

A Hoof in the Right Direction...

Does Your Horse “Feel Good” Inside? Why It Matters.

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No matter what your horse is doing, how it feels inside, will guide their thoughts. Your horse cannot separate what it thinks, from what it feels. If your horse doesn't feel good about what he/she is doing their thoughts will be anywhere but with you. Their body by nature will want to be with their thought, creating a dangerous situation.



with me, I found they rarely were. Annie is a kind mare so I didn't notice how often she wasn't feeling good. When I started to pay attention I saw she was wearing a “do it too me look.”

I will be obedient, but I don't have to like it came ringing through loud and clear. I was at a crossroads about what to try and how.

Where To Start

Recognizing how your horse feels starts with knowing how you feel. If you don't know how to understand what you feel, you cannot understand what they feel.

Whether your horse is easy going, stoic, or hot it will express how it feels. When and how it does that, will determine if you both remain safe when it happens.

Knowing how your horse feels gives you the opportunity to defuse less than desirable outcomes.

Are your horse's thoughts with you when you are together? If your horse does not bring their thoughts to you in quiet moments, they will not look to you when the stakes are high.

How to bring your horse's thoughts back to you depends

on the situation. Search for ways that work with you and your horse. A light request is the place to start.

Allow your horse ample time to search for the answer to your request. When they find the answer on their own, they become a partner by choice, not submission.

Annie's Story

Annie, a 12-year-old Appaloosa mare, recently came to live with me. I have had horses for 30 years, but Annie flummoxed me. She would lead just fine, but at her own speed, not mine. No amount of coaxing, flag waving, or other antics on my part would change her speed. She was obedient, but resisted changing how she felt.

During my search to find how often her thoughts were

I had recently attended a horse clinic that focused on changing a horse's thought. I felt it was time to change mine, in order to help change Annie's.

Training was not going to change how Annie felt. Would it change how she felt if I let her find what I was looking for? I decided to get creative and play with a new approach.

I started by sitting in the middle of the round pen facing away from where Annie stood. I made sure my focus was clear and remained on her choosing to come be with me. It required her leaving being near her pasture mates where she felt good.

I took a bit of time but she did, placing her muzzle on my shoulder. She let out a sigh. I had let it be her choice, no longer trying to trick her to join



me. The choosing made a difference to her.

For several days I tried something different. Remaining consistent in letting her find feeling good inside while in my company. Each day we had the same results. It was time to see if the change in how she felt extended to leading her.

Using the lightest physical request, Annie walked up beside me. We walked off at a pace I chose. We both felt good. This may seem minor, but it is major piece of the future we are building together.

Additional Tips:

Watch how your horse feels in every interaction. Learn if your horse is simply obeying a command, they may not when it counts. Telltale signs are pinned ears, swishing tail, glassy eyed stare, a checked out look to name a few.

Watch for when your horse's focus is on you. If it is their ears will be forward waiting for what you will ask. If you are working with your horse and they are constantly looking elsewhere, you don't have their attention.

If you are working in a round pen and they are constantly looking over the rail, you don't have their attention. If you are riding and they do not respond with a light request to what you are asking, their thoughts are elsewhere.

If you ask to go one way they want to go another, their thoughts are not

with you. Observe your horse and how they feel when you are not interacting with them. Watch where their focus is and when it changes.

Identify visual signs of how your horse is feeling inside. Then close your eyes and try to identify what you have just seen, through feel.

Have a clear intention of what you want your horse to put its thoughts on. Make sure your intention is the same as what you expect them to do. If not it will only confuse them.

Remember:

How your horse feels inside matters a great deal to them. It's

of benefit when it matters to you too. Change starts in small moments. Your horse cannot separate what it feels from what it thinks.

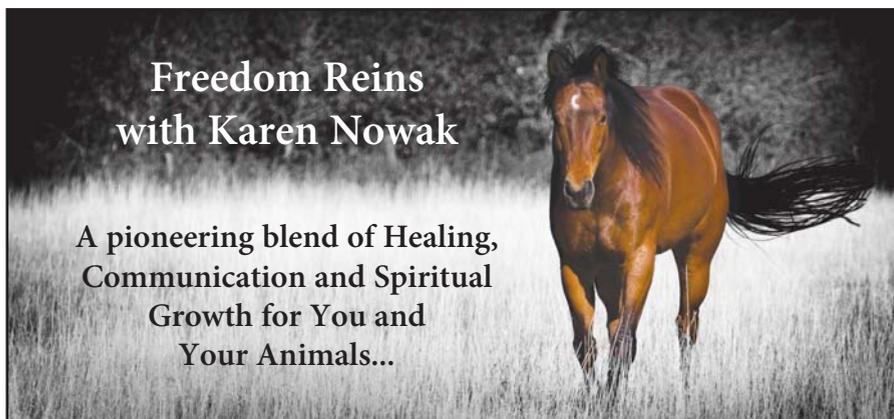
Learning where your horse's thoughts are and how to change them could save your life. Your horse will seek to feel better about what you are asking if given the opportunity.

Training is valuable, but you can't train how they feel. Consistency, repetition, and time will grow your power of observation.

Change a thought and you change the feeling. Understanding these basic principals and putting them into practice will reap rewards in time spent with your horse.

Resources to learn more about changing a horses thought: www.tommoates.com, www.harrywhitney.com, and www.goodhorsemanship.com.au

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