

# FIRST: Develop a Great Relationship

# THEN: Ride Like the Wind in Any Saddle You Want

By Tim Hayes

The defining factor for humans in achieving happiness is the quality of our relationships: relationships with ourselves, with others and, if so inclined, with God. Of these

the most challenging is our relationships with others.

Developing and having a great relationship with a horse is remarkably similar to developing and having one with another human and it requires the same effort and desire. The simplest yet most profound formula for both humans and

horses is and has been from the beginning of time: "Treat others the same way you wish to be treated."

Like most people I don't like to be told what to do; much less be forced to do it. I don't like to be judged, criticized or made to feel wrong. I like to feel that my relationship with my friends, family or significant other is a partnership where we enjoy each other, support each other and accept each other for who we really are and not whom we wish the other would be.

Many of my relationships work best when I and the other person know and feel we are *equal* partners and treat each other that way. However there are some relationships that work best when someone is the senior partner or "Leader." This is true anytime two humans decide to dance together and wish to avoid stepping on each other's toes. It is true when raising and parenting a child. It is just as true in a partnership with a horse that is *allowing you to ride on his back*.

The most important reason to be the leader in your partnership with your horse is safety for you and your horse. If your horse does



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not accept you as his leader and does not follow all your requests there are things he may decide to do that could not only put him at great physical risk but put you there as well. If you and your horse know you're not completely safe then neither of you will feel safe. It is impossible to ride together in harmony much less at your best if you or your horse does not feel 100% safe.

There are three mandatory elements necessary to create a great relationship with either humans or horses: love, trust and respect. Try to imagine having a relationship with someone significant if you're missing any one of these three: it's impossible. All three elements are achieved the same way with horses as they are with humans: communication and behavior. To communicate and be understood

you must be able to speak in the same language as your partner. The problem with most horse/human relationships is communication. Horses don't speak English!

Without the ability to communicate to one's horse in his own language the human (rider) is left with a method, which though momentarily effective, over time becomes less effective and totally counterproductive to developing a great relationship. The method is a combination of force, intimidation and pain. Unfortunately the vast majority of "traditional" riders of all disciplines in both English or Western styles are taught and use this method:



"Confidence"



"Mutual Trust"



nation of force, intimidation and pain. Unfortunately the vast majority of "traditional" riders of all disciplines in both English or Western styles are taught and use this method:

*"I kick my horse to go. If he doesn't go I kick harder. I pull on the bit to get my horse to stop. If he doesn't stop I pull harder."*

This however is the quickest way to lose your horse's love, trust and respect. Additionally horses don't care what type of saddle you have. They've never cared. They only care and positively acknowledge you when they see you care enough to learn how to speak and communicate with them in their language.

"Natural Horsemanship" simply means what is natural for the horse not what is natural for the human. The horse's natural language that's used to communicate with other horses is body language, touch and feel. Today this language or method of equine communication can actually be taught to and learned by humans.

Communicating and developing a relationship with a horse must always begin on the ground. Horses only communicate



"Partnership"



with other horses on the ground. Sitting on the back of a horse is unnatural. Otherwise you would see horses riding other horses.

It is after you have learned to communicate in your horse's language on the ground, developed a relationship of mutual love, trust and respect and established a partnership where your horse willingly accepts you as the senior partner or leader that it is time to transfer this unique relationship to your horse's back. It is then that you will ride together in harmony. Two dancers, one leader - Riding like the wind - Together with Freedom, Unity and Grace - In any saddle you want. ©Tim Hayes 2012

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