

THE IMPORTANCE OF PATIENCE

by Helping Hands Horsemanship

Today I would like to talk about why patience is so important in horse, pony and miniature horse training. Before I get started with this article, I want to say that I keep saying "horse training" but I mean any type of equine training. This can be applied to a horse, pony, miniature horse, mule or donkey! When our horse's training is coming along nicely, then it is such a rewarding and good feeling. And for all of you who've experienced this, you would know exactly what I am talking about. But on the other hand, if the training isn't going as we had hoped, it can turn into a miserable nightmare. So that's why I feel it is so important to talk about something that is very essential in training any living creature. And it's a simple one word thing called "Patience".



Our horse's behaviour is a mirror of how good a trainer we are

How much further we get if we can just control our frustrated feelings and have some patience is amazing. Sometimes it may seem to us that our horse is just plain stupid because he's not understanding what we are telling him. But no, actually he isn't understanding because we aren't explaining it right. There's never really ever a time that something is a horse's fault. Our horse's behaviour is a mirror of how good of a trainer we are.

If my horse was always unruly and sour when I tried to ride and I looked over the fence at my neighbour who was riding an extremely well trained horse with a huge smile on his face, should I say "oh it's not fair that he get's a good horse when I have to ride this stupid thing?" No, I should say, "Okay what did I do wrong in my horse's training?"

A foal or young horse doesn't know right from wrong

When a foal is born he is just like you or I were at birth. He is completely innocent and doesn't know right from wrong yet, and he learns the way to behave from the other horses and people in his life. Some horses however can be a little harder than others to train but they are all trainable, and it's up to us to mould our horse into the shape we want it. It's not his fault if he's unruly, it simply means that we did something wrong in his training which could easily mean that we skipped a step or two. So instead of losing our tempers when things go wrong, we need to back up and figure out what we did wrong.

So don't feel discouraged or like a failure if things aren't going well. The wonderful thing about making mistakes is that we learn from them and may not have to make that mistake ever again! It can almost feel nice to make mistakes sometimes because it's another thing learned. And believe me, everyone makes them! Don't be misled by people acting like they've never made a mistake and you are the only one who makes them. No, that is definitely not true! I can't even begin to count the

mistakes I've made, but there's one thing that I'm pretty sure of, and that is that I'll make plenty more in the future!



A foal or young horse doesn't know right from wrong

Imagine if it was you trying to learn something new

I want you to try to imagine something for a moment. Let's pretend that you were at a gym class trying to learn gymnastics. All of this is new to you and it seems like your teacher is speaking a different language than you're used to because you have no idea what she is trying to explain, so you're not getting what she is trying to tell you and, when you ask her to repeat it, she starts yelling and getting angry with you for not understanding. So you quit her class and went to this other lady who, when you didn't understand, she would stop, slow down and back up and explain things in little steps until you understood them. She helped you through the steps of what you were trying to learn. Who out

of these two trainers do you think that you'd learn quicker with? It's the same principal for the horse. Are we willing to have patience and take things in small steps until he

understands or are we going to rush through things and get impatient with him when he doesn't understand?

You can get so much further if you can control your feelings

This also can be applied to anything, whether it is a family member, friend or whoever. You can get so much further if you can control your feelings and have patience and understanding. Whether it is a person or animal, maybe they're just having a bad day and need you to bear with them if they are getting a little cranky. But in almost everything we do we have a choice: a right one and a wrong one. It may seem nicer or easier at the time to take the easier choice but that is usually the wrong choice. What we end up paying for later is usually more than if we had taken the harder path (but the right one) in the first place.

I could keep rambling on but I think that I have said enough and that you get the general idea of what I'm saying. My opinion is that patience is probably about the number one thing in horse training so I just wanted to talk a little about that subject with you all. So if we're having training trouble, I think that if we apply some more patience, then the outcome will be much nicer.

It won't always be your fault – horses have their off days too

I also want everyone to know that I'm not saying that this will cure all problems or that everything your horse does wrong is your fault. Yes, there are times that he may not be feeling well or something is bothering him that will make him act up but, for the most part, if our horses are usually always a handful then that is a result of something we did. And it may be just a simple little problem that if we thought about it rationally and showed the horse with patience what he was doing wrong, then I think that we could teach him more quickly.

Never work with a horse when you feel angry with it

And I'm also not saying to have so much patience that you let a lot of things slide and allow the horse to walk all over you. All you have to do is show him rationally what he is doing wrong. One thing to remember is you should never work with a horse when you feel angry with it. Try to calm down and take a deep breath instead of taking it out on the horse. We always need to remember that getting angry and losing our temper doesn't do anything but frustrate ourselves. So with that said, I think that I will close for now.

I look forward to talking with you all again but until then, may the good Lord bless and keep you!

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Proverbs 16:32

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.