

YODER SAYS...

It takes a lot of learning to let yourself make mistakes.

When I joined the team at Hold Your Horses, they were already 12 years into running an operation that had certainly seen its fair share of challenges. Lily filled me in quite thoroughly when I arrived (not only on matters of her being the cutest, most important member of the herd, but also on issues related to the organization's history of resilience).

The organization started as an LLC, transitioned to become a non-profit, and faced the challenge of moving its entire operation twice on short notice. Hold Your Horses held space for employees faced with unreasonable life crises, grieved the loss of beloved herd members, watched hay crops destroyed in hail storms, skated across parking lots turned into ice skating rinks, and bled out precious funds to rebound from heavy spring flooding. Over the years Hold Your Horses transitioned from renting space to paying a mortgage, working with 7 different barn managers, and rehoming 10 horses that did not make the cut. Since I came on the scene 2 years ago, the seas have grown rough with cash flow challenges, a polar vortex, race riots, and, oh yes, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hold Your Horses is still afloat (that's just a metaphor, the flooding is gone). Heading into year 15 the clients are still (one by one and at a distance) coming through our barn doors. They come for healing, connection, and coordination of their brains and bodies. This is the work we do. Our herd, partnering with the clinicians and horse handlers, help people move forward in their lives. Our learned experience of resilience has created a more responsive team of professionals, and the positive energy is reflected in all of us.

What does it mean to be resilient as an organization? As a professional? As a living being? How do we rebound from challenges that run the gamut from uncomfortable to devastating? Well for one thing, in my opinion, it's best not to treat everything as a crisis. In the running of a farm, working with live animals, and helping people with disabilities, the landscape is abundant with problems to solve. If we go after all of them with crisis-level energy and emotion, burn out is absolute.

As a horse I am a remarkably calm sort by nature but many others around me (some horses and some people) operate at slightly higher RPMs. They need to work a little harder at being less reactive and more responsive. Okay, so I get upset when the turkeys fly out of the trees when we are out on the trail. It bothers me. I might jump a bit or startle, but then I take a breath and respond by moving forward. A fight-or-flight reactive response would be to turn tail and run full speed back to the barn. Maybe I want to do this, but I am able to take a breath and settle my frontal lobe gently down over my limbic system.

Big emotional reactivity can make resilience harder to achieve. Emotions are really important but letting them guide our decisions in the moment can end poorly, or at the very least exhaust our ability to rebound. I don't mean to minimize the effort it takes to be successful with this concept. It takes a lot of learning to let yourself make mistakes. This is where resilience lives and where real change can happen. Think about it. Then send me a note with your thoughts. I will be in my stall, taking a few deep breaths.

~Peace out, Yoder



YODER

THE THERAPY PONY, FEATURED COLUMNIST

You can email me through
Janet@holdyourhorses.org
(Please write Yoder Says in the subject line)

