

"HOW DO YOU LIKE ME NOW?"

You don't have to make this journey on your own! Pick good people to help you!

Recently on another drive between clinics one of my favourite songs by Toby Keith came thumping through the stereo.

The song is about rubbing an ex-love's nose in your success; something I am sure many of us have wanted to do over the years.

It made me ponder the way that we, as horse people and in our general lives, are so influenced by what others think of us and how the world perceives our success.

Often at clinics, people attend who are really battling with nerves or with their own and others' expectations of what they should be able to do with their horse, when in reality the only person's opinion that matters is their own.

I am going to share with you some ideas on what I think each of us needs to remember as horse people to make the most of the amazing opportunity we have to be with these amazing animals.

MINDSET MATTERS

If you want to get me to bite, come to a clinic and tell me you are "Just a trail rider" or "Just a pleasure rider".

If you work with horses in any form, you are a horse trainer. The guy who cleans the stalls at the race stables has influence over every horse in his care, as does the grand prix dressage rider.

You do not have to hear your name in the winner's circle each week to be an important part of this amazing industry and to have a huge influence over the horses around you.

So instead of thinking of yourself as "Just a....." instead remember that you are as important as the next person. As someone wise once told me "We all put our jeans on one leg at a time."

EVERYONE ACHIEVES AT A DIFFERENT RATE

Learning any skill is something that takes time, patience and practice. And each of us learns skills at a different rate, so do not get disheartened when you suffer a setback; that happens to all of us.

What matters is not that you are always successful with each new skill straight away, but that you keep improving until you are as good as you can be with that skill. And this is your journey, no one else's, so do not judge how fast you are

progressing by what other people do, just look for that little bit of improvement each day.

Remember not all horses learn at the same rate or achieve the same set of skills, so why should humans?

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

There is no right or wrong answer to this question; it will be different for each of us and the answers will change as we travel along this horse journey.

But it is nice to have a goal or several goals to work towards. It gives you a direction and allows you to keep moving forward. Goals can be as simple as you need (eg learning your trot diagonal). Remember that when you achieve a goal, you should be proud of you and your horse.

DISCIPLINE MEANS NOTHING

There is so much snobbery between disciplines and I find it both disheartening and unnecessary.

I am pretty sure there is nobody that would swear they have "only ever rode and chased campdraft cattle." Whilst we all like different events and tend to work within the boundaries of those that interest us, that does not give anyone the right to make assumptions or comments about what anyone else does. And if someone does have a pot-shot at what you do with your horse, just remember that is more a reflection of their own insecurities than it is a comment about your journey.

IT'S ABOUT THE JOURNEY

And every day is part of that journey. Each day brings new challenges and opportunities and it is up to us to make the most of each one. Whilst we may have goals that we are aiming for, even our goals are only a stepping stone on the journey that we are on.



IT IS NEVER YOUR HORSES FAULT

Recently at a clinic a teenager was riding a lovely horse that did not do what she expected. To me, standing on the ground instructing, it was pretty clear that the reason why the horse was doing what it was doing, was because the rider was not giving clear and consistent queues.

As I said previously, everyone learns at a different rate and has different skills, so I did not judge her on her lack of knowledge, but simply tried to guide her so that she could see the difference between riding like she was and riding in a manner that would help her horse.

Unfortunately she was not at the place in her journey where she was ready to listen to this help and instead found it necessary to yank and pull on her horse's mouth before eventually bursting into tears.

Whilst I have no problem with her behaviour, I had a huge problem with the way she treated her horse. Her unpreparedness to listen and learn was not her horses fault and was wrong to inflict pain due to her lack of knowledge.

REMEMBER WHERE YOU CAME FROM

I find it comforting to always remember that nobody was born with a set of amazing skills that made them a great horseperson. Whilst some of us may have been born with a natural aptitude to become good horse people, there are plenty of us who have gotten there through plain old hard work, asking lots of questions, making mistakes and spending hours in the saddle.

And most of us are working on these skills still!!



What you do now is not what you will do forever!



*Being able to ride perfect circles is a goal I set myself years ago.
It's a skill I have never lost!*