

# ~ Class Lecture: Horse Behavior ~

This is a handout that I give my colt breaking and training classes. It is easy to see the correlation between man & horse and God & man. I will be referring back to this handout and will elaborate on the different parts as the book progresses.

## **Traditional Thought Process**

**Primary Objective:** Get horse to do a job

**Primary Obstacle:** Horse will not do the job

How do I get my horse to do the job?

**To eliminate all problems you will ever have with your horse, change your objective.**

## **Alternative Thought Process**

**Primary Objective:** Horse and Person becoming one; “perfect unity” (Perfection)

-The will of the horse becoming the will of the person: instead of 2 forces moving against each other, 2 forces moving together as one, “His legs are my legs, we are one body” (Ray Hunt).

Ray Hunt says, “It’s like a dance. You are leading and the horse following, but you are both moving as one. It’s like a peaceful waltz in perfect unity.” Not a high school, uncoordinated bumpin’, grindin’ hot and sweaty, seizer fit.

**\*With the second objective you will not have obstacles, because the objective is to eliminate the cause of all obstacles. You are finding a cure instead of treating symptoms.\***

**\*The first measures outward status to determine progress. In this mind set, perfection is unattainable, and has the potential of creating problems.**

**\*The second deals with inward status to measure progress. This will not cause problems and has the potential of perfection.**

My goal for this class has not been to help treat your symptoms, but to help YOU find the cure. **THE CURE FOR YOUR HORSE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR HORSE AND EVERYTHING TO DO WITH YOU.** As soon as a person realizes this, they have taken the first step in becoming a horseman or horsewoman.

### **Horse’s Will**

#### **Primary Driving Factors**

- 1) Survival/Self-Preservation
- 2) Companionship
- 3) Comfort

**1 Variable Factor = Hormones**

### **Man’s Will**

**To do a job**

### **Major underlying factors:**

- 1) Confidence
- 2) Energy

## Confidence

- Confidence is the main underlying factor which drives all 3 of the primary driving factors.
- A horse will experience **comfort** when they are **confident** in a person or situation.
- A horse develops **companionship** when they are **confident** in someone or something.
- A horse is driven by **self-preservation** when they lose **confidence** in a person or a situation.

Increase in **Confidence** = Decrease in **Self-Preservation** (vice versa)

**Comfort and Companionship** Increase = Increase in **Confidence** (vice versa)

**Comfort and Companionship** Increase = Decrease in **Self-Preservation** (vice versa)

## **Measures of Confidence Level**

- 1) Head height (best measure of confidence level)
  - a) High = Bothered/Unconfident
  - b) Low = Relaxed/Confident
- 2) Tail (clamped down/relaxed)
- 3) Eyes (wide-eyed/dopey)
- 4) Movements
  - a) Tight, stiff, quick movements from fear, braced up = Unconfident
  - b) Relaxed, free moving (but not scared), supple = Confident

## Energy

-Energy is often a major underlying factor of self-preservation, which inhibits the other 2 driving factors; comfort and companionship.

\*As the **Energy level** decreases ~ **Self-Preservation** decreases ~ which opens the door to increase **Comfort** and **Companionship** (when presented in the correct manner)\*

## Obstacles in Accomplishing a Job

**1<sup>st</sup> Obstacle** – Horse submitting to man's will.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Obstacle** – Communicating man's will.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Obstacle** – Obeying commands.

**4<sup>th</sup> Obstacle** – Completing the job.

In order to get a horse to do a job for us, they must first submit their will and accept our will. Then we must try to communicate our will, and finally they will need to obey our commands.

Many people try to overcome the 4<sup>th</sup> obstacle without paying any attention to the previous 3.

## Question to Ask

**Does the horse want to do what you are asking?**

**Does he know how to do what you are asking?**

## I. 1st Obstacle – Submitting to Man's Will

- Two types of Submission

A) Willing

B) Unwilling

**Both are effective to get the job done. However, unwilling has negative consequences.**

**(A) Unwilling Submission “Giving to Pressure”**

**- Attained by Force**

- 1) Horse submits because he has no choice.
- 2) Body submits to will of human, but the mind has not.
- 3) Horse would rather be somewhere else.
- 4) Horse becomes a “slave.”
  - Rebels if gets a chance  
Example: run, buck, brace up
  - Horse is driven to do job.
  - Horse does the job, but doesn’t like it.  
Example: tight, head raised, maneuvers have braces

**(B) Willing Submission “Seeking Relief”**

**- Attained by Free Choice**

- 1) The horse chooses to do the job.
- 2) Set it up so the horse would have it no other way than to do what you want to do.
- 3) Horses are driven by comfort. Make it comfortable to do the job.  
“Make the wrong thing difficult and the right thing easy” (Ray Hunt).
- 4) In this way the horse and person become partners. The horse has a choice.
- 5) Requires patience, timing, and feel.
- 6) A person can ask a lot more of a horse once they have submitted willingly.
- 7) Willingly submitted horses try to please their riders.

**Two Levels of Submission & Two Kinds of Horses**

**I. Ground Level: “Turning to You”**

- Our first approach to saddle and ride.
- For them to follow our will, we must meet their driving factors.
  - Not be scared of us, “self preservation”
  - Offer them “comfort” and “companionship”
- This can be attained in the pasture and with their buddies. So why do they need us?
- We must develop a need for us in their life.
- This is done by putting pressure on them until they turn to us, and then relieving the pressure.
- **“It takes pressure for relief to be effective and relief for pressure to be effective.”**
- If there is any hope of perfection, this must be attained before we get on them. This is easily achieved in a day.

**A) First Type of Horse: Those that haven’t been handled**

- It takes longer to gain trust.
- But relief, comfort, and companionship are much easier to attain.
- Very little pressure has to be applied for them to turn to you for relief (only time).
- No false teachings – when pressure is applied they usually give.

**B) Second Type of Horse: Those that have been handled**

- Trust, comfort, and companionship have already been established.
- But is very hard to establish the need for you.
- In many cases, a great deal of pressure must be applied for relief to have meaning.

- May have developed false teachings. They lean into pressure instead of giving.

## **II. On Their Back: “Two Becoming One”**

- If the first has not been established this is very difficult.
- This type of submission is never ending, until perfection is attained. Until perfect trust, obedience, and communication are established and they never leave your will.
- **Achieving perfection:** following submission, there must be a perfect level of communication.

## **II. 2<sup>nd</sup> Obstacle – Communicating Man’s Will**

- How does man communicate with horse?  
We don’t speak the same language, or think the same way.
- Non-verbal communication  
Example: body language, feel
- Communication involves two individuals (two-way communication).
- The person must learn to read the horse. What is the horse saying?  
Example: head raised = bothered, head lowered = relaxed
- We are good about communicating our will to horse, but do we listen?
- **We communicate through their driving and underlying factors.**
  - **Self-preservation, comfort, companionship, confidence, energy**
- 1) A person can get more done with a horse out of trust (comfort, companionship) than out of fear (self-preservation).
- 2) A person must decide in what manner they will communicate with the horse.
  - “Slave” or “Partnership”
  - “Tell the horse” or “Ask the horse”

After the first level of submission has been met, the most effective method of communication is through 3 factors.

### **3 Factors of Communication**

- 1) **Feel**
- 2) **Timing**
- 3) **Balance**

**\*The rate a person is able to move toward perfection rests entirely upon these three factors\***

### **“Feeling” of the Horse**

Ray Hunt says, “You can’t buy it and I can’t give it to you.” You can read all the books in the world, have people tell you what “feel” is, see people that ride through “feel,” but you will never have it until you experience it. It can only be achieved between you and the horse. People can help situate you, so that you and the horse are in a position to experience “feel,” but ultimately it is between you and the horse. I can tell my class what to do and show them what to do, but ultimately it is between them and the horse. **If you can’t feel when things are perfect, how do you expect to attain perfection?**

Often perfection will pass by in a split second and then vanish. A person needs to recognize these split seconds and relieve the applied pressure. It is through receiving relief that the horse

develops the desire to stay in perfection. Then the seconds can be multiplied to minutes. **A 30-minute ride with 2 minutes of perfection is better than a 3-hour ride with no perfection.** The 2 minutes may be multiplied. However, the 3 hours without perfection will lead to an unwillingly submitted horse, leading to resentment.

### **III. Obstacle – Obeying Commands**

**3 Main reasons horses don't obey commands:**

**1) Self-Preservation**

- Due to lack of trust

**2) Disobedience (bitter resistance against commands)**

- Due to false teaching (operating through unwilling submission)

**3) Lack of Understanding/Communication**

- Horse needs more time, patience, and teaching

- **A person must learn to distinguish between the three, if they are ever to become a good horseman/woman.**

- The person must learn to read the horse to determine why the horse is not obeying.

- This is extremely crucial because **the person's reaction to the horse's action will greatly impact the horse's mind set and overall trust for the person.**

- **Resistance arises as a result of these three factors.**

- **As resistance level rises, self-preservation rises (Fight or Flight).**

- **The resistance level of the horse is a direct result of the amount of pressure put on by the person.**

### **Resistance in Obeying Commands**

**#1 Reason = Horse hasn't submitted to man's will**

**3 Stages of Resistance:**

**1) Disagreement**

- Good, builds trust. Horses must learn it is always easier to obey our commands.

- Horse builds confidence in your decisions

- Horse needs to learn that your decisions are always right. Be consistent.

  - It is always easier to obey your commands.

- Person always has best interests in mind for horse.

- Don't give him more than he can handle.

**2) Arguing**

- Heated disagreement.

- A result of false teaching (operating through unwilling submission).

- Needed sometimes, but not always necessary.

- Often results when confidence is lost and self-preservation starts to kick in.

- If caused by too much pressure by person, not good. Slow down, build confidence.

- If caused by a stimulus that scares the horse, this is part of starting colts (doubling a scared horse). Go back and build the horse's confidence, slow down and start over.

### **3) Fighting**

- Due to false teaching.
  - In confused and scared horses, this is caused by impatience of the person. Slow down!
  - There is no good that can ever come from fighting with a horse. All we do is shatter their confidence. Depending on the intensity of the fight it may take a hundred good experiences to offset the fight and sometimes they never fully do regain confidence.
  - A horse will always win a fight against a man if they choose to, they are bigger and stronger.
- 
- However, there are some horses that have been handled under false teaching and have been taught to fight. They become filled with resentment and have been taught to fight against commands (example: shoeing).
  - Do not fight with a horse. If you do not have time to slowly build their confidence, set it up so that they are fighting against themselves.  
Example: tie their head solid, tie a leg up, rope a hind leg with another horse, tie a leg back, set your hands solid on their neck (collecting).
  - Make sure that when they are done fighting against themselves, you are there to offer them a better, more comfortable way.
  - We are not trying to punish them for wanting to fight (they did not want to fight in the first place, they were taught to fight) we are showing them there is an easier way.

### **Example**

To better explain the different levels of resistance I will give an example of trying to achieve direction (suppleness through poll and loin). An example of **agreement** would be as soon as the slack is taken out of the rein, applying pressure to the horse's mouth, the horse seeks relief by breaking in the poll, softens through the loin, and willingly gives his eye, putting slack in the rein.

**Disagreement** – When the slack is taken out of the rein the horse hesitates, the person has to wait for the horse to give (usually driven by lack of communication).

**Solution** – Patience, wait for the horse to give. Look for the “smallest change and the slightest try.” Moving the horse's hindquarters and putting life in the feet may help to put slack in the rein (Stage 1 – foundation of maneuvers). As soon as the horse puts slack in the rein relieve the pressure.

**Argument** – When the slack is taken out of the rein the horse's head comes up causing the horse to be stiff through the poll and loin (usually driven by self-preservation or lack of communication).

**Solution** – Slow down and lighten the pressure until the horse's head comes down, then wait for the horse to give.

**Fighting** – When slack is taken out of the rein the horse flips or shakes his head (usually driven by resentment).

**Solution – NOT GOOD!** It is easier for horses with bad teeth to become resentful to pressure on the bit (get your horse's teeth checked). However, bad teeth or not, it is always because of too much pressure applied, too much direction. This is not an easy problem to fix. It is far better to never let it get this far. For best results I set my hands on the horse's neck and apply light pressure getting the horse to flex in the poll (vertical direction). This may take a while, because the horse is resentful to pressure and will try to root against the bit or flip their head. Once they have learned to give to pressure and relax, flexing in the poll vertically, then I lightly try to get them to give their nose and break in the poll horizontally, and submit their hindquarters. They must learn to willingly submit again, driven by a soft feel, instead of unwilling submission (false-teaching).

It is also important to note that in order for a horse to elevate or flip their head their hindquarters must be underneath them. By getting a horse's hindquarters willingly submitted (Stage 1), the horse will quit fighting and arguing against the bit.

The man and horse relationship is similar to the relationships we have with people. The level of our relationship is based on the amount of agreement we have. If we agree on the big things (willing submission) the little things (obeying commands) will most often fall into place. However, if there is no agreement on the large issues, although we may have come to agreement on some smaller issues, when our relationship is put to the test it will fall apart.

Because horses are prey animals, trust is the main issue. We must gain trust on the ground, on their back, standing, walking, trotting, loping, and galloping. If speed exceeds confidence, the trust that was previously established most often is lost and must be re-established. Horses are very forgiving and with time will learn to trust us again. However, similar to us, we can only shatter that trust so many times before they learn that we are not trustworthy. The amount of time the horse was ridden after losing confidence will determine how long it will take to build confidence and gain trust again. Some horses with a history of riding without confidence will never fully be able to trust.

A horse is going to have to run into some resistance from time to time, until our will for the horse has become the horse's will. However, make sure that your relationship is based on agreements and not on disagreements, arguments, or fights. If the man and horse are not operating in agreement, it is either because of false teachings or because of poor communication by the human.

#### **IV. Obstacle – Completing the Job**

**\*Resistance is what keeps us from completing the job.**

**4 Things Need To Be Established To Prevent Resistance:**

##### **A) Willing Submission**

Definition – When a request is made the horse willingly performs the task requiring little to no pressure; **it is the horse's idea**. After initial contact the horse performs the task on a loose rein and with no leg pressure.

## **B) Good Communication**

Definition – Learning to read, feel, and understand what the horse is saying in response to our request (Communication involves two individuals, what is the horse saying?). We communicate through the horse's driving and underlying factors along with feel, timing, and balance

## **C) Balanced Life to Direction Ratio**

**Life** – The ability to move the horse, with any speed at any time.

- When the person's legs are lightly fanned the horse should move their feet in the direction we want, with the speed that we want.

**Direction** – When the slack is taken out of the rein the horse puts the slack back in the rein with suppleness through the poll and loin.

### **a) Vertical Direction – (Atlas Vertebrae)**

When the slack is taken out of both reins, the horse breaks in the poll vertically, willingly putting the slack back into the reins. This should be achieved at all speeds; standing, walking, trotting, loping, and galloping.

### **b) Horizontal Direction – (Axis Vertebrae)**

When the slack is taken out of one rein, the horse puts slack back into the rein (left and right), with suppleness through the poll and loin. Horizontal Direction should be achieved at all speeds; standing, walking, trotting, loping, and galloping.

1) Break in the poll.

2) Nose should be directly underneath the eye.

3) Should not be able to see any white in the eye.

- When the horse is stiff through the poll he will be looking forward and we can see the white in his eye. When he breaks in the poll, "giving the eye," he will look back and the white will turn black.

4) Poll and loin should make a perfect "C."

- Should be able to ride a perfect circle ("C" is half an "O").

- After tipping the nose, the front feet and hind feet should travel on the same path as the nose making a curved line.

**False Direction** – The horse puts slack back into the rein by giving his nose, without breaking in the poll; a "rubber-necked" horse. On the outside the horse is giving, but on the inside they are tight and stiff (unwilling submission).

- Poll and loin are "I" shaped instead of "C" shaped in turns.

- Results in dropped shoulders, leaning out in turns, kicking hindquarters out or hopping in spins and rollbacks, and not holding a pivot foot.

- Also results in rubber-necked horses, hard mouths, stiff movements, missing leads and cross firing.

## **Balancing the ratio**

The ratio is determined by the speed with which we can willingly bring the life up, and willingly direct it on a set line (straight or curved), without losing “direction” (suppleness through the poll and loin).

**\*The horse’s feet are directed by both our reins and our legs. Our reins only show them where to go, our feet get them there.** Our reins are the steering wheel which tells our horses where to go. Our legs are the gas pedals which bring life to the direction, enabling them to move willingly. If we show them where to go with our reins and they do not move, they most often need more life, not direction. If they do not receive the needed **life** to help **direct** the feet, but instead receive more **direction** from the reins, they will often become **resentful** to the **direction** by: elevating, flipping, or shaking their head, or rooting their nose against the bit. Or they will become numb and dull. All are forms of unwilling submission.

## **4 Types of Horses and Riders**

- 1) No life, no direction**
- 2) Life with no direction**
- 3) No life and direction**
- 4) Life with direction**

**\*The horse’s head is directed with the reins.** When the slack is taken out of the reins, if the horse does not put slack back into the reins, the horse is being ridden in unwilling submission/false teaching (wearing pressure instead of giving to pressure).

There are 2 different factors here, “direction” and “life.” We run into 2 problems with our horses, we can’t get them to go on our path, and we can’t get them motivated to go at all. It is easier to get a horse on our path if they are already moving. The goal is to start slow and build speed. Start simple and get more complicated. Get direction at a walk, then life. Then start putting the two together. Get direction and develop a soft feel at a walk, then get life. Once you have the life then try to direct it.

First, just try to go straight in a perfect line. Keep the horse directly between your hands and feet, on a loose rein, no leg pressure, and traveling on the set path you have chosen. This is the first step to perfection: life on a straight line. Then gradually start to complicate things and keep the perfection. Start making turns and changing directions. If perfection is lost, go straight until it is perfect again, until they are riding perfectly between your hands and feet.

Keep building this confidence, until any path you put them on they stay perfectly between your hands and feet. Whether it is loping circles, making turns, backing up, tracking cows, any line whether straight, or curved, forward or back, they stay on it. It’s all about life, and direction. It would be scary to try to accomplish our job with all life and no direction, but on the other hand with all direction and no life, we would not get anywhere and our horse would get very sluggish and numb to our cues. We need to find a balance and the goal is always perfection. Whenever perfection is lost, go to a place where it can be attained again. Try to give your horse a job, somewhere to go, something to do. They get bored and numb the longer you stay doing the same thing without giving them something new to work on.

## **6 Steps in Building a Foundation (Direction and Life)**

- 1) Submit and contain life on the ground
  - Stand quietly to saddle, bridle, and mount.
- 2) Life on the ground with saddle
  - Loping calmly and relaxed with saddle.
- 3) Direction on the ground
  - Horizontal direction and disengaging hindquarters (Stage 1 – Foundation of Maneuvers).
  - Putting slack in the rein when slack is taken out; suppleness through the poll and loin (direction).
  - Pivoting around the inside front foot, stopping forward motion, disengaging hindquarters (Stage 1 – Foundation of Maneuvers).
- 4) Direction on their back
  - Disengaging hindquarters, “Doubling” (safety valve).
  - Standing, walking, trotting, and loping.
  - Putting slack in the rein when pulled on and stopping forward motion, pivoting around inside front foot at all speeds (Stage 1).
- 5) Life on their back
  - Loping calmly and relaxed with rider.
- 6) Life with direction
  - Supple through poll and loin, directing hindquarters to stay on a line.
  - Direction and Stage 1.

## **D) Solid Foundation of Maneuvers**

Two types:

- a) Mechanical
- b) Mental

### **- Mechanical**

- Total control of:
  - 1) Head and Neck
  - 2) Shoulders
  - 3) Hindquarters

**Definition of Mechanical** – The ability to move the 3 parts of the horse in any direction to accomplish any job (4 stages).

### **1) Stage 1 – Hindquarters**

- **Lateral movement of the hindquarters.** Stopping the inside front foot and **pivoting the other feet around it.**
  - Should be able to walk the hindquarters around the inside front foot on a loose rein. The hindquarters should move off our leg like an oiled-up hinge. After an initial cue (rein, leg) the horse should perform at least a quarter of a circle on a loose rein and no leg pressure. **Stage 1 is about submitting the hindquarters and is the most important stage in the mechanical**

**foundation of maneuvers.** Stage 1 enables the horse to perform the other 3 stages in the mechanical foundation of maneuvers. If any of the following stages (2, 3, or 4) are lacking, it is because Stage 1 is lacking.

Example – Lightly take the slack out of your rein and lightly bring your calf into the side of the horse. If the horse does not respond, make contact with your spur to the horse’s side. If the horse still does not move, run the rowel of your spur up the side of the horse (only in lazy horses, not in a young horse that does not know what you want). Do not poke the horse with the spur. This will cause the horse to tighten up. We want to bring the life into the horse not cause them to become tight. Once you have the life then direct it, stop the forward motion and pivot around the inside front foot. Repeat this process: apply calf pressure, make light contact with spur, and run the rowel up the side of the horse. Eventually when you lightly bring your calf into the horse’s side, they will pivot around the inside front foot on a loose rein and no leg pressure. It is important that when the horse moves off your leg pressure you remove the pressure. In this way you teach the horse to move off the pressure of your leg instead of learning to wear the pressure of your leg, as they are moving. This is very important when going into Stages 3 and 4. Once you remove leg pressure the horse should take at least 2 to 3 steps on their own. This is willing submission, “after an initial cue the horse performs the task on a loose rein and no leg pressure – It’s the horse’s idea.” If it’s the horse’s idea, we shouldn’t have to drive him to do it.

“Doubling” (safety valve) – Submitting the hindquarters in a high self-preservation situation. Example to the left – Tip nose to the left pulling out (not back) at roughly a 90-degree angle from the jaw (rein should not be longer than a foot). Right rein should be long enough that the horse can bring his nose all the way to your left stirrup and still have a float in the right rein. Your inside shoulder should be higher, you should have more weight on your right butt cheek, and your head should be slightly tipped to the right side of the horse’s neck (put more weight in outside stirrup). Bring left leg into the horse’s left side to direct the hindquarters to the right.

Goal – When forward motion stops, the horse will stop driving with the hindquarters and pulling with the front end. The horse will “disengage” the hindquarters stopping the driving motion. The front left leg will change from a forward motion “leaning” to the left, to “pushing” the hindquarters around the left front leg using centrifugal force. When this happens the horse will put slack in the rein bringing their head and neck to the left, arching their ribs to the right, and pushing the hindquarters to the right around the left front foot. **They should accomplish this in less than 3 steps from the time you take the slack out of the rein.** If they cannot do it in less than 3 steps in a walk, do not try to do it in a trot and lope.

We may have to sacrifice the head to get the feet sometimes. Like flagging a horse tied to a post, they may hit the end of the rope and raise their head before they disengage their hindquarters. **When the feet get right, the head will be right.** After a horse hits the end of the firm lead rope a few times they then start preparing to move their feet before the slack is taken all the way out of the rein. Apply the same concept to your horse when getting them to pivot around the inside front foot. However, **always** come back and make sure they are soft in the face, “giving” their eye (direction). Always remember to keep the direction (head and neck) to life (feet) ratio balanced.

## **2) Stage 2 – Pulling with the Hindquarters**

### **- Hindquarters pulling the horse in a reverse motion.**

Example – Do Stage 1 a few steps each direction and lightly pull back on both reins, as the hindquarters are moving. When the horse takes a step back, remove the pressure and let him rest. Eventually when you lightly take the slack out of one rein (example – left) and bring your left spur into the horse, they will pick up their left hind foot and bring it back. Then lightly bring in your right spur and bring the right hind foot back. If they go forward return to Stage 1 (stopping the forward motion and pivoting around the inside front foot). Eventually you will be backing your horse independently of your reins, using your feet to pick up the horse's hind feet and set them back. It will also help your horse if you slightly lean forward taking the weight off the hindquarters when you are backing them.

You are asking the hindquarters to move, blocking them when they go forward, and are giving the horse relief when they choose to move their hindquarters back. Eventually the horse will begin to pull with the hindquarters when you bring life into them. If you want to speed your horse up in a reverse motion, speed up Stage 1 back and forth and then bring the speed into the back. Pulling harder on the reins only causes the horse to elevate their head and back crookedly. By bringing the life into the hindquarters, the horse is then able to pull with the hindquarters allowing the horse to back fast and straight. If team ropers would work on Stage 2 in the box, it would eliminate most of their problems like backing crookedly, swinging their hindquarters out of the corner, rearing, and not wanting to stand still.

This stage is extremely important for teaching the horse to back up and stop. It is important when backing our horses that they are pulling with their hindquarters and not pushing with the front feet. The first step in backing should always be with the hindquarters pulling, not the front feet pushing. If the horse is pushing with the front feet, possible problems may include dead feet, laziness, raising their head, over-flexion, and backing crookedly. Pulling with the hindquarters eliminates all these problems and will help a lot with your stops. When stopping a horse, I pull on both reins and let them come to a slow stop. Then I immediately go into Stage 1, making quarter turns back and forth, and then go into Stage 2. The horse eventually learns that when I take the slack out of both reins and sit down, their hindquarters need to stop and run backwards. This teaches them to really bury their butt when they stop, without elevating their head and getting resentful to the reins.

## **3) Stage 3 – Hindquarters and Shoulders**

### **- Lateral movement of both the shoulders and hindquarters together.**

Example – Lateral movement to the right – When a horse becomes solid in Stage 1, if we put our left foot into them and lightly tip their nose to the left, they should immediately swing their hindquarters to the right. Then all we have to do is draw on the outside rein (right) and get forward motion. As long as the horse's hindquarters continue to move laterally and the horse has forward motion, they will cross over in front (laterally with shoulders). One way to achieve this is to ride parallel with the fence, then swing the hindquarters out so that the horse is at a 45-degree angle with the fence. If the horse stays at a 45-degree angle with forward motion, he will cross over in front. When the horse crosses its front feet, relieve the pressure. Be sure to block

the horse with your outside right rein when you kick the hindquarters out. If you do not, the horse will go past the 45-degree angle with the fence, to a 90-degree angle and then it is impossible to have forward motion and cross over in front.

This method is ok (45-degree angle with the fence) in the beginning to teach your horse to move laterally with the shoulders. However, make sure that the horse learns to move laterally with their shoulders and hindquarters together. If not, they will always move off your outside leg in a counter arc, which will cause major problems when going into Stage 4 (pivoting around the inside hind foot). The problem will appear when you bring your outside leg into the horse to spin them. They will always have their nose tipped to the outside of the circle instead of the inside. They will be arced the wrong way (outside of the circle, instead of inside) and this will lead to them dropping their shoulders and swinging their hindquarters out in your spins.

Goal – When we fan our left leg the horse should immediately step laterally to the right with the left front foot. If he does not, go back to Stage 1 and get his hindquarters moving off your leg again, and then come back to the shoulders. The end result should be walking, trotting, and loping in a straight line, and when we lightly fan our left leg the horse moves in a lateral motion, crossing the front feet to the right, with vertical direction (collection).

Preparation for Stage 4 – The final step of Stage 3 before entering into Stage 4 should be: from a standing position, when we fan our outside leg (example – left) our horse should pick up the inside front foot first (right). To achieve this, move your horse in Stage 1 (pivoting around the inside left front foot; example – hindquarters to the right) and lightly pull on your outside rein (right) keeping the hindquarters moving. When the horse takes a lateral step with his right front foot, remove the pressure and reward the horse. It is important to keep the hindquarters moving. Stage 1 goes into Stage 3. Eventually when you bring your left foot into the horse, they will step laterally with the right front foot. To help your horse achieve this, put more weight on your outside stirrup (left leg). The right leg will then have less resistance and it will be easier for the horse to pick up the right foot.

#### **4) Stage 4 – Shoulders**

**- Lateral movement of shoulders.** Stopping the inside hind foot and **pivoting the shoulders around it.**

Before moving to Stage 4, the horse should be solid in Stage 3 (lateral movement of shoulders), meaning that when we lightly bring our calf into them (our left leg) they step with their inside foot first (right). If they are stepping with the outside foot first, then they are often counter-arcing away from our outside leg, which will cause them to be stiff through the poll and loin. This is not good because the goal is to use centrifugal force to pull through the turn. It is difficult for a horse that is tight through the poll and loin to pull themselves through the turn. Go back to Stage 1 and get your horse pivoting around the inside front foot on a loose rein (with the horse's head straight). Then bring Stage 1 into Stage 3. If the horse cannot do Stage 1 with their head straight, when we attempt to do Stage 3, the horse will go into a counter arc.

Example – Stage 4 – Once the horse has learned to move off the outside leg by stepping with the inside foot first, then the easiest method of progressing into Stage 3 is to walk the horse

forward and stop them when the inside hind foot is the last foot to hit the ground. The next step that the horse will take will then be the inside front foot. We then only have to pick the foot up and move it out and back. Put your weight in the outside stirrup, fan your outside leg, and if you have direction (suppleness through the poll and loin) the horse will step laterally and slightly back, around the inside hind foot. If the horse swings the hindquarters out and does not pivot around the inside hind foot, it is because the horse has lost direction (became tight and stiff through the poll and loin). If we direct the head and the horse is stiff in the loin, the hindquarters have to go the opposite direction. It is only through a supple loin and poll that a horse can pull himself around his inside hind foot. **This is why it is so important to not spur the horse with the outside leg. It will cause them to be stiff through the loin.**

#### **Key Components in Stage 4:**

- 1) Stepping with the inside front foot first.
- 2) Direction (suppleness through the poll and loin) when the slack is taken out of the rein.
- 3) Picking up the inside front foot and setting it back around the inside hind foot.
- 4) Hindquarters pulling the front feet around the inside hind foot.

If any of these steps are missing, the horse cannot use **centrifugal force** to pull himself through the turn. To speed the horse up in the turn, the horse must be able to freely move their front feet in a lateral motion and pull with the hindquarters.

It is important that the horse does not learn to kick their hindquarters out during the turn. To prevent this remember these tips:

- 1) Do not pull the horse through the turn.
  - Wait for the horse's feet. The reins should be tied to the feet.
- 2) Do not pull the head too far. Slightly tip their nose.
  - The more we pull their head around, the more they will think we want Stage 1 and will kick their hindquarters out.
- 3) Do not kick the horse through the turn with the outside leg.
  - This will cause them to be stiff through the poll and loin.
- 4) Keep your weight to the outside.
  - Our weight will either help the horse in the turn, or hurt the horse in the turn. There is not much middle ground. If our weight is on the inside, the horse has to become tight through the poll and loin to counter balance our weight.
- 5) Do not demand too much too soon. Slowly build their confidence.
  - Do not try to make a full turn right away. Try to make an octagon, then a square, and then a triangle.
  - Make eighth and quarter turns, and then ride them forward so that the horse does not learn to kick the hindquarters out. Instead they learn to pull with their hindquarters through the turn, and then push with their hindquarters out of the turn.
  - After they are solid in pulling themselves through quarter turns, then try to make a half turn, then a three-quarter turn, then finally a full turn.

## **Gaining Speed in the Turn – Using Both Legs.**

- One of the best ways to gain speed in the turn is to do rollbacks. If a horse can do a rollback with willing submission, without getting tight and stiff through the poll and loin, they are in good shape to start using the hindquarters to pull the horse in Stage 4.
- Using both legs to speed them up in the turn will prevent them from becoming stiff through the poll and loin by only using the outside leg.
- Push the horse forward, then lightly pull them back around the inside hind leg.
  - If you have followed all the steps up to this point, they will not kick their hindquarters out. If they do, go back to “key components.”
- Use both legs to move them forward (pushing with hindquarters). When the inside hind foot hits the ground, pull them around the inside hind foot and then use both legs to push them forward again.
- Have them take a step with the back right leg and when they step up with the left leg, pull them back again. Repeat this process and eventually when you ask to speed them up with both legs, they will know they cannot go forward and will use centrifugal force to pull themselves faster into a nice spin.

\*Weight placement is very, very, important. If your weight is not on the outside, it is very hard to have direction in the turn (suppleness through the poll and loin).

Another good way to get them to smoothly walk around the inside hind foot is to get them very solid in Stage 3 (when we bring our outside leg into them, example – left, they step with the inside front foot first, example – right). Then get horizontal direction with forward motion (suppleness through the poll and loin). Once the horse can complete a full circle on a loose rein and no leg pressure (direction), lightly bring your outside leg into them and they will go into a nice slow spin. If you cannot complete a full circle with a loose rein and no leg pressure, do not bring your outside leg in until you can. If they become stiff through the poll and loin once you have started in your spin and kick the hindquarters out, bring your inside leg in and get direction again. If you have direction and a solid Stage 3, you will have no problem in Stage 4. The problems in Stage 4 come from losing direction (stiff poll and loin) and not having the shoulders freely move off your outside leg, stepping with the inside foot first.

**\*It is very important that when you feel the horse start to pivot around the inside hind foot you remove all pressure, rein and leg. The horse will then hunt the spin to get relief.**

**\*The most important thing in all 4 stages of a “mechanical foundation of maneuvers” is the first step. Slow down and take plenty of time to make sure that the first step the horse is taking is correct. SLOW DOWN, AND MAKE SURE THE FIRST STEP IS CORRECT!**

## **D) Solid Foundation of Maneuvers**

Two types:

- a) Mechanical
- b) Mental**

**Definition of Mental** – *Horse* and *rider* begin to receive insight, into how they can move together in perfect unity to accomplish a job. The horse experiences willing submission, good communication, a balanced life to direction ratio, and a mechanical foundation of maneuvers all at the same time.

It's like you are riding in the dark and somebody switches on a light. All resistance leaves and it makes perfect sense to *you* and the *horse*. The horse becomes as light as a feather, moving in perfect unity with the person. There is no resistance in doing the job. We are able to pick up the feet and move them wherever we want. These are the "ah-ha" moments when riding a horse. It is by multiplying these moments that we are able to *build* and *keep* a "foundation for perfection." The goal is to multiply these moments from brief seconds, to minutes, and to hours, until we are left with no more resistance and find ourselves riding in absolute perfection.

### **Three Stages of Mental Foundation:**

- Stage 1 – Brief seconds during the ride
- Stage 2 – Minutes during the ride
- Stage 3 – Consistency during the ride

**These are the necessary stages of having a solid foundation "with no resistance" to do any job.**

## **Direction to Perfection (Making Circles)**

**The rate at which a horse is able to progress is determined by the horse's ability to stay on a set line and speed, whether it is straight or curved, walking or running.** When a horse travels off that line, we need to be able to direct and move them back on line. When the nose is tipped the feet should follow. After the nose is tipped, if the feet continue to push in the same direction, the method of realignment is determined by what stage the horse can perform. **The method of realigning the horse is either by moving the hindquarters (Stage 1), or the shoulders (Stage 4).** If the horse has not become solid in Stage 3, do not try to jump to Stage 4 to realign the horse.

### **Common Mistake**

When a horse in Stage 1 or Stage 3 gets off line (loping circles), the person may try to push the shoulders over to get them back on line. Once the horse begins to push to the outside of the circle, the person looks at the horse's head, and shifts their weight to the inside to be able to kick the horse better with the outside leg. This causes the horse to push out even harder to the outside of the circle. The person then kicks and pulls harder to keep the horse loping, trying to pull them back on line. **As the pressure increases from the rider, the horse's resistance level rises due to self-preservation and lack of communication.** If pushed far enough, the horse eventually pulls their head straight and runs off.

### Proper Solution

As a horse in Stage 1 or Stage 3 starts to push to the outside of the circle, **shorten the inside rein, shift weight to the outside, use inside leg, and look behind you to the outside of the circle** (this will shift your weight, help block the shoulder, and lets the horse know where you are going). **Horses can feel where a person is looking. Ride where you want to go.**

### Preventative Maintenance

Don't set negative patterns in your horse. If he leans the first time around in your circle, head it off the next time. Shorten your rein and lean to the outside before he starts to lean out in your circle. Do not continually try to lope to complete the circle once the horse has become stiff and starts to push to the outside. This will set a negative pattern. **Slow down to a trot if you need to and take the lean out by: 1) Kicking the hindquarters out, 2) Moving the shoulders over (if they are at the proper stage), 3) Cutting the circle in half.** By cutting the circle in half, it will over-compensate for the horse pushing. In the spot where the horse was previously leaning, he will then be thinking about getting to the other side of the circle and will not lean. Once the horse has begun to think about getting to the other side of the circle, instead of pushing out, try to complete a full circle. **4) Circling to the inside or riding them higher.** If the horse cuts in at the top of the circle going to the left, take the horse in a little circle to the left. (He will more than likely be leaning to the right at the bottom of your circle.) Give the horse his head and kick him with both feet, shooting him out of the circle, "riding higher" right at the point when he will no longer lean to the right and before he cuts into the left. Kicking him with both legs will bring his head straight and will shoot him higher on your circle. A person might have to take a few circles, but the horse will learn it is more work on the inside of the circle, than on the outside and will quit leaning in. **5) Loping circles in a field.** This is a very effective way of getting a horse to lope nice circles. A plowed field with deep ground works the best. Try to lope a circle and whenever your horse cuts in, ride him straight until the lean comes out. Whenever he leans out, double him. Disengage the hindquarters, stopping the front end, and then push your horse across through the other side of the circle and lope straight for a ways. Then try to make another circle.

### Finding the Solution – Power of Direction

All the methods I have just explained are only treating the symptoms instead of getting to the cure. If you have to get a horse ready for a sale in a short time period, these methods can help get your horse willingly loping circles. However, if you want to get to the cause of the problem or you are starting a horse from scratch and want to eliminate the problems, learn the power of direction.

When a horse has horizontal direction (suppleness through the poll and loin) with forward motion, the horse's spinal column will make a perfect "C" around our leg. If the horse continues in this horizontal direction they will make a perfect "O," which is a perfect circle. Any problems that we may encounter loping circles (dropping the shoulder, leaning out in the turn) happen as a result of losing horizontal direction (not making a "C" around our leg). Instead of the spinal column making a perfect "C," enabling a perfect circle, they become tight and stiff through the poll and loin resulting in the "I" shape of the spinal column. This results in a dropped shoulder or leaning out in the circle. If we want to prevent resistance, the focus should not be loping

circles. The focus should be keeping horizontal direction with forward motion and we will lope perfect circles.

Our goal should be perfect circles. If I asked someone to draw a perfect circle on a large piece of paper, they would draw a small circle. There is less room for error the smaller we make the circle. Apply the same concept when loping circles. Get horizontal direction at a walk. Any time the horse becomes tight through the poll and loin, bring your leg into them until they make a “C” around your leg. Pretty soon the horse will not want to stiffen his loin and will keep a perfect “C” with forward motion, making a perfect circle. Then try a slow trot, and an extended trot. Any time the loin stiffens bring your leg back in. Pretty soon you will be trotting a perfect circle. When you achieve the same thing at a lope, you will be loping perfect circles. A horse does not fail to lope a perfect circle when they drop their shoulder or lean to the outside of the circle. These are only the symptoms of losing horizontal direction.

### **3 Stages of Breaking a Horse**

#### **I. Setting foundation**

#### **II. Using jobs to build foundation**

#### **III. Using foundation to do a job**

- **Neglecting the foundation to get a job done is the cause of many problems.**
- The job becomes more important (sorting cows, loping circles, opening a gate) than building the foundation. The job is completed, but at the expense of weakening the foundation.
- By thinking only about the job, negative patterns are set, and the horse learns to operate through unwilling submission.
- **An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Do not let negative patterns form.**

If good communication, willing submission, a balanced life to direction ratio, and a solid foundation of maneuvers have been established, the person is on the right path for perfection. Most of the problems we have with our horse result from a lack of confidence in one of these areas. All hope of perfection leaves when willing submission is lost. Once the person tries to force the horse into operating through unwilling submission, the perfection that was previously established slowly starts to diminish.

I have never achieved total perfection in any of my horses. However, there have been times when I have felt perfection while I was riding. It is by “feeling” these times of perfection and multiplying them, that I believe perfection is attainable. I don’t know if I will ever attain total perfection with my horses, but I know that it is attainable. I think the amount of perfection that can be experienced is entirely up to the person and how much time they are willing to work on it. Perfection certainly does not need to be attained to enjoy riding a horse. However, for me the more times of perfection I have when I am riding, the more enjoyment I receive. My livelihood revolves around horses, if I am not improving I get bored and riding colts becomes work. The times I have improved the most with my horses have been when I have been aware of the times of perfection during a ride and tried to multiply them.