

EquiHorse Newsletter 1

You're probably interested in knowing the most common reason why people seek my services. No, it's not for trailer loading. Although I'm often asked to help with trailer loading problems, what I rapidly discover is that the horse's problem is much more basic than not wanting to load onto a trailer.

Almost all problems labeled as 'leading or loading problems' are really CONTROL problems. I don't mean CONTROL in that you have every contraption available attached to your horse so he has no choice in the matter. What I mean is that your horse is in your CONTROL in that he is paying attention and 'listening' to you and that he also respects and trusts you. When you don't have your horse's attention, respect, and trust, you don't really have control of him . . . even if he is at the end of your lead rope!

I'm sure you've seen or experienced this yourself. You're leading your horse and he hears another horse whinnying or sees another horse being led out of the barn. Before you know it, he's tuned you out. If he spins around to see the other horse, you might get bumped into or even knocked down. I hope this hasn't happened to you. About a month ago I got a call from a lady that it did happen to.

EquiTale #1 'Polish your ART work'

She had been hurt while leading her horse and was now so afraid of him that she would find any excuse not to work with him. Because I always like to see the owner/handler interact with the horse to get a feel for how to address the problem, I asked if she felt safe bringing the horse out of the stall. She replied 'Yes, I can get him into the arena for you.' She put a chain over his nose and as she brought him out of the stall, he was whinnying and spinning around her. Even though she still had hold of the lead rope, 'he was out of control.'

The first thing I did when she handed him over to me was to exchange the chain shank for a simple cotton lead. She immediately asked 'Are you going to be able to hold onto him without the chain? I certainly can't.'

I told her that the chain could inflict pain, which would be a distraction, and I wanted him to be able to focus entirely on me. After thinking this over for a minute, she replied: 'That makes so much sense. This is the approach I've been really looking for.'

I proceeded to work on getting his attention by asking him to turn and face me and also worked on building his respect by asking him to back away from me as I slowly approached him. He stopped calling out to the other horses and started to focus on me. After repeating these exercises many times (like we show in our video) he was completely focused on me. It was only then that I looked for his trust by asking him to step towards me with light pressure on the lead line. The owner commented that she was 'truly impressed with how her horse focused on me and was suddenly so attentive. It was wonderful!'

It had gotten quiet so quickly, that the other people in the barn came running to see what had happened to the horse. Everyone was amazed to see the horse standing focused and quiet, and consistently responding to my requests. Why? Because I polished his Attention, Respect, and Trust work (ART work).

I've been back to work with that horse several times, and each time we start by polishing up his ART work. And each time I work with him, he improves. He responds correctly to these exercises more quickly and stays focused longer. And his owner feels safe with him again.

These ART work exercises are the most basic ones you need to teach your horse to build the proper foundation for everything else you want to do with him. If you want to see a video clip of these exercises, you can find it on our website.

I hope that I've made you aware of the most basic of natural horse training/teaching principles . . . **Establish Control of Your Horse.**