

Opening reminders:

For the most part, a horse is the projection of peoples' dreams about themselves - strong, powerful, and beautiful. They are capability of giving us an escape from our mundane existence. This long held view makes it difficult to see how some folks treat their horses with intimidation and in such harsh manners. In dealing with thousands of worried and disturbed horses, I have found that most horses will do their utmost to be our co-operative and willing partners if we will but make a sincere effort in communicating with them clearly and fairly.

Cinch Savvy : Horses have such good long term memories that they never forget things whether good or bad and this is what I call baggage whenever a poor memory is brought forward by our action if our action is similar to what was presented by previous person when the poor memories were generated. It pays dividends to make sure your horse is laterally bent slightly and sufficient to see us when we are tacking them up, especially when we are attaching the cinch (a.k.a. girth). This gives the horse a chance not to make erroneous assumptions about what is taking place and so long as we don't repeat a painful act they will learn to accept our actions.

Points of Interest :

Softness versus Lightness: Softness is when we ask / communicate our request to our horse (via pressure release) and we receive a measured decision when they comply with our request in a comfortable / soft manner. Lightness is when we ask for a response and receive an unmeasured / instinctive repelling or jump from our pressure release request.

Jodhpurs : long riding breeches, tight from knee to ankle) were named after the ancient city of Jodhpur in the state of Rajasthan, in northern India and were originated by men in the late 1800's.

Riding & Training Advice:

Collection w/ clear understanding and agreement : One of the major errors I often see with riders (most often with my dressage rider clients) is when they are asking for collection by holding their reins with static (sometimes even heavy) pressure rather than in a soft pressure release style. I also see many giving contradictory signals by driving their horses into the bit with their leg cues. Holding a steady / relentless rein pressure until a horse relents and acquiesces generally serves to generate an opposition reflex action which is hard wired into their psyche / DNA over millions of years (and won't be changed by us). By doing so we are requiring them to act in an unnatural and uncomfortable manner, unnecessarily disturbing their horses. Holding a constant pressure can also cause a horse to "break" in the neck a few inches behind the poll where it should not break, causing neck problems in due course. The neck break needs to be more natural at the poll. A good / natural solution is not difficult to achieve although it does require a bit more patience from the rider. A long term and natural solution is to work "with" our horse by coming to an agreement on an appropriate amount of pressure to hold with our reins - following a soft pressure release request for collection. I have

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(cinch savvy - collection - respect)

taught this method of communication training to innumerable riders to their everlasting satisfaction and surprise. Once the front end is successfully agreed and practiced at a trot and then canter for a few sessions, then the rear can be handled similarly with a softer rein agreement at a canter / lope in relatively short order.

Respect: No matter who you are you won't have much, if any, luck training your horse if your horse doesn't respect you. Respect is a natural part of a horse's instinct and is related to dominant or submissive behavior when dealing with other animals and/or ourselves. In order to have a good relationship with your horse, you must be the dominant and capable partner as well as benevolent. Your horse must see you as his leader for you to win respect, trust and his willingness to please you. In order to achieve the respect and trust; ***a proper balance of training, discipline and rewarding his willingness to try for you is required.*** Knowing how to do this is the key to transforming your problem horse into the kind of horse you always wanted and for maintaining a good relationship. Continuing to maintain this balance is a must. The techniques required for gaining a horse's respect and trust are not too complicated or difficult to learn. These are best learned gradually and in modest steps. I spend most of the time, in my teaching of horses and riders, dealing with these techniques for riders to achieve good results as well as maintaining them.

Confidence: Becoming a firm, benevolent, competent leader is a very comforting thing for our horse. They then become very responsive, which in turn gives us as riders confidence and satisfaction as our horses improve in recognizing our requests and complying quickly. Once our horse feels that we are recognizing their replies to our cues (generally our release of pressure is the easiest signal to indicate this to our horse) there becomes a wonderful two way communication that we should strive for. Horses become much more manageable once communication and leadership improve.

Closing reminders:

The communication, respect, leadership techniques serve to generate Confidence in both the horse as well as ourselves. In a cooperative situation, horses tend to follow (look for) releases of pressure much more than the application of pressure.

Horses, being such herd animals, need for us to be firm leaders (at the least the next animal above them in the pecking order or hierarchy) although we must also be benevolent leaders - which is quite a paradox for us to deal with but worth the effort it takes for us to become so.

More on Cinch Savvy : even though I have been training in England for so long, I still find it awkward calling a cinch a girth. Since the girth is a part of the horse it is strange to say or hear someone else say that they want to put a girth around the girth. Two countries separated by a common language is the cliché. So when I make that mistake in language have a laugh.

Until next time, have fun and stay safe.

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