



Toward a Deeper Understanding of Mental Communication

The clearest lesson that the horses have taught me through all my life is that good riding, compassionate, correct riding comes from mental clarity.

Mental clarity begins with intent. What is your intent for your time with your horse on that day? In that moment? You begin your trip to the barn to let go of your preoccupations with the other moments of the day or perhaps you worry about the moments to come later in the day/week/month. You must BE THERE for your horse. Are you mechanically going about his grooming and tacking or are you there, listening to him, checking how he feels that day? Did you ask him if he would like to dance? And do YOU know the type of dance you want to have that day?

What is your intent for your time together?

Begin the first few steps of the dance with a little work-in-hand. This will help to establish your mental connection before the longe. Be with him... listen. Is your horse offering the movement easily or is he resistant on one side or the other, or both? BE with him... listen. There is no room for pushing or aggression when you are truly listening. Then, begin your longe work. A great deal of communication gets established during the longe. You can send your horse forward in a rhythmic working trot by establishing the clarity of vision for that working trot in your mind and by sending that vision, that rhythm, to your horse.

After some weeks of training, which depends on the clarity of your intent and vision, you will progress to sitting on top. With the same clarity of intent and vision that you achieved while longeing and bringing your intent for POSITION, NOT ACTION, your horse will happily listen to you and progress through his training.

This may seem simple. In fact, it is. But with all good teaching, it will be revealed in layers. Along the way you will have golden moments, those little 'aha' moment. Eventually you will arrive to the place where it is all golden moments. But you must chop wood and carry water....in other words, put your intent into practice, practice, practice. Or better yet? Play, play, play!!!!

You can learn much more about this aspect of riding from *Meditation for Two* and from my latest book, *The Alchemy of Lightness*.

Questions:

How do I let go of the notion that I am not doing enough or achieving enough for my horse? How do I let go of this insecurity without then stepping into ego, without stepping into the attitude that I have nothing left to learn? How do I balance my non-knowing with being ok that I don't know? And then how do I improve? I guess what I am asking is how can I be in a balanced, calm, relaxed space when I'm feeling completely clueless?