

YODER SAYS...



Well, I got the download from conference. It sounds like you all spent a lot of time discussing brains—both horse and human—and how understanding that brain activity creates better outcomes for clients. I can't begin to understand much about human brains, but I do recognize human body movements and facial expressions. I never forget the smell of a human and I can hear a human heartbeat from 4 feet away. That gives me all the information I need most days.

Did you learn more about me (well, any of us horses) at conference? Maybe you better understand how horses live in the moment and,

when the moment is over, we go back to grazing. We need plenty of time to make adjustments: to changes in light, weather, and the people you place on our backs. When you listen to us and observe more about what we need, it works out well for all of us, doesn't it?

Horses feel everything, but we don't spend a lot of time thinking about those feelings (we are missing that rational brain bit in our frontal lobe). A remarkable feeling might push us to action, often fight, flight, or freeze. We use the reptile brain, the survival brain. When you give us time and space to adjust and connect, it generally works out better. We might even move things up a notch to our mammal brain and enlist more of the positive behaviors you all like: being calm, giving our best quality of movement, connecting with you and your people.

I am about as calm a therapy pony as you can find. Not much rattles me, although some of you who read my column know that I am not a fan of turkeys (even I have to draw the line somewhere). They are unpleasant creatures and tend to fly up from the field with their kin when you least expect it. A lot of wing-flapping and squawking. Terrifying to see them perch in the trees. My team is aware of all this. They have helped me be less reactive and are careful to avoid known turkey time in the field. They have a safety plan to follow in the unlikely event of a water landing. It is better now; I sometimes see the turkeys when I am out grazing in the pasture. I pick up my head, note them, and then...I go back to grazing.

I am tolerant and calm in sessions but, to be honest, sometimes I get bored. Routine is good but being lead around in the arena, starting, stopping, waiting for endless items to be dropped and retrieved, and hearing the same voice cues from the clinicians can put me into a sleepy state. Here is what helps: I love sessions in the long lines. It reminds me of my driving days. I also enjoy taking a turn at playing the games. I am a great bowler, and I also like to count with my feet. When poles are set up on the ground, I remember to pick up my feet. And I always like to check out the newest toys. My favorite is when I need to roll at the end of a session and the team turns me loose. It is a great way to release. Then I head back outside and go back to grazing.

I know you sometimes call horses your "tools" or your "strategies" to help your clients make lasting changes in their lives. That is okay, but you also partner with us. Please understand that we work with you in the moment: we perform, we move, and we react. When all is well after that moment, we can go back to grazing.

When you remember to partner with us we can all move forward together more comfortably and effectively. Thanks for taking the time to invest in your learning about us and for giving us the gift of time and understanding, good food, and good care. Come visit me sometime and we can graze together.

~ Best, Yoder



YODER

THE THERAPY PONY, FEATURED COLUMNIST

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