

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS

By Tanja Kraus

Images by
Equinox Images





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tanja Kraus is a horsemanship practitioner from the Mid North Coast of New South Wales, Australia.

Tanja coaches students, conducts clinics, does teacher training and retrains horses recovering from trauma.

Tanja's philosophy is to work within a horse's understanding and acceptance under threshold in a way that is kind and that supports them. Her Motto -- **'Horses First'**

< INSIGHTS AND IDEAS >

Insights and ideas is a collection of articles that will give you a little bit of an understanding of my philosophy and approach to both horses and their riders. I've been so fortunate to work with many horses and riders over the years from many disciplines and backgrounds and with many different challenges. I share these experiences through the written word in the hope that they will inspire, motivate, and offer a different perspective perhaps to how you're working with your horse or maybe even promote some deeper understanding about yourself. I do hope you enjoy this brief collection. Should you be interested in seeing any more of my work please don't hesitate to contact us to purchase my latest book or you can view my articles on the web or in the magazines that I regularly contribute to.

TK xo

Tanja Kraus
Tanja Kraus Horsemanship / Holistic Equine Education

Images By Equinox Images
Facebook -- Equinox Images
katherineobrienequinephotography@yahoo.com

Book design By [Graphic Design & Illustration](#)



Holistic Equine Education
with **Tanja Kraus**
For the Horse



CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Setting yourself, and your horse up for success in training | <u>5</u> |
| Fake it until you make it | <u>7</u> |
| What's the point of groundwork? | <u>8</u> |
| Honesty | <u>9</u> |
| Stress | <u>11</u> |
| Self Control | <u>12</u> |
| Create the power then use the power | <u>13</u> |
| Lightness comes from the horses mind | <u>14</u> |





SETTING YOURSELF, AND YOUR HORSE UP FOR SUCCESS IN TRAINING

Most of us know, or have heard, that horses learn when we release. Meaning that when the horse responds to our cue or prompt in a way that we desire, if we release or 'stop asking' and allow the horse to rest, he will figure out that he has done the correct thing.

In my experience this is the easiest way to train a horse.

My core principals of training are;

Be a heat seeking missile for the 'good'

Find the way to say yes

Ignore the stuff you don't want



Human beings often exist in a 'correction' approach to training or education. So when something happens that we don't want, don't like, or didn't ask for, we want to correct the behaviour. Horses don't understand this approach, and while you can be successful using this method, you will often have a horse that becomes more worried about the 'no' and afraid to try anything, rather than curious and generous in what he offers us.

It is always important to remember the depth of the core principals;

Be a heat seeking missile for the 'good'. Remember the 'good' is only what we as the human deem it to be, if the horse was in nature with his herd, its not good or bad, it just is what it is. We often think too much when it comes to our horse 'not doing what we want' and take it personally, when really he is just trying to fit into a complex system of rules that we have structured for him, that he doesn't really understand. So cut him some slack!

Find the way to say yes. We are (allegedly) the superior species. It is our responsibility to find a way to say yes to the horse, to reward him for some small element, to enable him to relax mentally and physically, and not become overwhelmed in training.

Ignore the stuff you don't want. Again, superior species! The horse isn't 'not doing what you want' to annoy you - he is most likely trying to do what you want and not understanding, or he has become so physically or mentally overwhelmed he is trying to communicate this with you through undesirable behaviour. As humans we want to either correct or punish this behaviour, when simply ignoring it allows us to stay on track and focussed in our work.

I'm aware that there are some approaches which promote 'allow the horse to make the mistake, then fix it' and this is just setting you, and the horse up for failure. That is like putting a bowl of candy on the table in front of a toddler, not saying anything, allowing them to eat it and then giving them a smack -- they didn't know they were doing anything wrong until after they had done it, so now they are just resentful for being punished. Seems counterproductive.

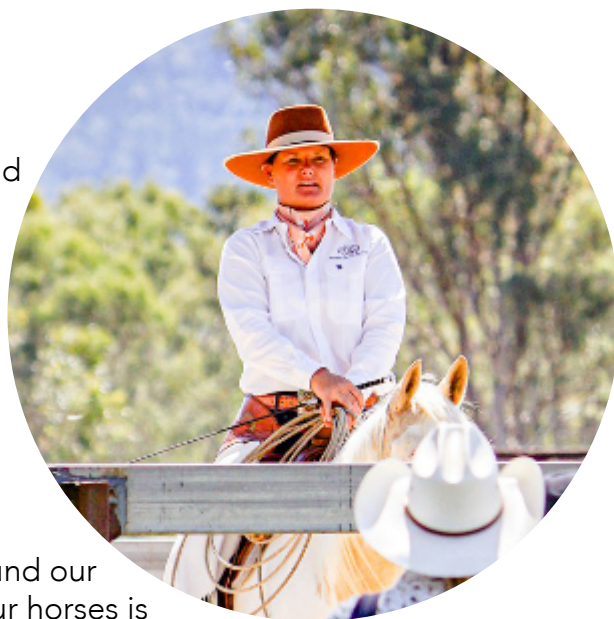


FAKE IT UNTIL YOU MAKE IT

In an equine world where we move forward towards authenticity, practicing mindfulness, compassion and also attempt to 'be ourselves', 'Fake it until you make it' sounds like a catch cry that should remain in the past from where it came.

Fake has become a dirty word, ironically, in an era where there are more filters, photoshop and makeup techniques than ever before.

As we often find with horses, it becomes a little more complicated than that and in fact, employing some techniques which allow us to feel more confident around our horses, and in turn *become* more confident around our horses is helpful, and so 'Fake it until you become it' becomes a handy tool.



These are not new techniques for humans and we have used the same concepts on our horses. Those of you that have trained with us will have heard us explain that putting the horses body in a certain position, then tells his mind he is ok. (The same is true for human beings).

The balance is employing the techniques which allow you to become more confident -- often revolving around our posture and basic foundation skills-- and utilising these skills to provide the space for you to find the pathway to communicating with your horse in your authentic voice.

And the truth is your authentic voice may very well be the one of calm, confident reliability that your horse is looking for, but right now it may be hiding behind a shield that your brain has created to protect your safety due to some negative experiences we may have had in the past, or, simply the wisdom that comes with age, an event, or motherhood.

The truth is, most of us have to 'Fake it' at some point or another . When we are nervous about that competition, job interview, speech or driving test it doesn't help to go in nervous. So, we pull up our cowgirl boots, hold our head up and get on with the job. It's this very body language that helps us feel better, and thus become more confident.

Amy Cuddy presents some great information in her Ted Talk, (link ibelow,) where a basic experiment using only posture over a 2 minute period showed a change in testosterone and cortisol levels, which affected decision making. This was after just 2 Minutes!

So whilst I'd be the first to tell you to be authentic when it comes to your horse, and don't try to be someone you are not, I'd also be the first to encourage you to empower yourself to allow you to be the partner your horse can trust.

Food for thought

[Link to TED Talk](#)

www.horsemanshipforperformance.com



WHAT'S THE POINT OF GROUNDWORK ?

I guess the real question is what do you use groundwork for ?

Depending on the horse I may use ground exercises for;

- Connection
- Conversation
- Play
- Preparation to ride
- Safety Checklist
- Body work
- Fitness training
- Strength building
- Flexibility

Groundwork is the most under - utilised skill I see amongst horse owners, and is most often considered something to 'get beyond'. For example; "I don't need to do ground work with this horse anymore".

Does it need to be something we progress to a useful level? Absolutely! If you are still lunging a horse at 10 years old to "Get it ready to ride" then something is missing. But, using groundwork as part of a balanced training program is a smart way to train.



HONESTY

Honesty

Challenge

Emotion

Confronting

Working with young (and when I say young I just mean uneducated) horses is a journey of self discovery in itself.

Our young horses due to their lack of experience are unable to 'bridge the gap' for us and therefore cause us to take ownership of everything that happens - the good, the bad, and the ugly.

When our young horse gives us feedback like;

'You're not making it clear'

'You're too loud'

'You're scaring me'

'I want to be somewhere else'

It can be confronting to us, as it causes us to consider our conduct and our *self*.

Older horses learn to 'figure out' what it is that we are asking of them, and will show up to bridge the gap, even if we are loud, unclear or clumsy.

Young horses cause us to self reflect and adjust or change.

Young horses cause that realisation of "It's not you, it's me".

When we have this thought we generally react one of two ways;

Guilt - 'I knew it was my fault' and subsequent negative thoughts 'I'll never be good enough'.

Or

Rejection 'it's not my fault this stupid horse just doesn't get it' and subsequent affirmation of skill 'I know what I'm doing'.

Humans tend to have this blanket exclusivity in the moment - an issue presents and all of a sudden we are useless (or the horse is), instead of changing the dialogue to 'usually I do this in this situation, but it's not working for this horse - what can I adjust'

Opportunities like these are how great horsemen are made.





STRESS

Stress is inevitable in our horses lives.

Whether it is the stress or discomfort of experiencing something they don't 'like' (for example being shod, trimmed, wormed or washed.) or something more significant like travelling or the competition environment, there will always be the presence of stress.

How we help our horses deal with that stress, how we help and support them is the key to our horses either becoming more anxious, or more confident.

If you dismiss your horses worry "oh get over it it's just a wormer" then you contribute to the stress, and become the source, rather than the solution.

Stress is unavoidable, but our conduct is both optional and vital at this time.

Some training approaches see the human *be* the stress (like applying pressure in a Roundpen) *and* the solution (like the removal of that pressure) BUT this still has you as the source - causing distrust.

Have you ever experienced distrust in a relationship with a friend, family member or partner?

The distrust remains and trust needs to be rebuilt - It is far better for it not to have been done in the first place.



SELF CONTROL

My horse must have self control, emotionally and physically.

If I put the rein down, and this causes my horse to go faster, change direction or change gait, then my horse isn't maintaining these things, he is relying on me to do it.

If my horse is relying on me to keep them 'in check' then they are relying on the rein as speed control. How can I then use the rein for the intimate conversation that occurs between my rein and the horses face (mouth or nose)?

If my horse relies on me to 'keep peddling' (using my legs to keep her going), How can they then feel the slight change in leg position as a cue to move laterally?

If my horse relies on me to keep them emotionally controlled, the day will come that they cannot listen to me.

Riding my horse in the freedom of a long rein helps to develop their self control, and is a prerequisite to developing self carriage.



CREATE THE POWER, THEN USE THE POWER

We often see people teaching the horse to perform manoeuvres like a shoulder in, and then they 'waste' the power that has been created by that exercise.

Recently we had our first 'Coach the Coaches' boutique clinic, where I take students who have their own coaching businesses through various skills -- Business development, coaching skills, and then a focus on their own personal goals with their horses.

One of the exercises we worked on today was the use of the shoulder in, and more importantly the power it creates, and then taking that power and putting it to good use.

The lightness that comes from harnessing the power is the stuff that dreams are made of.



LIGHTNESS COMES FROM THE HORSES MIND

Lightness comes from the horses mind.

Lightness can't be demanded, it can't be coerced, it can't be manipulated.

Lightness comes from the horses desire to be in partnership with you.

It comes from the horse not only understanding what you are asking, but having a great willingness to do what you are asking.

Lightness is the horse meeting you half way.

Lightness is the horse putting his body in a position of balance to do what you are asking -- without you asking him to do it.

Much like a person always needing to be 'asked' to do things, A horse that needs to be asked or told where to be or how to be there, will only ever perform with the dullness of resentment, where a horse with desire shines in their movement.

A horse that becomes a true partner is light, willing, balanced.

Create an unstoppable desire and motivation in your horse.



Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed it.

*Please find and follow me on facebook and instagram
and sign up for our weekly newsletter on the website
below*

*My new book is available via the website or buy now
link below*

#forthehorse

TK



[Buy Now](#)

www.horsemanshipforperformance.com

