

YODER SAYS...

OMG. I totally gained the COVID 19...make that the COVID 190. It's true what they say about too much screen time. I went from carrying my people around the arena and up and down hills to standing still and steaming up screens with my nose. I could move a little for the screen visits, but not like before. I might trot past the screen or walk around trying to find things, but mostly I would stand still while a therapist helped with a virtual grooming session or tried to point to my various body parts. A few times they asked me to guess which red cup was hiding a treat (after they moved the cups around like crazy). I could always sniff out the treat and boom, there you go, more pandemic poundage.

Those long, quiet days are still a recent memory. They moved by so slowly, with just a few therapists carrying their phones or computers and talking endlessly. Barn staff would dutifully move through their daily chores but their fatigue was palpable. Everyone wore face coverings and the smell of disinfectant crowded our indoor spaces. People walked differently; a bit slumped. The masks muffled voices. I couldn't smell breath or feel those soft kisses. I did my best to be present for anyone who needed to lean in and bury their face in my neck. I could feel their need for warmth and connection. My extra pounds came in handy here, the people seemed to relish the contact with my cushy rib cover.

It's better now. I started with Noom (it's really helped me with more mindful eating). I am back on my conditioning program. More staff at the farm means more work gets done. The masks remain but people are talking and laughing and standing a bit taller. The sound of more voices at the farm is music to my ears. I still help with screen time, but more therapy sessions are in person: small people on my back, big people walking me around obstacles, staff riding me over poles and through gait transitions. The increasing warmth and light of the changing season brings more movement and more connection with the outdoors.

I know the past year changed our farm and how we provide service. We tightened our belt with finances (even though I went up a girth size). We used more creativity and problem solving to meet the challenges created by the pandemic. We did our best to stay connected during a time when many of our people were sad and alone. I don't want to repeat the year, but I am grateful for the learning and our ability to sustain our work. I may have let go of some pounds but I will hold on to our mission to move lives forward from trauma and disability. Thanks for reading. Take a moment to reflect on something that brings you joy and give yourself some credit for making it to this new day.

~Peace out, Yoder



YODER

THE THERAPY PONY, FEATURED COLUMNIST

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