

**Opening Advice; recognizing the difference in which method to best use for redirecting your horse's energy:**

I have had a number of clients ask me for clarification about when and which means to use in controlling their horses. This is especially true in regard to run-a-ways. The first point to remember is not to increase or generate a horse's natural opposition reflex by pulling back on the bit. Also remember not to clamp down with the legs to stay aboard as that will only exacerbate the situation when adrenalin is up. Put more weight onto the ball of your foot and push your feet forward to regain lost balance along with using one hand to pull up on the front of your saddle in order to deepen your seat whilst keeping your other hand free to work with one of the reins.

If you have caught the situation quickly and are not but a step or two "behind the horse", you are most likely able to safely apply a single rein overt move to one side, turning the head and then immediately disengaging the hind quarters without tripping your horse. Whereas, if you were not sufficiently alert as a rider and have been caught out by your horse and are many steps behind the movement the horse may be moving much too fast for an overt single rein movement to be the best choice.

If this is the case, then a Cavalry lift is a most effective way to break the inevitable brace the horse has generated and by lifting his head it is natural for all horses to begin to slow their movement since they can no longer see the ground immediately in front. The cavalry lift will be the best way to give you the chance to choose a time to effectively use the "single rein" control method without putting the two of you at risk of toppling over in the process.

**Riding and Training Advice:**

***Continuing along the vein of appropriate controls for appropriate situations;*** there are two completely opposite reactions by a horse that can and should be dealt with in precisely same method. If your horse naps and heads in a direction you did not select, it is not efficient to try to turn the horse's head away from the direction he choose and force him to go another direction (due to the time it takes). Whereas it is very efficient and effective to simply use the lead rein to take over his direction and travel a step of two in his chosen direction then carry on beyond his choice and on completely around to the direction you wanted. This might take two or three repetitions in the beginning to teach him you are capable of controlling his movements in this way but it works well and he will learn. I can re-route a horse in this manner in much less time than it takes a rider to prevent the initial movement and reverse it toward the direction that the rider initially wished. This method applies very effectively with a horse that shies. When a horse shies it faces the thing that frightened it even though it is moving away from the object. By taking single rein control over its head in the direction it is already facing you will be able to turn past the problem and beyond much faster than trying to stop the initial movement and re-rout back away from the object of its fear.

***Applicable Quotation: Mary Pickford*** (Arguably the silent era's most renowned female star) made a statement that can be quoted for most if not all riders; "If you have made mistakes, there is always another chance for you. You may have a fresh start any moment you chose, for this thing we call "failure" is not falling down, but the staying down".

**I deal with many riders who have lost their confidence** and as soon as they learn methods of dealing with situations, that they failed with in the past, and apply them a few times they regain their confidence. I generally teach these methods on a 22' line at increasing speeds until they are good enough to go off line and experience it freely.

***Clarity with cues:*** (tactile in conjunction with verbal aids) Whilst horses do understand verbal cues (as well as our mental intentions) we need to teach them which tactile cues we use that mean the same as our verbal cues. This is important for our horses to understand our intentions on days of high winds, heavy rains, noisy traffic or when helicopters are hovering above, amongst the many other ways our voices can be "drowned out".

***Making use of ESP:*** Most of us are aware that horses have excellent extra sensory perception as prey animals. I have always called it Extraordinary Sensory Perception. We need to make good use of this perception when riding. Whenever asking our horse to make a direction change or impulsion change, etc. so long as we look where we intend to go and focus our mental attention on our intent, it will be no time at all in training to discover the pressure needed on our reins becomes softer and lighter.

***Muscles building exercises;*** For a dipping center back, use cavalettis -- poles on ground or about 10 inches above ground -- for ground work in order to help bring the horse's back up by using its lifting muscles more. You can use 12" to 24" (progressively) as muscles improve. Ground work exercises with poles and larger jumps whilst walking the horse to the jump then asking them to make the jump. Then progressing to trotting, then loping/cantering helps build up loin muscles as they must lift the body much like a cat does.

### **Closing Advice;**

#### **About bits;**

Remember that chrome and stainless steel bits both generate electrolysis, much as foil does against our human teeth. When a horse slobbers from this is not something good. Copper, brass and sweet iron all prevent this problem and are something a horse can chew on without the discomfort of electrolysis.

**When training;** and we are training our horses every time we are around or riding them whether or not we are aware of that fact, *patience and perseverance are most important attributes which we must possess.*

An early American President, **John Quincy Adams** (son of John Adams and even earlier President) once made a statement that can be quoted appropriately for horse riders, which is "Patience and Perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish".

***Until next time, have fun and stay safe.***

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