

Paul Dufresne TRAINING for COURAGE NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2019

I wish for everyone who loves their horses to take the opportunity to develop a special bond with their horse. That special relationship is NOT just for good trainers, as it often eludes trainers. It is for anyone wanting to invest a bit of effort and creativity while considering the needs of their horse. Are we getting so old we forget how to play, how to go investigate or just be? Play has been proven to be incredibly significant in the physical, psychological, and emotional development (of people and animals). Learning to take calculated risks or to go out on an adventure using creativity, balance, fitness, and the bond of a partner in crime!

The 50 Hour Challenge

This is the perfect time of the year for the 50-hour challenge. Steve Halpenny, another experienced horseman, had a great idea with the 100-mile challenge. I would like to change that somewhat to the 50-hour challenge.



Let's take walking with a horse for instance. If I go trekking with my horse I want to go explore at his *and* my pace. This can really slow down the distance covered should either I or my horse feels our courage challenged. We should never rush when either the horse or the leader is anxious. The benefits from such an exercise may not be clear to you in the first few days but I guarantee in a couple of weeks you will see a very positive difference in how your horse relates to and interacts with you.

Too often we get so preoccupied with more formal training we forget to develop a relationship where the horse has a good reason to want to try doing things for us. That WILLING partner everyone talks about is seldom truly experienced. This is actually doable by almost everyone. Who can't honestly take a horse for a hike with a few basic good yields under their belt before they start? If your horse will stop, back, move over from you or to you and understand to follow you from behind or beside you...."You are good to go"! It is recommended to start your hike in enclosed areas then to move to more open spaces.

You should decide what kind of a hike you will go on. I have a wonderful Andalusian mare I have leased as the prospective dam of my next Padrino stud colt. Poor Isabella knows pastures with her horse friends, a bit of barn visits, and a bit of stall, a bit of paddocks, a bit of tying. When it comes to dealing with the human environment on a farm however, this sensitive mare has no idea how to cope. She gets overwhelmed easily by anything in the outdoor arena, round pen, trail course or barnyard. If I take her for a walk on the trail though, she is a bit anxious but deals reasonably well with that because it's more like her pasture environment. Ah HA! This tells me that my walks will need to be diverse. I may not walk miles on the trails - I may walk miles throughout my own farm with her!

What might you consider before going on this 50 Hour Challenge?

This experience is about you leading and the horse following. The horse will lead beside you, and if it becomes apprehensive you will allow it to go behind you. You can show them how to be brave but avoid over-pressuring to go through or near something they are worried about. You can do all you want in demonstrating by yourself but just allow them to watch you at a safe distance. In this stage of the training it is all about them getting comfortable. If you spend your time showing rather than telling you will notice a big difference in how your horse may willingly offer to interact when they are ready.

One: Make sure the horse can lead reasonably well and does not pull you around if it gets worried. Stop and turn from any side. Back-up. Now if you want a few extra useful yields you could have lateral movements away from you or even muscular tapping with a relaxation cue (this will mean when you relax and tap them, they will bring their head below withers height and start to relax).

Two: Decide where the hike will go. On the first hike identify what your horse is more comfortable visiting and what seems to challenge them the most. The hike begins from the stall, paddock, or field where you got your horse from. When you halter your horse watch how the horse relates to you and the haltering as this will change.

Three: When you go check anything out, just walk, stop and relax your horse any time the horse begins to raise its head and worry. If you stop and calm it and it brings its head down to withers height or less (lower is better) you can slowly progress forward. If the horse remains in a more elevated position I will go back to a place the horse felt more comfortable. Every time the horse raises its head and stiffens it means it is stressed. We want to diffuse stresses, not compound them. By calming on the spot with rubs, tapping, or anything else that works for you, this will then decide whether you might want to retreat to a more comfortable place for the horse, or progress forward in what you were doing. Slowly. This is why I want to make this a 50-hour challenge rather than a 100-mile challenge. Sometimes we have to progress slowly. Remember the comfort spots your horse likes. This is where you can retreat if he gets anxious. Learning to pay attention and evaluate is an important part of your training.

Four: Safety should always be considered. Only go where you have control of your horse and they don't get uncontrollably anxious, then expand on that however slow that might be. If the horse gets worried about something you can always go ahead of them to show the way. If it is an object you can investigate it, and by your actions, you show the horse it is fine. If the horse calms by watching you then have them follow some more. If they are still high headed remove them from that stressor and regroup. As an example, if a barrel worried my horse, I don't have to have my horse walk with me around the barrel today. I only need them open to the suggestion of trying that eventually. I may go see the barrel, bang it around and move it or knock it over with my horse watching me at a safe distance, then walk off to go see something else. Any time I find something in the environment whether it be in the barnyard, arena, or trail I go check it out with my horse at a safe distance. You would be amazed how slow this can go but if you repeat this - however long it takes - the horse will come out of its shell and try to investigate as well. Horses are born curious but they were also born to run away from anything that might be a potential threat to their survival.



Five: When I was a youth, I use to go on such excursions all the time, it just seemed like the easiest way to show the horse things weren't all that scary. I would go for hours. Those horses and I were close. We could do just about anything even though we lacked the more sophisticated riding skills. We could fake just about anything because we had fun together and we took calculated risks together. I quit listening to people who would tell me what I couldn't do with horses. I watched what the horses (or dogs) told me and I asked them to try just about anything - just because I had heard that someone COULD do that with animals. I would try things because it seemed like fun to be able to do it and we would figure it out.

Six: If you decide to embark on this 50-hour journey please let me know how your relationship experiences develop. All the formal training skills in the world are empty without the horse enjoying and trusting your company. All things special come from creative play. Once you have a healthy start on this, combining the more elaborate riding techniques and skills later will always give you better results. Your horse will trust you as you are both learning. A horse who likes you and an owner who considers how their horse feels about things may make mistakes. Not usually the kind you can't get over but rather the type you can grow from.

Seven: For those who feel quite confident driving on a single line and you wish to send your horse ahead, this is fine but watch that this is done only occasionally. This challenge is more about you doing things together. It is a good way to test your horse to see how they feel about you and the surroundings.

Eight: *Is your horse on your property?* If so, you can even take this a step further. My horses here are always in training even if we're playing. When I have horses like 7-year-old Isabela (grey mare in side photos) who is fearful of the human environment I need to help her understand she does not have to be like that. What I do is to introduce a prop she is concerned about in her paddock. In this example lets start with a plastic barrel.

I can put a barrel in her pen and she may learn to disregard it or possibly just avoid it. I can be more pro-active in the approach by placing it in her hay. Isabella actually waited for almost 3 hours before she found the courage to try to eat the hay near the barrel. She watched me doing chores and kept wondering when I would come and remove that abomination spoiling her food.

Finally on her own time she tackled it. Skirting around grabbing a few blades. Moving away and then coming back. It was a SLOW process but it was hers. Eventually she got braver after a week and would move the barrel over to get at everything edible.

I then added a small tarp and put the hay on it with the barrel. This also took time but by the end of the week she would grab the tarp and move it along with the barrel. So I added a plastic pool. You get the picture. Now she has barrels, pool, plastic noisy bottles, tarps...She always thinks about her approach and then eats.

Every time I come to feed, I rearrange things and as I started that she would leave and watch from a distance than slowly move in as I left. Now she is watching from closer and closer, almost to where she will come and eat while I am still sorting stuff. She is not starving. She is at an all she can eat low cal buffet.

Isabela working on her courage In her paddock



First introduction to props



Considering props, stealing a bite



Getting more comfortable with props



Eating wherever the props are



Danza assessing props



Danza pushing her barrel prop

Danza, my little filly who also had to develop courage, now comes and follows me as I re-arrange things. She loves playing with the props. She was terrified as her dam Helena, like Isabela, was terrified of all these human things.

Danza is now beginning to interact and wanting to play with them and me. She will tell me when she is ready, I will not impose this on her. Funny thing is now with this approach if things get too much for her Danza comes to stand beside me so I can keep her safe. Even Isabela will skirt in behind me for protection from something she is unsure of.

Many people will look at this 50 Hour Challenge and think it just takes too long. I look at it and think if I have to double that I will! If I have to spend 100 hours so a horse will trust me I will. We can try to tackle just about anything where safety is part of the relationship. Isn't that worth it? In the big scheme of things that is not a very large investment of time and it will actually be fun!

Hope you accept the challenge. This is great for new horses, old horses, young horses, and for all levels of leadership.

2019 TRAINING FOR COURAGE : Clinic, Camps, and Intensives

Anyone wishing to organize a clinic in their area please contact me through my website or email address you will find all over this newsletter and I will supply you with the details. Anyone interested in lessons when I am travelling in through or in your area please contact me before hand. When I teach clinics, I usually also teach lessons after the clinic.

SPRING CLINICS

March 30-31, BHA, Burnaby BC - Horsemanship, Western Dressage/CD, WE

April 27-28, Kelowna TFC Center - Horsemanship, Western Dressage/CD, WE

May 2-3, Paints Plus, Sherwood Park, Edmonton - Horsemanship, WD/CD, WE

May...Training in Saskatoon between Edmonton Clinic and St. Andrews...Unless another clinic is booked.

May 25-26th, 2nd Chance, St. Andrews, MB - Horsemanship, WD/CD, WE

June 1-2, Fort St. John, BC - Horsemanship, Western Dressage/CD, WE

June 8-9, Grand Prairie, AB - Horsemanship, Western Dressage/CD, WE

**** Potential clinics in Chilliwack, Ladner, Saskatoon**

SUMMER CAMPS

Summer camps are always a blast. The folks coming to these camps get along and usually make lifelong friendships. Everyone is super supportive and tons of laughter is constant characteristic of these camps. We have different themes for different camps but we always develop good horsemanship from the ground to prepare for whatever discipline or challenge so that the horses and riders can gain confidence. Outdoor arena, round pen, barnyard, trail courses, obstacles, orchard trail, canyon trails are all available. Lunch and supper are provided mostly by my son and there is always enough and will delight your palate. At the end of the camps we do a day ride to Kalamalka Lake (Provincial Park) and take the horses for a swim, picnic, and take in some gorgeous mountain trails and views. Whatever the theme of the camp is will incorporate some of the skills you would like to learn and goals set by you. It is all about you learning to be able to do anything with fun and confidence, also to experience this with like minded folks. The days usually run between 6-8 hours....And sometimes longer....



This year I am experimenting and only running two camps as I will also offer intensives for those who just can't make to camps on those dates but are really serious about changing/improving their relationship with their horse and their skill level. View that option down below.

July 22-26th 5 day: WE, Mountain Trail, Extreme trail, Cowboy Challenge, Kelowna TFC Center
August 26-30th Sept. 2-6th 10 day (wknd off): Liberty, Seat, WD/CD, WE/Trail, Kelowna TFC Center

Cost: small paddock for your horse, bring your own hay or purchase some here, your own accommodations, lunch and supper provided. \$1,100.00 & GST for 5-day, double for 10 day

*RV space may be available for rent, if you don't have a horse you can rent one here \$250/wk., free camp space is available in barnyard, if electricity is required there will be a nominal charge.

FALL CLINICS

Sept. 21-22 TFC wknd., Liberty, Kelowna TFC Center
Sept. 28-29 TFC wknd., Horsemanship, WE/WD/CD, Kelowna TFC Center
Oct. TBA Second Chance St. Andrews, MB

YEAR ROUND 5-DAY INTENSIVES:

New in 2019. I often get people who tell me they can't fit in the dates of the camps but would sure like to come and ride for a week. Well now you can. In groups of 2-5 people you pick dates during the year that go from Monday-Friday. You contact me and check to see if those dates are open on my calendar (my calendar may have more things booked than what you see in this newsletter). If the dates are clear, you pay for your 5 days and you are booked in to come and ride at the TRAINING FOR COURAGE CENTER with us in Kelowna.

Here is your invitation to come and study your relationship with your horse on a **HORSE VACATION**. You will work with me everyday on your tailor-made program designed with you and for you. I will try to help you improve your horsemanship and achieve your goals.

Horsemanship skills you might like to improve on or focus on or explore?

Relaxation and confidence
Softness and soft feel
Lateral work and collection for your horse's health, obtaining a balanced horse, CD/WD in-hand to riding
Working Equitation -obstacles, but also very importantly the Classical Dressage/Vaquero riding skills
Mountain Trail, Cowboy Challenge, and the WD necessary to compete effectively in these.
Garrocha, learn to ride CD/Vaquero moves with the Garrocha, the Dance
Confidence on trail rides and in new places
Liberty*, how to get to know your horse better and to learn how to interact with it positively
Lightness
Advanced ridden work, CD, WD, WE, Vaquero
Relationship with horses, partner/friend, spiritual

What if I could help make that happen?

You learn horsemanship with me every day in a small private group in the Beautiful Okanagan. Each day we will ride for 4-6 hours (you can ride longer if you would like and use the Training Center facilities). Each person will have a 1-hour personal lesson but then will also get to explore their skills for the rest of the time with supervision and feedback. Depending on your goals we could be in the arena, round pen, trail course, orchard trail, canyon trail, and for some, possibly, Kalamalka Lake**.

We will begin the Intensives by writing down and sharing your goals and dreams. Then we will devise your training plan to achieve this and adapt it as necessary. In all disciplines we will always build on the ground from simple to more complex skills so your horse is prepared for riding safely in a healthy way. Relaxation cues and skills will be developed so you can have softness, feel, and understand lightness. Understand the use of the aids, proper balance, and confidence in both the horse and yourself. Having fun with your horse and being able to lead it safely and effectively is what allows both of you to grow without anxiety. Learning what you CAN DO! Good Preparation, Good Attitude, Good Try, "anything is possible".

In your spare time you can hang out on the farm, go visit the multitude of wineries, go to the beach, tour the Okanagan in all of its splendor with the orchards and vineyards, visit the trestles, or go dancing at the Corral.

Cost of 5 days: Stay in our 35-foot RV you supply and prepare your own meals Cost \$1,250.00 & GST or Lodge elsewhere: Stay in a motel or stay with friends, or bring your own RV/Horse trailer. You supply your own meals (electricity if necessary, nominal charge). \$1,000.00 & GST, includes a small paddock for your horse. Bring your own hay or you can purchase hay here.

If you don't have a horse of your own or can't haul yours, you can rent one of mine \$250/wk. (advance notice is required as I may not always have one suitable available without good advance notice).

Dates Pre-Booked: so far August 12-16th

** Liberty: I only have one clinic and part of one camp where we develop Liberty. It is such an important part of an equine people relationship but many facilities are not conducive to supporting the opportunity for people to do so. It allows the horse to express itself much more because it is not under constant restraint. Many horses' interactive ability comes alive in such play. People learn to use their body language more effectively but also improve their lead while allowing their horse to be more responsible. The more responsible a horse the more freedom it can be offered. This also can free up movement in the horse and leader. When people take themselves less seriously and have fun with it both horse and leader enjoy themselves more thoroughly in this Dance.*

***Horses are not driven or given direct pressure to go into water. We show by example by ourselves, or with other horses who willingly go. Eventually horses will try to follow you. They are much less threatened to do so this way and then go because they are curious and want to join in with the others. So, get terribly inter-active some need to do it a few times before they start to really get involved.=*