

Teaching vs. Training

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Bob makes a distinction between TRAINING and TEACHING horses. His methods are designed to TEACH rather than to TRAIN.

TEACHING implies that the horse UNDERSTANDS; whereas, TRAINING implies a conditioned response to a stimulus that is not necessarily understood by the horse.

In TEACHING, the horse is always offered choices without the use of restraining devices (e.g., side-reins). In comparison, TRAINING most often uses restraining devices in order to "force" the horse to do what is wanted.

However, because the use of the word "training" is so ingrained in our minds for all activities used to "TEACH" or "TRAIN" the horse, we will often use that familiar word in our discussions. But please understand that Bob's methods are really "TEACHING" not "TRAINING" methods.

Our Goals One of life's greatest treasures is a harmonious relationship based on respect and trust. When we achieve this with our horse . . . well, that is "priceless!"

You know you've earned your horse's respect and trust when your horse:

- wants to be with you and not because you have a dish of grain.
- is always willing to allow you to keep your personal space.
- enjoys the attention you give him and looks forward to working with you.

What is Needed? One of the best things about Bob's methods is that you don't have to go out and spend hundreds of dollars on special equipment or so called training tools. You most likely already have everything that you need (e.g., lead and longe line, dressage whip) to learn Bob's methods right now!

Communication that Makes Sense! Bob has gone to great lengths to develop a system of communication between horse and handler that truly makes sense. All communication takes place through some combination of the five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste and smell). In our dialogues with horses, these interactions can be in the form of CUES or DISTRACTIONS. Here are some examples of each.

- **SIGHT as CUE:** Longe whip positioned for a transition while longeing
- **SIGHT as DISTRACTION:** A plastic bag blowing in the wind
- **SOUND as CUE:** A whip crack as a fear motivator for getting attention
- **SOUND as DISTRACTION:** Another horse whinnying

- **TOUCH as CUE:** Pressure on a rein, looking for head position change
- **TOUCH as DISTRACTION:** A fly landing on the horse's body
- **TASTE & SMELL as CUE:** Not recommended for it may become a bribe which will only work if the horse chooses to partake of it
- **TASTE & SMELL as DISTRACTION:** Walking your horse over fresh green grass

How do we go about It? Bob starts by asking the horse to do a simple exercise. He uses no restraints so the horse has many choices of how to respond to the exercise. The the correct choice is physically the easiest response. By teaching without the use of restraints, the horse willingly develops a "want to" attitude.

All of the lessons overlap as they flow from one level to the next, making it easier for the horse to understand what is being taught. Therefore, the horse learns more quickly and advances further with a more consistent performance.

Why would we do it this way? By teaching in this fashion, there are no regrets or any need to undo previously taught exercises. All the cues that are taught to the horse in the groundwork lessons are the same cues used in the riding lessons. He never teaches or uses a cue that would become inappropriate at a later stage of development. Take for example voice commands: Bob doesn't believe in using voice commands as teaching cues because it is our language, not the horse's. After all, if you are going to successfully communicate with a mutual understanding of one another, both parties need to be speaking the same language, (haven't heard a horse say "WHOA" yet, have you?). Furthermore, if someday you choose to show your horse, many disciplines won't allow the use of voice commands in the show ring.

The only appropriate use of the voice is to give praise to the horse. Even though the horse doesn't understand the words you are saying, he does understand the tone of your voice in addition to a stroke or pet on the neck (touch sense).

Safety first! Make sure you follow safe procedures with all the equipment you use (e.g., don't wrap the lead line around your fingers or hand). Also make sure you work in a location that is safe for both you and your horse (e.g., good footing, no dangerous equipment or objects). No matter what you are doing with your horse, remember to think and act safely.