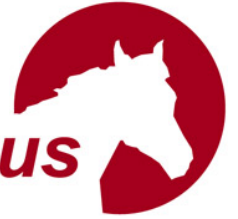


Understanding **Equus**



The Art & Science of Relationships What is 'Horse-man-ship'?

What do the words 'good horsemanship' mean to you?

For me it is about our **horse-human relationships**: Understanding our horses & ourselves, mentally, physically & emotionally - A Holistic approach to managing, caring for and building trust based relationships with our equine friends.

Over the last 3 yrs I've been working with a wide variety of trainers, coaches, behaviourists, & equine therapists, all exploring different; methods, techniques, approaches, and belief's, and all working to identify the foundations of good horsemanship.

What we found is: 'Horsemanship' is not about any specific 'training', 'tool', 'method' or 'technique' ... **It's all about relationships...**

Our ability to connect, understand & empathise, with our horses and ourselves.



Debbie & Caddy connecting with some mutual grooming

In fact I believe it is more about a way of 'being', not 'doing', 'who we are' & 'how we show up'...



As demonstrated beautifully by my non-horsey husband!!!

- The Science Bit -

1. All cells are in a state of either **protection**, or, **growth & development**
2. The brain & neurological system is a **social organ**, responding to and learning from others.
3. We all have '**Mirror neurons**' in the gut & brain, which replicate what is going on around us. – **Gut Instincts** -
4. **Emotional nurture** is a **physiological need**.



Building Trust & activating the nervous system with 4yo Feather

The recent advances in science and neuroscience have shown that we cannot grow & develop normally as children. Or learn, develop resilience, and be happy & healthy as adults, without feelings of **safety, stability & security**.

As such, secure attachment relationships, build brains. Helping our nervous systems find the vital balance between **arousal vs. calming** – Fight, flight, freeze vs. Rest & Digest.

In fact without **comfort & emotional nurture we cannot survive...**

As 'Bolby' the father of Attachment theories describes: "Seeking a close, trusting relationship, of care, comfort & love, is a natural instinctive behaviour."

So what does this mean for our horse-human relationships? This brings us to...

- The Art Bit –

1. It's all about the art of **love & relationships**.
2. **Building trust** through **Understanding** and **Communication**.
3. Engaging the **seeking, play & care** emotional systems, as described by Panksepp (1998)
4. Using **Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity & Empathy** (PACE – Daniel Hughes, clinical psychologist.)

To build strong bonds, & encourage learning & development, in our horses & ourselves.



Building bonds through Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity & Empathy

And so, in 2013 we developed the 'Understanding Equus' attachment aware relationship model, 'TLC'. A simple reminder of the 3 keys to building successful relationships...

**TLC =
Trust, Listen & Connect.**

T = Trust: The foundation of all good relationships. Trust requires empathy – the ability to 'walk in your horse's shoes' – When we feel understood, we feel calmer, more ready to take risks. A calm & alert state means we are ready to learn.

L = Listen: Remember, Emotions drive behaviour and behaviour IS communication. Therefore emotional intelligence is vital for establishing & maintaining positive relationships. The starting point of all good communication is the importance of mindfulness, being truly in the moment, and able to tune in to ourselves & others. This enables us to model the behaviour we wish to see in others.

C = Connect: With love, empathy, creativity & play. Heart-rhythm synchronization occurs between people when they are feeling love and care for each other. Establishing a heart-felt connection and 2 way communication is vital to achieve the appropriate level of growth & development. Engaging the seeking, play and care systems to encourage & stimulate learning



Respond and engage; assessing needs and activating the nervous system, through touch, or physical engagement.

Relax, balance, & regulate; To sense, listen, & feel in the moment, without the distraction of the past, or the future.



Challenge & Stimulation; is vital for learning and neuroplasticity means we ALL have the ability to change & learn new things.



This model underpins the 'Understanding Equus' Horsemanship Coaching & 'Equine Facilitated Development' programs for horse owners, adults & young people:

- Horsemanship Coaching -

It is my belief that there is no 'one', or 'best' way to training & being with horses, and different methods & approaches, suit different people & different horses.

Each horse & human is unique, a product of their own genetics & life experiences. Therefore each will resonate with, & respond to, different training methods & approaches.

My work as a horsemanship coach reflects this, as I help people to: Build better relationships and find what methods, training & support they need, to realize their dreams.

- EAL -

Together with emotion coaching, the 'TLC' model forms the basis of the Equine Assisted Learning & Development Courses & programs we run.

Partnering with the horses, we offer Coaching & Facilitation, for adults & young people.

1. For personal or professional development, life & social skills.
2. Developing leadership, teamwork & communication skills.
3. Building trust, confidence, emotional intelligence, self belief & resilience

Including the 'Building Connections' EAL program for young people in care. This is a 6-10 Week program, interacting with horses, helping children to develop life & social skills, emotional resilience, confidence & trust, in themselves & others.

Summary

So, next time you go to your horse, remember:
"Be the change you want to see in your horse"

Stop, ground yourself, & breath...

Then just think, we all need a little: TLC –
Trust, Listen & Connect, to build happy & healthy relationships



Photo's taken at The Natural Equine Fair 2015.

Thank you to Lindy Wale and all the students at Kingston Maurward College for organizing, to Lorrie Bee & Hazel-Ann Wilson for the beautiful photo's, to Caddy, Feather & Charlotte for braving the audience and to all who attended for your input and questions. Thank you also to my long-suffering husband! We hope you enjoyed the day & left with plenty of food for thought.

