



HAYES IS FOR HORSES.COM

HORSE TIME VS HUMAN TIME

By Tim Hayes

Someone once said that God invented time to keep everything from happening at once. In fact, humans invented time in order to help bring order, meaning and understanding to their unique existence.

As far as we know, humans are the only animals with recognized self-awareness, rational thinking and therefore a mental concept of time. Other animals may be aware of the physical changes in day and night, summer and winter and thus able to respond to these changes but it is only us humans that will ever know if we are "late." A horse for that matter never thinks: "oh my, I'm running out of time." Understanding and remembering this significant difference will have an enormous impact on how you and your horse get along and the success you will achieve in your horsemanship and riding.

Today more than ever humans live by the clock.

We fit every minute of our lives into a schedule. We create agendas with predetermined requirements as to how much time it will take to achieve satisfaction in everything we do. However when we think something must happen within a certain amount of time and doesn't, is always a set up for stress, tension, anger, frustration and disappointment. Being "late" is one of many examples that can illus-

trate both the difference and the importance of Horse and Human time.

EXAMPLE: If I ride on Wednesdays at 4 pm and don't get to the barn until 3:55pm, I may rush to groom and tack up my horse so I can get in as much riding time as possible. Knowing that I am "late," I think I'm using up valuable riding time while getting my horse

ready to ride. This thought makes me anxious and tense. Instead of presenting myself to my horse as a happy, calm, relaxed friend and leader, I show him a partner who is anxious, frustrated, preoccupied, and tense. The quality of my grooming and saddling that is usually a nice way to connect with my horse is now a signal to him that something is not right with his human partner. My horse does not know I'm late because "being late" does not exist in his world. All he knows is that I'm anxious and not relaxed.

As we start to ride I feel a resistance coming from my horse. He's communicating to me with his body (the only way he knows how). He's telling me: "Your body feels tense and that makes me anxious. I'm not feeling very safe and comfortable with you on my back right now, can you do something to change what I'm feeling from you... can you help me?"



Horse time in Idaho.

I think: "Oh that's great. Not only am I going to run out of riding time, but I'm going to have to struggle with my horse and his bad attitude." I do what many people do; I blame the horse for the problem. I begin to feel angry and frustrated and my cues become rough and heavy-handed. This is frightening for my horse. He thinks: "not only is my partner anxious, he's hurting me!"

At this point my horse will usually do one of two things. He'll either emotionally and mentally shut down, brace himself and do everything he can to tolerate me until the ride is over. This is how humans create dullness in their horses. Or my horse will ask me to leave (read: buck me off). This is how humans get hurt. Natural Horsemanship is seeing and understanding every situation from the horse's point of view.

It's taken me years and many mistakes to remember the enormous impact time, or the nonexistence of time, has on me, my horse and my horsemanship. And like everything else I've had to do to get my horse to be better; I had to be better. I had to change my behavior first.

Now when I get to the barn and I'm "late," I change my agenda. I adjust to fit the situation. Instead of doing 20 minutes of groundwork and 40 minutes practicing flying lead changes, I might just practice some groundwork or take a nice leisurely ride with the time I have left. If I'm "very late" I may just spend time with my horse and let him graze.

By putting myself on "horse time," I show understanding and respect for my partner who lives in the moment and has no schedule or agenda. Then, no matter what we do we are spending quality time together not just physically but emotionally and mentally. Our relationship becomes stronger, my horsemanship gets better and neither of us ends up frustrated, disappointed, dull or hurt and...we usually have a great time. ©Tim Hayes 2014

Love is what we give our time to - Children know this — so do horses.

•••

Natural Horsemanship articles by Tim Hayes are at:

www.hayesisforhorses.com

For clinics, classes or private sessions, contact Tim at: tim@hayesisforhorses.com or 800-959-3101

•••