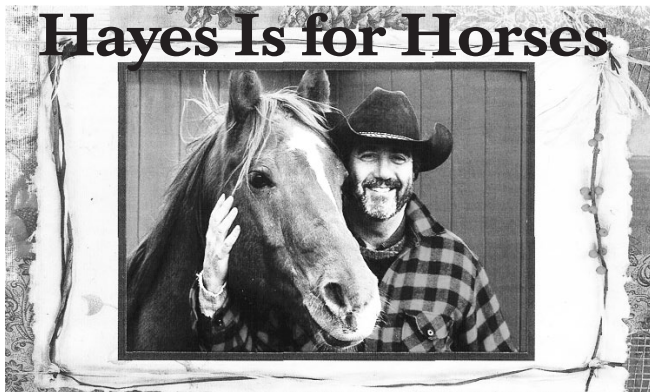


Hayes Is for Horses



Dealing with Fear... Horse & Human

By Tim Hayes

Dr. Saul Miller a leading North American sports psychologist recently called to tell me something he thought I would enjoy. He said that in studying the importance of psychology in the performance of the human athlete for the past thirty years, he had discovered something totally unique in the sport of horseback riding. In over twenty-five different sports from football to hockey, horseback riding was the only sport where the athlete's "equipment" could become nervous and therefore affect the athlete's performance. Clever, yes. True, painfully.

In being humorous, Dr. Miller nevertheless brought up a reality that is experienced by all of us who interact with horses. It is a subject the knowledge of which (or lack of) can mean the difference between life and death for both human and horse. This subject is FEAR

Fear is one of the most common factors when humans and horses get together and one which is dangerously misunderstood. Simply stated, what frightens horses does not frighten humans. What frightens humans does not frighten horses. Unfortunately neither species knows this and cannot understand why the other is so afraid of such "harmless" things.

HORES FEAR

As a prey animal (dinner for predators) horses live their entire lives on alert. They must be ready to flee at any second in order to survive. However if they ran away every time they sensed something might be a predator, they would exhaust themselves, waste their strength and energy and become more vulnerable to a real threat.

The nature of horses is such that not only are they hyper-vigilant, they have the greatest memories (save the elephant), of all animals. Their superior memory enables them to continually identify, remember, store and classify everything they see, hear, taste, and smell. This becomes a list with two categories, which they remember for life. Something that could eat me. Something that could not eat me. Living in the wild this list becomes fairly complete in the first few years of a horse's life. Living in the domestic world of the human the list can require more time and more items to create a brave confident horse.

The secret in helping our horse become "bomb proof" is knowing those specific things that trigger his fear of being eaten and put him on alert. It is also keeping ourselves calm and relaxed when he becomes bothered and anxious. We comfort, reassure and allow him time to personally investigate the situation until he is satisfied he is safe. This reinforces our leadership position by gaining his trust and respect. We also keep our horse and ourselves from getting hurt.

Being a good leader and helping our horse when he becomes afraid is similar to being a good parent and helping a fearful child. The following scenarios are good examples.

In the first scenario a father tells his four-year-old child to go to his

room and go to bed. The child says he doesn't want to go alone because he's afraid of the dark. The father says don't be silly there's nothing to be afraid of and stop wasting time. This makes the child even more fearful and he pleads with his father not to make him go to his dark room alone. His father raises his voice and yells if the child doesn't go to his room, he will be punished. The child goes crying to his room and goes to bed not only afraid of the dark but of his father as well.

In the second scenario when the child tells his father he is afraid of the dark, his father tells him he understands because he knows other kids (and even adults) who are also afraid of the dark. He picks up the child, holds him tight and walks to the bedroom as he comforts and reassures him. In the bedroom, he asks the child to help him turn on the light together. He stays in the room until the child tells him he feels safe and it's okay to go.

Both scenarios end with the same result, the father gets his child to go to bed. The method used in the second scenario not only creates a deeper bond of love and respect between father and child, it instills powerful knowledge in the child that will help him in the future. The next time he is frightened, he can look to his father as a trusted source of wisdom, protection and safety. This is the same principal upon which a herd of horses choose their leader. This method is the same whether it's a herd of 100 or a herd of 2 (you and your horse).

Natural Horsemanship is about seeing the domestic world we have invited our horse to enter through his eyes. It is our responsibility to learn what behavior our horse is using to tell us when he is bothered or frightened. There is only one major fear that will cause our horse to react in a way that can cause serious injury to him and us. The fear of being eaten by a predator. The following are the primary stimuli that trigger this fear in our horse. Knowing and remembering them will allow us to comfort, reassure and help him look to us as his leader to feel safe and protected.



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New or unfamiliar predators. Other adult's, children, dogs, etc. New or unfamiliar places. Going to a show, going on a trail ride, etc. New or unfamiliar objects. Raincoats, backpacks, clippers, etc. Changes—anything familiar appearing differently. The pile of sand that was 2 feet high yesterday is 3 feet high today. Movement — of anything. A sheet flapping in the wind, a door opening, etc.

When any one of these stimuli occurs we must understand that our horse is genetically programmed to go on alert. In his mind any one of them could indicate the unseen presence of something that could eat him. It is in this moment that we must be there for him and use our horsemanship.

Whether we're on the ground or on his back we ask him to execute a maneuver that will cause him to switch from using the right side of his brain (run without thinking) to using the left side of his brain (think without running). We help him investigate the scary stimuli and overcome his fear. Most importantly we know the trust he needs to have for us as his leader must be established before we find ourselves in this situation. If not, he will feel safer relying on himself and if so, he'll run first and investigate latter.

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10 times the amount of fuel of a typical crude oil ship), the risk of fires, and the hazards associated with the heating of the LNG at the marine terminals. States officials have raised serious questions about the adequacy of FERC's security assessments.

The group also cites concerns regarding assertions by the United States' former deputy counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke that Al Qaeda operatives came to the United States by sneaking aboard Algerian LNG tankers and that they considered Boston Harbor a "logistical hub" for the terror network's U.S. activities prior to Sept. 11, 2001. With the boat bombings of the U.S.S. Cole in 2000 and the oil tanker Limburg in 2002, Al Qaeda has demonstrated the capacity to strike at sea. FERC's safety regulations are inadequate, in part because they deal only with LNG terminals, not tankers.

Further, liquefied natural gas is not environmentally sustainable. Natural gas used as fuel for electricity pollutes, and the exploration and drilling for natural gas can cause environmental damage.

But why bother fighting it? According to the sneaky new law, it's totally out of our hands. Our hosts, who knew that, were only a sham of concern.

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as gratifying. As a personal trainer she teaches her students to stay in the present, where they truly are, not where they were or where they are going. Deb as a friend can be summarized in a quote by Mary E. Burkette, 'Wealth is not found in our bank accounts, but in the treasury of feelings we can share with friends'."

Lynn Farley, who works at the stable, shared this experience: "I have had the pleasure of watching Deb as a gifted and talented horsewoman and it will not surprise me when someday she takes a noble horse to the very top."

Hayley McKay, who rides under Debra, expressed her gratitude this way: "I would like to thank Deb for making myself and my fellow riders the best we can be by encouraging us to always be better. Thank you, Deb, for pushing us to the edge of a cliff and then watching us soar. And, thank you for making my biggest dreams come true."

Emilee Raynor, who also rides under Debra, had this to say; "Through Deb's hard work and dedication, I have learned so much these past few years. She is a great role model, and I enjoy training with her and spending time with her and the horses. I look forward to many great years to come."

According to Jordan Tooker: "Deb has done so much for me in the seven years I have been riding with her. She has helped me to be a confident rider and to believe in myself. I admire her so much and thank her for pushing me harder and harder to be a better rider." And Tracy Sachak, an intern for E.E.S.F., had this to say: "I have been working closely with Debbie since June. In that time, I've learned so much about riding, training and equine management. She has inspired me to be a better rider, student and person. Her love and expertise with horses has made her an amazing trainer, mentor and friend. To learn from such a loving, caring friend is a wonderful blessing that I will always treasure. I would like to thank Debbie for her patience, dedication and love these past few months. I am looking forward to working with her in the future."

Everyone at Equus would like to wish Debra the very best, and to encourage her to continue to reach for her own goals

just as she has encouraged those around her to reach for theirs! Thank-you Deb! We love you!!

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Horses are masters of knowing what happens before what happens happens. (reread this a few times slowly to have it sink in). This ability has enabled them to survive in a world filled with predators for thousands of years. When we see a horse's ears and eyes quickly change their direction, their neck and head go up, their muscles tighten and brace or them needing to move their feet, they are telling us they have been alerted by something they thoroughly believe will eat them.

Knowing that this is part of everyday life for a horse and in reality neither the trigger nor the invisible predator can do them or us any harm, enables us to stay relaxed and confident. We are able to take whatever time necessary to reassure our partner that he can trust us when we tell him he doesn't need to run. Understanding the nature of horse fear is what prevents humans and horses from getting hurt. It helps the horse become braver, more confident and hopefully over time "bomb proof."

Although human fear is similar to horse fear in that we're afraid we could die or be seriously injured, it differs in two distinct ways. First, we fear death and injury will be caused by our "trusted" partner not some other predator. Second, the stimuli that trigger our fear come directly from our partner and not from outside sources.

In next month's issue we will examine human fear, how it differs from horse fear and what we need to do to overcome it. If we expect our partner to change and become braver, we need to become braver first. Then and only then will he follow us down the trail.

*For more information visit: www.hayesisforhorses.com,
or call Tim at 631-329-5840*

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