

Training For Courage – Tying, Part 1 By Paul Dufresne

Tying is one of the most important foundation skills there is and may well be one of the most underdeveloped by people in general. Why should people learn to tie their horse?



Endotapping Bala, getting a positive emotional state before start



Back-up yield



Side yield

Because it is necessary in case of emergency, veterinary care, basic grooming and tacking in heavy traffic facilities, trail riding, trailering, horse shows as well as to learn to yield to the reins, just to name a few. A horse can feel security in being tied. It can actually calm a well-prepared horse, limiting anxious movement, but it must be made clear to horse that we are coming back and not abandoning it and that it will be safe from harm. It would be very easy to write a complete chapter on the topic but instead I will give you a synopsis of how to go through the process with photos. What people first of all need to do is quit thinking of tying from a human perspective and start thinking of it from a horse perspective. Many preventable injuries occur if this skill is poorly prepared. It is scary for both the horse and people.

The horse is a prey animal. It does not naturally rationalize that we would tie it in a safe area and that this is just a temporary situation. The horse, depending on its preparation, could be feeling like it is trapped - that it will be easy prey and may die if it doesn't get out of this NOW! The closest I could describe in human terms that we might be able to understand is leaving a young child somewhere without their understanding that we will return. Panic will set in, and in the case of the horse, the fear/excite adrenaline cycle can be very explosive as they try to escape and get back to the herd. If they do not see you as the leader of the herd and the rest of the herd is missing, as well as their freedom to make choices, then compound this with stressful situations while being trapped ... it can get very frightening.

What do you need to do to help your horse overcome the fear of being trapped and become a safe and responsible fellow that will wait patiently for you to release them?

The first thing is to get your horse to "emotionally feel good." I feel that one of the best methods of relaxing a horse is Endotapping and teaching the horse the basic yields on

a circle, on the proper bend while releasing the poll. The shape of the proper bend relaxes the horse. Even mounting on a box helps change the top line to a more relaxed position.

You need pressure yields forward, backward, side to side, pull side to side then and forward if stuck. If your horse does not have these basic yields in-hand your horse will be more likely to fly backward on a tie. You might get lucky and it never happens, but it could just as easily be a simple matter of time or an unplanned stressor occurs and your horse panics on the tie. When a horse feels sudden pressure their natural reflex when worried is to push into it, so one preparation is to send the horse back and then hold. If they lean on the lead, snap a lunge whip behind them showing them to move forward, then as soon as the horse moves forward stop and relax.

Ground tying is one of the first stages of tying. You ask the horse to stand there slightly away from you and wait. Then later you go on a longer line and ask them to wait. If they try to move have them move much more than they wanted in a circle or backing up, then ask them again to stand and wait. Make sure when you move that you block them with your body energy by sticking your arm and hand out as you move away so they are not inclined to follow. If they follow, just correct them. If they leave, help them leave in a circle or backing up and ask again. There should be a consequence when they leave but it should not be a punishment. Rather it should be a motivator to reconsider. The duration of the ground tying should get longer and longer with practice and time. A longer lead line can also be left on the ground away from the horse so that you can step on it should the horse try to leave and so you can correct. You could reward with a small treat or not - depending on your inclination. I would use treats with horses that find this very difficult as most animals are more likely to change if there is something in it for them.

Training For Courage, cont'd



Back and stand



Way back and stand



Post drawn in closer



Wait and stand at a distance



Single post wrap at a distance

A tie post is a great way to move from ground tying to a physical tie.

This being said we should never solidly fasten a horse to a big post or tree without their understanding of what is expected of them. This can cause serious injury to the horse and even death if the horse panics. I like to use a big smooth surfaced post and put a single wrap near the wither height of the horse and send it around the post. When it feels the restraint of the tie it will usually pull back - a little or a lot. As soon as the horse yields to the tie by not leaning on it when I ask it to stop, I would reward the horse with Endotapping, or taking the horse away for some other activity before trying again.

The next progression at the tie post is to ask the horse to back up with energy and then stop it on the tie.

If the horse comes forward to release the pressure, I reward it. If the horse panics and throws itself back or lunges I give it a bit of line but slow it down until it stops and then I would ask it to step forward with the lunge whip to release the pressure. I would repeat this often until the horse's immediate response is to come forward to the pressure and stand still.

Join us next issue to see some variations and more progressions on tying as well as the completion phase of bombproofing with tying.

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. The horse learns to be more emotionally secure and will respectfully follow while developing athleticism in a mutually courageous manner by having a deeper understanding of how they affect each other.

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