

Training For Courage

By Paul Dufresne

ENDOTAPPING AND BOMBPROOFING PART 3

When Endotapping is combined with bombproofing it is quite simply the most powerful way of allowing a horse and its leader to obtain success in overcoming the challenges of the ever-changing human-oriented environment.



Easy watching me as I beat the tarp with no expectations from him other than to watch me



Otis following me as I walk off the tarp while he watches



Otis preparing to step forward by tapping into relaxation



Otis big try stepping forward but still leaving the hind back there

I have used all kinds of basic natural horsemanship techniques of advance/retreat proving to a horse that there is nothing to fear through my more progressive “leadership by example” techniques, but nothing has yet compared to the power of Endotapping in the face of a scary situation.

As it was described in the last two installments, it is a neuromuscular hormonal stimulation which causes the release of endorphins in the body. This produces a stay and play response rather than the opposite reaction - that of an adrenalin release which is produced in a fear/excite reaction that causes a flight response.

Bombproofing should only be tackled after you have already developed reasonable relaxation cues with a horse.

To do so without relaxation cues is simply setting up a horse to fail and mistrust your lead. The best way to explain this is to show you with an example. I will pick the tarp as a prop. It is quite challenging with most horses because of its property of picking up life, noise, snagging a foot. First I have the horse follow from behind me on a fairly loose lead. I focus only on the tarp as I walk up to it and beat the crap out of it with a whip, kneel or sit on it, stomp on it - all of this without looking at the horse which gives the horse absolutely no reason to be concerned. This is leading by example, and it is good progressive TFC leadership but with the addition of Endotapping, you make it that much easier for your horse to be exceptionally brave.

Once the horse has observed you thrashing this tarp with confidence then you can approach your horse and ask it to advance by driving it. First I ask the horse to bring its head down and



Otis overcoming his fear of tarp and going over



Easy getting tapped with tarp flying over from trailer

relax. Only after the horse has relaxed will I then ask it to try to move forward with a nudge of the whip. If the horse is terribly concerned, I would reward any type of forward lean by releasing forward pressure and then tapping the horse until it yields the head down and relaxes the poll. I would then ask the horse again to try and move forward. If the horse attempts it but is still concerned, I leave it alone momentarily and then start to tap again until the head drops down and the poll is relaxed.

This may go quite slowly for some horses but if you wait until the horse tells you it is ready to do more, you will not be repeating this a multitude of times as you might using many other techniques. Sometimes you have to be willing to go slow in the beginning so that you can go

Training For Courage, cont'd

much faster and more safely later. Not all horses are the same. Some are easier and some have such strong fear/excite cycles that without this you could be struggling for some time. I have yet to see a horse stuck for very long when utilizing Endotapping (this is in horse time by the way and not the impatient human time... which is far too quick).

Quite simply, you just keep adding a step at a time. Retreating is not really necessary in most cases as you always bring the horse back to the feel good by tapping and then only ask it to go forward once it has told you it is okay. If the horse does retreat, telling you it needs more space, just resist it and when the horse stops where it can deal with it, just repeat the steps again. The coolest thing is that as the lead gets so preoccupied with keeping in touch with the needs of the horse they don't realize how many times they have repeated the steps but now they have also gained better control of the horse's poll. Gaining better cues to gain the poll makes it so much easier to then do so in performance movement exercises in hand or riding.

In these photos is Otis - a horse I used during a demo night at a clinic at Clearview arena in Qu'Appelle, SK. His owner was near the last straw as he kept exploding, bolting, pulling, running through the lead or rein. He had to learn basic yields and then go on a circle with positive bend developing good relaxation cues facilitated by Endotapping. He then learned with good leadership that he could cope with his fears in positive ways if we were willing to listen to his needs. In the ensuing clinic, Otis was the second best horse at the clinic. Following the clinic no one at the barn recognized him - he was so calm. I was thrilled for his owner and look forward to seeing them progressing safely in a positive relationship.

This approach works with all forms of challenging situations. When doing so always examine all the characteristics of any challenge. Look at all the potential snags and then tackle it one step at a time. If you always regain the FEEL GOOD, you can't go wrong!



What you can do if you really want to prepare and have your horse follow your lead once having done your homework

Paul Dufresne is a writer, performer, trainer and clinician in Kelowna, BC, who educates in Natural Horsemanship; Classical Arts; Liberty and Circensic Dressage. He teaches people to understand horses, but more importantly how to tap into their relaxation reflexes in ways seldom seen in North America. In doing so, he is able to guide people in creative experiences where the human learns to be an effective, safe leader.