

Tell the Truth

By

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Do you have trouble catching your horse in an open pasture or a large pen? Have you thought up some clever “tricks” like offering feed while saying, “I’m only here to feed you” and then slip the halter on while she’s eating. Maybe you hide the halter behind your back and make believe you’re not interested in your horse at all. “Oh...don’t worry little mare...I’m just out here taking my morning stroll. I’m not the least bit interested in you.” She’s naturally curious so she eventually comes to take a look. Gotcha! Tricks like these work only for a time. A prey animal quickly learns to distrust a predator. This is why horses will let us catch them for a while then suddenly begin to move off when we get close and make us chase them around the pasture. Usually we get angry and stomp after them until they get bored and quit. The next day our anger subsides but we’re resigned to chasing the horse so we don’t resort to tricks. That’s when they let us catch them.

Horses are prey animals. They do not hunt to eat and, therefore, have never evolved the need to deceive prey. However, throughout history, horses have been hunted by predators. They have survived by developing a keen sense of deception thereby avoiding capture. They perceive with life saving certainty that what the predator portrays on the outside reveals what he thinks on the inside. They rarely misinterpret intention.

You and I are predators. We don’t like to think of ourselves as predators, but nevertheless we are. We hunt other animals to survive. We prey down the food chain. We believe in the “golden rule” yet we tend to deceive to protect ourselves from danger or to ensure our survival. These tendencies are overlooked by other predators who are engaged in the same deceptions, but they are not overlooked by our horses.

A satisfying, cooperative relationship with your horse begins when you learn to be honest with her. If you want to catch your horse, first set that intention in your mind. Then, without any instinct to deceive let your body do the talking. Don’t bother “learning” catching techniques from horse trainers, simply allow your body language to speak your mind. Walk across the pasture with clear intention and honesty. If you don’t mean to threaten your horse do not move in a threatening manner. If you do mean to threaten her, there is no way you will hide it from her perception.

Honesty is the foundation of authentic communication and lasting relationships. Your horse can be your most demanding and effective teacher. If most of your other training techniques are not holding over time, check yourself. Are you being honest with your horse? Do you know what you intend every time you interact with her? Look inside, not outside. It is usually something in there that your horse mistrusts.

When your horse let’s you catch her every time, then look at your human relationships. But look inside, not outside.