

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE HORSE

By Ray Hunt

Examining your relationship with your horse ...

Awareness of details:

- In the last 5 minutes of your ride, what would you have kept and what would you have changed?
- It is important to recognize whatever that horse does on the outside is powered by emotions, drives and needs that exist on the inside.
- The most important place to look for solutions to any problem is inside yourself.
- A rider must be committed to practicing for improvement – working for perfection ... perfecting the true basics, the fundamental skills that are the basis for every movement or performance on horseback.

The FOUR Basic Skills – Pillars of Horsemanship.

FEEL

Riding is both a dance and a conversation between horse and rider.

The rider who has feel is aware of themselves and their horse:

- The mind remains in the present moment.
- Awareness is at two levels:
 - External (physical).
 - Internal (mental/emotional)

Feel for the horse.

Feel of the horse ... and let him feel back to you.

Feel works by means of “life in the body”, like a fluid that can be moved or move from one body zone to another:

- It is also the energy that causes the body, as a whole, to be able to move.
- “Raise the Life” or “Get the Life down into those feet” are admonishments for sluggish, unresponsive horses.

TIMING

Pay close attention to movements of the horse’s jaw, poll, neck, back and legs.

- “Reach into the Energy” to time their aids to accelerate or redirect the horse’s hooves.
- Being able to state with precision when a particular hoof is picked up or down.

STRAIGHTNESS

Straightness means the horses head, neck, back and croup – therefore legs – fluidly track whatever line, straight or curved.

- When turning you want an even rhythm with all four legs working equal.

BALANCE

Feel and timing work to get a horse calm and confident from the inside, out. Straightness works from the outside, in.

- Horse and rider appreciate the feeling of being in the sweet spot – the positional dynamic in which perfect balance is maintained.
- It is the rider's job to "fix it up" – to position the horse's body so he can find the sweet spot.
- The rider offers suggestions, direction and support – the horse does 100% of the physical execution.

It is my responsibility to fix my mind and my body to where I want them to be, and then my horse will be able to understand me.

- *Pretty soon the horse understands so well, he'll start to fill in for me.*

ACHIEVE SUCCESS

You have to try, make mistakes and learn from the mistakes.

You don't get discouraged, blame others or your horse or get angry.

You have to think about what happens – what caused it OR why you did it and what happened as a result.

Every experience is all a part of a great life.

Don't make the same mistake twice – be too busy making new mistakes.

The way to make fast progress, is slowly.

To those who have practiced, everything will be given as a gift.

Live up to a standard of performance – as high as your ambitions.