

YODER SAYS...



I do my best thinking while getting my hooves trimmed. It is a bit of “me” time. Recently, as I settled my hoof in the crook of my farrier’s arm, I began thinking about the international theme of this issue of *Equilibrium*. I really feel challenged on how to approach this topic. I have lived in Ohio and Minnesota, so the concept of international travel and exploring different cultures is not in my hay bag, so to speak. However, I do think horses help teach a number of universal languages that are truly helpful for human-to-human and human-to-animal connections. Grant me your attention and I will explain a few of them.

INTENTION

The language of intention is often more powerful than words. If people approach me with clear intention to touch my soft winter coat, or lead me out of the pasture, or steer me in a different direction, it almost doesn’t matter how they choose to get it done. If the person is clear and kind, I am happy to engage. While my hooves are trimmed by the farrier, he is clear with his intention that I need to stand quietly. He also is aware when I need a break to shift or stretch.

If intention becomes muted by big emotions, like fear or anger, or if I become caught up in a head filled with busy thoughts, I find it hard to understand what someone wants. I am patient with this process, but I know many horses (and some people too) get confused and may demonstrate an unpleasant reaction. It might be in the form of a rapid exit, shutting down, or physical resistance. Horses can feel the energy of a person’s emotion or busy thinking but are unable to interpret what it means, so generally an exit strategy keeps us safe.

A clear and kind intention creates an environment of safety and that leads to trusting relationships. This is most important for horses and people when they are learning and trying to create lasting connections, no matter where they are in the world.

MOVEMENT

All living things move. How we move to express ourselves is non-verbal communication. Movement combined with intention is easy for me to interpret. I know people love to dance. I understand it can be an art form, and I truly love nothing more than to watch my people have a dance party in the barn aisle while they celebrate a special time with each other. It feels joyful and fun.

How we move our bodies in relation to others creates understanding. Horses easily convey their wants and needs through movement. We push in to get first dibs at the fresh hay, roll to release tight muscles (or flies), and swish a tail or shake a head to request space from others. If our back or feet hurt, the way we move tells that story (and we are so grateful when people take notice). When working in therapy sessions, our footfalls convey a message too. Slow and steady helps people feel calm and organized; a brisk trot brings a giggle or a new awareness of how to manage the lure of gravity.

When people observe or experience the movement of horses it offers universal sensations. A sudden misstep creates a moment of fear, a flamen sign brings laughter, and a horse galloping through a field spurs a feeling of freedom in anyone lucky enough to see it.

PEACE

This universal language is so important. Although not a constant state, peace is something that connects all living things because without it there is no time to rest and reset. When a visit to our farm or a steady ride on my back helps a person settle and focus, that is peace. Anyone watching the sun rise or set over this stretch of open land shares a moment of peace. Standing in the barn aisle at night, listening to the steady munching of hay by its inhabitants, brings a blissful peace.

I love this quote by Mother Theresa: “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

All of us who live can connect through these universal languages of intention, movement, and peace. It matters not where we are, what language we speak, or how we live and work in the world. We all belong.

~ With Love, Yoder



YODER

THE THERAPY PONY, FEATURED COLUMNIST

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