

*It's not about Horsemanship....
It's about lifemanship,
And it is all about relationships!*

What is a Horse?

1. A horse is a living animal, and more specifically, a mammal.
2. A horse is a relational, herd animal.
3. A horse is a sentient being.
4. Each horse is an individual. If we truly want to have healthy, connected relationships with our horses we must shift our focus from what is good for *the* horse, to what is good for *this* horse.

What a Horse is *not*?

1. A horse is not a tool or an instrument. If you find that you are using the horse like a tool, then it's good idea to utilize an inanimate object. Way less liability and expense! Fewer ethical concerns.
2. A horse is not a mirror or reflection of me. A horse is a living, breathing, sensing, feeling, and thinking being. A horse can certainly respond to me, but this is quite different than mirroring my internal experience in some way.
3. A horse is not a metaphor. Objects are often powerful metaphors, but when doing therapy, learning, or coaching, a living being should never be a metaphor for another relationship.
4. The horse is not a deity. A horse is not perfect. Not always presents. Not always honest. The desire for, or the illusion of, perfection always gets in the way of genuine connection.

5. A horse is not a human. In order to do ethical work in this field we must explore and celebrate similarities and differences.
6. A horse is not a therapist.

Here are some mammalian qualities of horses:

1. Horses have a mammalian brain and nervous system.
2. The nervous system of a horse can engage in fight, flight, freeze and fawn.
3. Attachment and bonding and relationships are basic needs.
4. Horses can embody trauma.
5. Horses can check out, submit, appease, and dissociate.
6. The horse's brain, as a prey animal, naturally develops similarly to the traumatized human brain.
7. The horse's brain is plastic and use dependent.

Regardless of the task or activity, a connected relationship is ALWAYS the goal.

The Big Ideas of Relationship Logic.

1. When building a relationship with a horse, we start with an awareness of what we are trying to achieve, neurologically speaking.
2. The ultimate goal is to build a connected relationship.
3. We want the horse and person to gain the ability to do WE thinking instead of ME thinking. To achieve this, we aim to build the ability to use their neo-cortex, which means cultivating neuronal cross-brain connections.
4. In order to do this, we have to allow the most choices possible.
5. Whenever we make a request of the horse, the point is to make a connection. We build connections through request for connections. This can be accomplished

through many different *tasks* including both “attachment” (physical closeness) and “detachment” (physical distance) work. The principle of pressure is used anytime we make a request.

6. The relationship starts with a request and with a request comes some pressure. When one feels pressure one has 3 choices (ignore, resist, cooperate.) Body energy is pressure. Its not what we do on the outside; it’s what is happening on the inside that matters the most.
7. The principle of pressure is used to build the relationship and to reorganize the brain.
8. Building a connected relationship is the goal.
9. Attachment and detachment are two categories of behavior within a relationship that are used for building connection.
10. The principles of pressure and choice guide us in how we will respond during these exercises to build the desired connection with the horse while creating and reinforcing healthy relationship patterns, neurologically speaking.

Attachment and detachment with connection can occur in the next context of many different tasks or activities. Here are a few (this list is nowhere near exhaustive):

Attachment

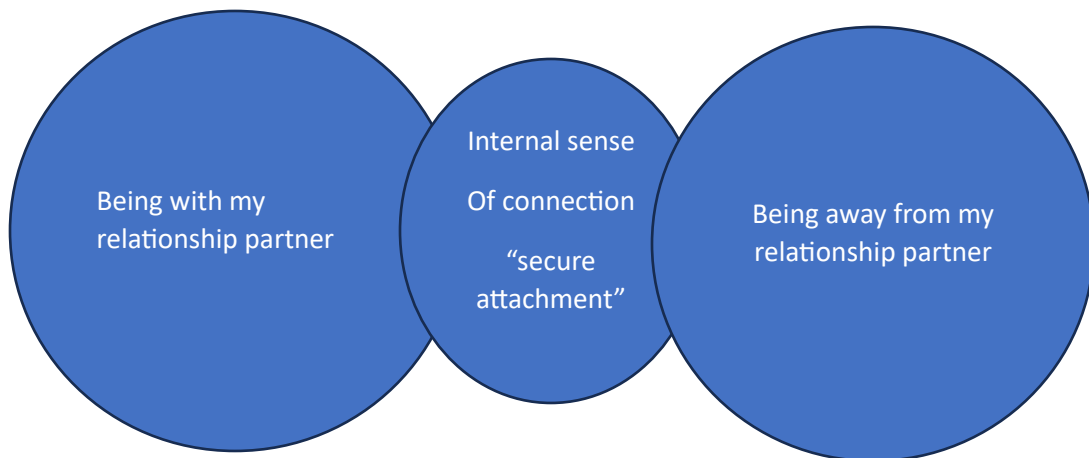
1. Grooming
2. Touch/massage
3. Energy work
4. Asking my horse to follow me/ walk with me.
5. Walking in step with my horse.
6. Riding

7. Asking my horse to back up.

Detachment

1. Asking my horse to move away while I stand still.
2. Asking my horse to stand still while I move away.
3. Asking my horse to follow me.
4. Riding
5. Asking my horse to back up.

Attachment & Detachment in TF- EAP



Both attachment AND detachment WITH connection are necessary for developing an internal sense of connection,

A healthy sense of connection is akin to a 'secure attachment pattern' as described in Attachment Theory.

Releasing Pressure to Build the Relationship and Reorganize the Brain

1. The “reward” is the release or decrease of pressure.
2. Whatever is happening right before the release or decrease of pressure is what has been “rewarded”.
3. The goal is for the person or animal to learn to do the right thing because they believe it’s the right thing to do.
4. When the person or animal does the right thing and the pressure goes away, “feel good” neurotransmitters are released.
5. Negative reinforcement builds an internal locus of control more effectively than positive reinforcement.
6. We must seek to understand the need underneath the negative behavior without allowing the negative behavior meet the need.

Is Pressure Always a Bad Thing?

A blog by Kate Naylor

In Natural Lifemanship, we use the word ‘pressure’ a lot. It’s been very carefully chosen, actually, because of its usability in all circumstances. We use it when we talk about horses, families, therapy, work, and everything else. But for many, the idea of pressure connotes something negative- pressure is force, pressure is stress. The dictionary describes it this way. And if you have any experience with horse training, you would be right. Typically, horses are forced or stressed into making the choice that humans want. So much pressure is exerted that the horse will do anything for release. These methods of force have no place in therapy, so it is important for us to really examine the idea of pressure, and whether or not it truly is a negative thing all of the time.

I have heard many times that pressure is an unkind, unhealthy thing that we should never exert on children, animals, our partner- but I believe when people say that what they mean is inappropriate pressure. And to that I emphatically agree- YES! Inappropriate pressure is unkind, unhealthy, and not good for relationships. But just plain old pressure? That's simply a fact of life, and of relating.

Let's look at some examples. When your toddler walks up to you, arms outstretched, is that not pressure? Your toddler is making a request using a small amount of pressure...energy... force. And is that a bad thing? Or is your toddler simply trying to connect? What about when your horses stand at their gate watching for you at breakfast time? Your calendar has a big red circle on Friday because your project is due? Or your dog sits by the back door, waiting patiently to be let out? All of these behaviors exert a very small amount of pressure on us- its simply communication. When we think about it in terms of our own personal development, we call it eustress. A small amount of tolerable stress helps us grow. Pressure can be the same when it is used appropriately.

Examples of Pressure:

1. Wet hands are pressure to reach for a towel.
2. Darkness is pressure to turn the lights on.
3. Drowsiness is pressure to sleep and take care of my body.
4. Hunger is pressure to eat.
5. Thirst is pressure to drink.
6. "Hello" from a passerby is pressure to respond.
7. A deadline is pressure.
8. Self-criticism and intention setting are both pressure of expectation.
9. Speed limit signs can be felt as pressure to slow down.

You can lead a horse to water

But you can't make them drink.

You can lead a man to knowledge

But you can't make him think.