimulus with an **appetitive** (something the horse finds attractive or enjoyable). There's **no desirable behaviour to reinforce**; DS/CC focuses on changing how the horse feels about the scary thing, so the **appetitive is given after he perceives the scary thing** regardless of behaviour. This does not involve luring or reinforcing the horse for going close to the scary thing while still feeling afraid.

It is often followed by or combined with **+R (Positive Reinforcement) training** to complete the picture.

There are an incredibly wide range of **R- (Negative Reinforcement) Protocols** when it comes to dealing with fear. These utilize **approach and retreat**. As the horse approaches the threshold for reactivity, becoming **uncomfortable**, they are allowed to retreat when showing the correct behaviors.

Beyond this threshold the horse will often show **appeasement** and/or **displacement** behaviours but this is often interrupted, punished, or interpreted as a good sign. Licking is often interpreted as learning and therefore good, even though the horse is actually **processing a stressful event** and relieved that it is over.

The horse **learns to show the desired behaviors** when they approach their threshold with an object/stimuli and that this will earn them **escape/avoidance**. The horse may learn to be able to control their physical reaction, but often the **fear or aversion remains**. Which can lead to dangerous **"stimulus stacking"**.



Putting a horse in a very uncomfortable situation beyond their last threshold, with **no means of escape**, is called **Flooding**. This technique can only result in **Learned Helplessness or Tonic Immobility**. While the horse **may appear calm**, they are not, they are beyond fear, beyond reactivity. They shut down.

This can seem to be great from a training point of view, the horse becomes compliant and easy to handle - but also becomes prone to some serious **fallout** for the horse. It is also prone to **sudden relapse and extreme outburst of reactivity**.

HOW DOES YOUR HORSE INTERACT WITH YOU WHEN YOU ASK NOTHING

This section I have an exercise for you to do with your horse.

Head into the paddock or pen sit or stand somewhere safe and observe what the horse does in your presence. This is where I often will do a meditation either self lead or a guided one to help bring me out of my head and into my body.

Then go into noticing.....

OURSELF

How you feel?

(anxious, overwhelmed, tired, sore, grateful etc)

What sounds do you hear?

(birds, wind, horse breathing, or chewing or moving etc)

What is your breath doing?

(Fast, shallow, long, slow etc)

Where is your heart rate at?

(Racing, slow etc)

CONTINUED

Now THE HORSE

- Their body language
- Their mood
- Their breath

Does the horse interact with you?

How do they interact?

Some horses come over and want to get you up, rubbing you, sometimes pawing you

Some go into protection mode

Some let down and fully relax

Others ignore

Taking this time to sit and be fully present **with no expectations** is the most important work you can do with your horse, no matter what discipline you do.

Incorporating this into your way of being with the horse you will find the training will become easier.

LIVING IN CONGRUENCE WITH YOUR HORSE

Horses are a place of growth, where we continue to learn about not only ourselves but them as well. They are our biggest teachers.

When you come from a place of gratitude, empathy and understanding truly magical connections happen that you didn't think were possible.

I believe we are only scratching the surface when it comes to connection with these magnificent beings.

Final Thoughts

Be kind to yourself.

Slow down,

You will get stronger connections and as well more. "achievements" if you take the time it takes.

Be present, notice the small things!

Feel the emotions that arise within and sit with them.

Be grateful for the good as well as the challenging times,
There are often many lessons learnt in these times. It could also be opening a new chapter.

"The greater the storm the brighter the rainbow" (unknown)

If you would like to learn more about connecting with your physical self or strengthening your connection with your horse we run one:one lessons or Soul Journey Retreats at Barkridge Equestrian, in the beautiful Catlins of New Zealand.

BARKRIDGE RETREATS



SOUL JOURNEY WITH HORSES & NATURE



Self discovery &
Connection

ONE DAY OR TWO DAY
SOUL JOURNEY RETREATS

No Horse Experience Required



Deeper Connection to Self
& Your Horse

TWO DAY DEEPER CONNECTION
RETREAT

Bring your horse

find out more at casey-evans.com

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CONNECTION INSPIRED JEWELLERY



Collaboration with the extremely talent and amazing human Zantedeschia Robini of ROBINI Jewellery. This collection symbolises the bond and connection that a horse and rider share. Together as one in strength, peace/unity & harmony.



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