



Natural Horsemanship and Marriage

By Tim Hayes

Horses have taught me more about being a better person than any book, class or teacher. Horses, I believe, are “Love” in its finest form and it is because of horses that all my human relationships have improved.

I’ve watched how horses treat each other, how they’ve raised their young and how they’ve worked out all their inter-equine relationship issues. They never criticize or judge each other. They never try to change each other. They never lie and they always express the truth about their thoughts and feelings. They are egoless and next to survival they just want to get along with each other.

One day I sat down and listed the character traits I saw horses exhibit with each other: acceptance, tolerance, patience, understanding, kindness, generosity, trustworthiness, justice, respect, truthfulness, compassion and forgiveness. Amazingly, they were all the qualities my parents, my teachers, the Boy Scouts and the Bible had said to possess in order to be a good human being.

Horses were living by “The Golden Rule”: treating each other the same way they wished to be treated. When I relate to a horse the same way another horse does my relationship with that horse improves. When I behave with those same horse qualities toward another person my relationship with that person improves. It is so profound I made it my company logo: “Be a better human - Be a better horse”[®].

I’ve also learned a horse is never wrong. Everything he does is rooted in the dignity of his self-preservation. Whenever my horse resists one of my

requests, it’s not because he is misbehaving, it’s his way (his only way) of letting me know I need to ask for what I wanted differently and in a way that won’t threaten his survival. As long as his self-preservation is involved there is nothing I can do to change him in order to get what I want. To get my horse to change, first I have to change! This, I discovered, not only applied to all my human relationships, it turned out to be the reason I had repeatedly failed at having a successful romantic or long-term relationship with a life partner.

In the past, my problem had often been getting into romantic relationships with a women I believed I needed to fix or change in order to fully get my needs met. I discovered that treating my partner that way was like treating my horse as if he was wrong. Just like my horse, everything my human partner did was based on what she believed was necessary for her survival or to put it another way: to be herself. And just like with a horse, if I wanted something in our relationship to change, I had to change first.

Sometimes there is nothing I can change or do differently. Each and every horse and human has a true unique core nature that never changes. If this is the case I need to get a different horse or, if it’s my romantic relationship that’s not working, I need to look for a different person. The key is being able to recognize this true core nature whether it’s a horse or a human.

A year and a half ago I met a women named Elise. By then horses had helped me change enough so I could truly see her for who she was and who she wasn’t. I loved what I saw.

We spoke on the phone, we saw each other constantly, we rode our horses together, we shared everything. We loved the same things: family, children, horses, movies, sports, spirituality, *The New York Times* and ice cream. It has become the most comfortable, easiest and intimate relationship I had ever had in my life. It feels like home.

On October 4th 2008 Elise Gutfeld and I were married. I am overwhelmed with joy, happiness and gratitude. What is truly amazing and why I have chosen to write about it in my Natural Horsemanship column is how my knowledge of horses and their relationships with each other helped me to become the person that could and would ultimately attract someone like Elise. Horses, in fact, gave me the tools I was missing and that I needed to have the one human relationship I had searched for my entire life. ©TimHayes2008



Married with Horses: Tim and Elise Hayes with Austin with Eclipse; October 2008