

Evaluating Your Horse

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Before you can fix any “problems” you might have with your horse, you have to identify what the problem is. You don’t take your car to the garage and say, “Something is wrong with my car. Fix it”. (You’d probably have a big bill if you did that.)

Instead, you tell the garage what the symptoms are and from that they decide if it’s the transmission or something else. Same with your horse. You have to evaluate the symptoms and based on your evaluation, “fix” the horse.

It’s important to know the tendencies of each horse so you have an idea of what you need to address first. That is, do I teach my horse to respect me or do I teach my horse to trust me?

Say for example, your horse runs at you trying to take your space. Running at you is a sign (or a symptom) of **aggression** and trying to take your space is a lack of **respect**. That’s the evaluation of the horse’s actions.

Knowing that your horse is aggressive you don’t want to start by trying to teach him more tolerance. Some people call this desensitizing or sacking out. But beware! You don’t want to make an aggressive horse more tolerant!

Instead you want to put a little fear into him and then turn that fear into respect. Remember, increasing the horse’s tolerance is like teaching the horse not to respond to stimuli! Make sure that your horse will always respond to stimuli. Cues are a form of stimuli and we want our horse trained to (or responding to) our cues.

And if you want to know how to turn aggression into fear and then into respect – well you have to watch the video “The Aggressive Horse”. The techniques can’t be explained in just words. You need to see the horse’s actions and the handler’s (in this case Bob’s) actions and listen to what Bob says as he’s working with the horse.

What if your horse shies away from you when you approach him or moves to the back of his stall when you go to get him. How do you evaluate these actions? Because the horse is moving away from you, the horse is either afraid of you i.e., fearful, or you have a horse that respects you very well and is willing to move out of your space.

Take home message:

Evaluate your horse to determine if he tends to be:

Aggressive – comes towards you quickly in an uncontrolled manner.

Fearful - moves away from you in an uncontrolled manner

The aggressive horse needs to be made to respect you but putting a little fear into him and then turning that fear into respect.

The fearful horse needs to be made to trust you before you can teach him to respect you.