

Training for Courage

By Paul Dufresne

DANCE AT LIBERTY, PART 2

In part one of Dancing at Liberty, I discussed some of the effects of positive pressure on three major zones that cause the horse to yield in various directions. We started with having the horse yield forward by focusing on zone 1, sideways with bend in zone 2, and slowing/stopping or turning away from us with a focus on zone 3.



Rib pressure and softening on circle



Pressure to nose to slow



Pressure to stop



Pressure to turn nose to rail



Pressure to turn shoulder past 90 degrees



Pressure still pushing hip away and entice with right hand to track in

In the previous article, the photos showed putting pressure on zone 3 in front of the horse's head/nose, then moving closer to their face once they have slowed and recognized that they should yield to effect a turn away from you. If your request to yield is ignored, the key is to use your whip or flag more energetically ahead of zone 3 (sometimes way ahead) until the horse slows to look at your whip/flag. As they slow, you can then wave towards the nose and as the horse starts to turn away from you (into the rail) you should wave towards what was the inside shoulder so the horse completes the turn away from you. Keep slight pressure on the head and shoulder until the horse has passed 90 degrees to the rail. Wait for the horse to start moving ahead of you so that you remain in a good driving position at zone 1. Stay ready to slowly move to zone three with your eyes if the horse tries to turn back towards you.

The controlled outside turn sends a message to the horse that you can take up

space when you wish and that they should move to another place when you ask.

This outside turn has many additional benefits in helping the horse to collect itself, to slow, stop, and rollback on the haunches but also in bending itself in a positive shape. The turn away from you also causes a horse to want to look at you. When a horse is caused to turn away and yield space it will want to look back again to make sure it is ok and that you will leave it alone after yielding space. So the horse will seek you - looking for approval for having complied. When developed correctly, this natural desire can be used to entice and draw the horse towards you.

When the horse yields to pressure in zone 3 and turns respectfully in the other direction you can add pressure from zone 1 and 2 to keep them moving forward and use zone 3 at the shoulder to move them right to the rail. Take most of the pressure off when the horse moves in the direction and manner you want. Once the horse is trying to stay where

you suggested and in the gait you wish, you should begin to move in a path more parallel to theirs. I find that when I move along with the horse it is less invasive and leaves a positive, relaxing pressure on the horse, bending correctly on a circle. In accompanying the horse on its path, we lead them but also allow them their space to be comfortable. As the horse gets comfortable with slowing, stopping, doing outside turns, and staying soft in the gait I have suggested, I will then develop the inside turn to further soften the horse and to develop a recall.

When preparing for an inside turn, I first cause the horse to turn away from me but then I keep pressure on the rear after the turn while moving myself closer to the rail. This usually causes the horse to keep turning inside to look at me. When the horse starts to turn and seek me, I stop, relax and look at them in a reinforcing way - like gazing at a good friend. As I do this, I will draw my energy back into myself in a confident posture as if I were

Training for Courage, cont'd



As he turned, I kept his energy coming forward towards me, changing the whip hand and vibrating behind me



Quiet time after the draw until he offered connection to be touched



Touching with appreciation, security, calmness

backing up. When the horse becomes more comfortable, realizing I am looking to interact, I will slowly move backward and slightly sideways from the horse to try and draw it towards me. I will wave my whip or flag behind me, away from the horse, if it looks to avoid facing me. Every time I move my flag behind me to get the horse's attention and they seek me, I will stop. Every time the horse tries to look at me or moves towards me, I will cease the pressure to reward their attempt to connect. I would repeat this until the horse starts to realize that when I bring energy back into myself I am offering some of my space for them to share with me.

If the horse has difficulty with feeling comfortable moving into my space when asked, I may have the horse move further ahead of me on the circle against the rail and then slowly move myself further ahead on the rail away from the horse towards its upcoming path. As the horse feels the change in my position and pressure, it will often turn

towards me while maintaining its forward momentum. As the horse comes in I can choose to put pressure just away from the shoulder then towards the shoulder to complete the turn or keep them coming towards me as in recall to come and stay and relax with me.

The more times you repeat outside and inside turns with positive pressure, the better the horse will learn to yield space towards and away from you, becoming more receptive and understanding that compliance is a good, secure experience. The sooner the horse starts to really understand this, the sooner it will be willing to follow any other suggestions we might have when offered in an understandable, confident way.

There can be many variations of general reactions to pressure depending on slight differences in your timing, energy, focus and where the horse is at emotionally. Part three will deal with energy and gait control. Remember to take it slow and have fun experimenting!

Paul Dufresne is a writer, performer, trainer and clinician in Pritchard, 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. Visit his website at www.trainingforcourage.com.

Editor's note: See Paul and his horses dance at liberty and much more at the upcoming Equine Extravaganza Fundraiser in Pritchard, BC on October 8th. Read about it on pages 6 & 7.