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TEC Summer Recap

What a summer! Meeting new clients and visiting with past ones, has brought quite a variety of folks from all walks of life and from around the planet!

It was interesting that many new clients are involved in humanitarian efforts; the correlation between them learning/refining their horse/human relationships, in order to improve their human/human relationships is awesome. The horse's honesty never gets old for me; in fact it keeps me fresh and on my toes. I appreciate there is no "ulterior" motive when the horse communicates, and the black and white clarity is refreshing in this day and age of folks getting lost in the "gray" areas of life.

We had unseasonably high temperatures peaking near the hundred degree mark for nearly two months; and now as with the rest of the USA, we are being ravaged by natural disasters, with fires currently burning on all four sides of us. We have been buried in a haze of smoke almost daily since the end of July, millions of acres burned, and it has taken a toll on the wildlife, the horses and humans.

Students traveled from near and far to participate in lessons, clinics, the working student program and training. Another theme this summer was relearning how to "slow down, in order to hurry up." Whether it was folks who'd been out of the saddle for thirty years, those who were recovering from physical/emotional disabilities, or novice students, it was awesome to watch the transformation from "what will we accomplish," to communicating and riding with thoughtful intention and leaving expectations aside, allowing for things to organically evolve with the horse. I find horses are a reflection of their handler/rider; it is mind blowing how quickly they can adapt to mimic what they are feeling from the human. To watch epiphanies occur in the human as they searched for a "connection" with the horse makes their patience and effort worth it, leading to quality and confidence

building rides.

Another discussion that arose with various students was that of "letting go" of the "traditional" pressures/expectations and "rules" when riding. I love experimentation, and prefer to ride with no "boundaries". This allows freedom for the rider to experience the journey with the horse, rather than focusing on the destination. I cannot emphasize how many times folks don't even realize they are carrying the "baggage" of "what they should be doing", which clouds their ability to be present and clear for the horse. By taking away those human induced pressures, amazing things evolve with the horse.

Although I work with many horses every year, this year one little horse in particular caught my attention. She is a BLM mare whose history is unknown, but who clearly communicated her first experiences with humans made during the round up and life that followed left her wanting to be nowhere near a human.

I've had the rare opportunity to spend more time than "normal" with this little horse and to see her evolve from a diminutive, fleeing creature to a confident, quiet horse has been so rewarding. Her deftness to decipher, search and answer makes her very fun to work with, but her level of thinking also keeps me primed for all the rest of the horses I work with.

She is the epitome of watching a horse grow from a defensive, fearful, dramatic and insecure animal to one that oozes curiosity and "try." I feel very lucky to have the opportunity to help her on her journey.

I've already scheduled clinics for the spring and summer of 2018. Please review the calendar and find out if I'll be in your area, or if you'd like to book a clinic see info below.

I hope you are enjoying quality time with your horse and look forward to working with you in the future!

Sam

Proactive Riding- Raising the Rider's Awareness

Creating conditioned and patternized behaviors, or routines, while interacting with our horses can lead to “dishonest” conversations between the human and the horse. Whether heading out on a trail ride or focusing in the arena, there frequently is a sense of “wonder” from the rider regarding what the ride will “be like” on any given day. I dislike repetitive movement as there becomes a familiarity and “dullness” to the conversation between the horse and human leading to brainless responses and a lack of adaptability. The day the person changes the routine their “quiet” horse becomes a fire breathing dragon because the pattern has changed.

There should be no mystery when working with our horses. Every interaction with the horse is an indication as to what is about to come. Weather issues, location limitations, and time urgencies can influence people and horses falling into behaviors that contribute to a lack of awareness, lack of clear intention and lack of mental presence.

Unfortunately the standard with horses is that as long as the horse isn't offering enough resistant behavior that the human sees their life flashing before their eyes, dramatic behaviors from the horse are tolerated. Anticipative movement, the lack of softness towards a light rein, seat or leg pressure, the dramatic, flamboyant responses to an aid, are all indications that the horse's brain and emotions are having a problem, and therefore his physical response will mimic the worry, fear, pain, insecurity, misunderstanding, leading to a less than ideal ride. Assess your relationship with your horse by asking yourself the following: Do you work with your horse at the same time of day? Catch him in the same manner? Enter/exit the gate the same way? Tie/groom/tack up in the same place? Mount from the same side, in the same location? Start off always tracking in one direction? These basic behaviors when done without intention, lead to mentally unavailable and resistant horses.

The moment you think about going for a ride, the ride begins. “Reality,” other distractions and stresses from life need to be put on hold. To be proactive by making decisions to influence how the ride will go, you'll need a mental clarity as to what you're doing, how you're doing it, and why you're doing it. Every moment you're in close proximity to your horse, you are teaching him something, whether or not you mean to.

Mental presence allows you to honestly assess what your horse is offering in his behaviors. My approach is to first address the horse's brain, and then the desired movement will follow. Opportunities for assessment can begin in the pasture or stall; notice if your horse moves off as you approach? If so, why? Is he distracted by

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new events at the barn? Wildlife that recently passed by? Does he prefer to stay with the herd rather than being ridden? You may not initially have a clear understanding of his behavior, but it will be the beginning of awareness from you of noticing initial resistance from him and be able to prioritize addressing it before you ride.

As you lead, is he ahead of you physically and actually “leading you”? If so, he's already telling you what the ride is going to be like. If he believes from the start that he is in charge, by the time you're in the saddle, you'll be at his mercy.

If he is pulling, hanging or ignoring your pressure with the lead rope while you're on the ground, he's already telling you he is going to be heavy on the bit and slow to respond with the rein. Why wait until you're in the saddle to address his concept, or lack thereof, of following, softening or yielding to pressure?

If he's become fussy as you tack up as you ride more frequently, have you assessed if your saddle is fitting correctly? Perhaps pain issues from ill fitting tack have begun, and you've assumed he's just being difficult with his excessive movement. He only has so many ways to convey his distress before he has to increase his behaviors until you can no longer ignore them.

Humans often anthropomorphize equine behaviors, giving human characteristics to them and wrongly interpreting what is occurring. Taking the time to slow ourselves down from the rushing mentality, by addressing the little details, can help us break down overwhelming scenarios and understand our horse's behavior. By learning to recognize the signs leading up to potentially unwanted behavior, we can influence a change within the horse, before he has committed to doing something we don't want. But the small details, the finesse isn't the “fun” or “exciting” way of doing things, therefore we humans bring chaos to horses, causing much turmoil.

Let us raise our standards. What if the new “normal” became a horse that presented himself quietly to be caught irrelevant of if feed had just been put out in the pasture or riding at an odd time of day? Ignoring discipline, riding goals or experience, what if we could straight tie, ground tie or cross tie our horse in a field, to a trailer, or to a post, as we groomed and tacked up, without any fussing, wiggling, pawing, swinging of the hindquarters, holding his breath while we tightened the saddle, or tossing his head while we bridled him? Let's be practical and forgo outdated tradition and learn to mount/dismount from either side on the

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(Cont'd) Proactive Riding
ground, from the fence or a mounting block, without having to lead our horse to a spot and quickly scramble on while holding the reins tight to prevent him from walking off. What if at any point we expected our horse could stand mentally and emotionally calm and therefore physically relaxed, rather than anticipative of what we might ask next. If the above mentioned behaviors became our basic foundation that we built our partnership with our horses on, imagine the possibilities. Here's to proactive riding and raising our awareness!

Colt Starting Epidemic

As I mentioned earlier, I've been working with this troubled BLM mare. When I head out to work with her, I have no specific "end result" goal in mind; I have to assess what support she "needs" from me on that particular day, in order to build trust and confidence.

Someone recently posted a video of one of those "colt starting competitions." I have a really, really hard time watching. Because it isn't about the moment of overwhelming the young, immature, horse who shuts down and tolerates the session or hours long experience, but rather, it is the years afterwards of undoing what happened on that fateful day in which the horse was totally unprepared for what was to come, and was "challenged" to get "it" (tolerate a rider) right, rather than supported.

In a very, very rare occasion have I seen a mentally, emotionally and physically mature enough horse to be presented in a "one time" starting session. I honestly believe it comes down to the human's desire to "prove" (i.e. ego) they can get it done, irrelevant of the horse that has to deal with the long term consequences. Even if it isn't done in the old "snubbing" a horse to a post, it can be very traumatizing, often which comes out in dramatic behaviors years later.

And typically the general public isn't equipped to deal with traumatized horses, which creates a whole other can of worms. This reminded me of a post I'd written six years ago in terms of our current interpretation of "pressure."

Here's the post... <http://bit.ly/2tvtyZA>

When I try to imagine this little mare I'm working with, at something like a three day colt starting clinic, all I can see is her mind being totally blown, and that she'd never fully "recover" from it. She initially had too much imposed upon her, that left very strong impressions → Continued →

(Cont'd) Colt Starting
and it wouldn't have taken much to overwhelm her and "send her over the edge" emotionally, potentially becoming physically violent. The human imposed "rush" in just a few interactions can lead to years of attempting to "undo" and regain the horse's trust. Why even go there?

How to host a clinic with Sam!

Typically clinics are booked months in advance, but I do occasionally have last minute openings. It can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months to get a clinic organized. Once you have six to nine people committed to participate I will be happy to schedule a clinic.

Host's responsibilities: Don't be scared! It's quite easy and a fun way to gather like-minded horse people for a fun filled, safe and supportive clinic. Determine at least two date options, times, length of clinic (3-5 days) and clinic content/focus. Secure a suitable facility to hold the clinic (see requirements below)

Distribute and collect all paperwork (see below) related to clinic registration and liability waivers. Collect fees from participants one month PRIOR to the clinic.

Mail participant's registration, liability waiver and fees and submit to Sam one month prior to clinic.

Organize accommodation/meals for Sam.

On-site" organizer during the clinic.

Why should you host a clinic?

Opportunity to bring Sam to your area, meet other likeminded horse people, host discount of 30% off clinic fee.

Participant Requirements:

Clinic Size- Smaller, personalized clinics designed to address the individual participant's needs. A minimum of six and maximum of eight participants is necessary to hold a clinic. All ages, riding levels and disciplines welcome.

Clinic Format- Flexible according to the needs and focus of the participants. Most include individualized groundwork sessions and both individual and group riding sessions.

For details on hosting a clinic

Instant Gratification... Harming our Horsemanship

How Auditing can change everything.

I recently finished offering a three day long Full Immersion Clinic. I've titled these clinics that because we cover so many aspects of horsemanship and riding. I never have an agenda as to what we'll accomplish. Depending on the participants and what their horse's needs are, things evolve organically. These are not sit-in-the-saddle-for-8-hours type of clinics. These are an opportunity to mentally slow down and really raise our level of awareness within/about ourselves and our horses, to better understand the conversation the horse is offering and learn how best to work with the horse in order to get the ideal ride.

I often open these clinics to auditors, folks who can participate in lectures, discussions, etc. but who are not working with the horses directly.

Although I abhor promoting myself, as I feel horse and students that have been under my tutelage will "speak for themselves", I do encourage folks who are working with me to come and watch, listen and learn, even if they aren't participating with a horse. I remember years ago, it used to be the "die hard" horse enthusiast would find, make, take any opportunity to be around horses that they could. Didn't matter if it was shoveling stalls to get that quick ride on a borrowed horse at the end of the day, or to go to the local fairgrounds and stay ALL day, watching, petting, and taking in all the riding activities.

And the "inspiration" for this post has come up several times. In my specifically intentionally scenario of "leaving reality behind" while offering the clinics, it allows people to "let down" for the first time in a long time. Leaving stresses, work, family issues, etc. behind, and just learning to be present, here in the moment, in order to best help their horse. By day two participants are often realizing how much of a shift has occurred in "slowing down within themselves, in order to hurry up and get to where they'd like to be," with their horses.

Watching, horse after horse after horse, and different folks with varying energy levels, experiences, perspectives, etc. allows both auditors and participants to see time and again, clearly how the horses communicate, what they communicate and why they do so. By not imposing a time pressure, it allows participants to experience (and most auditors feel like they're "in" working with the horse too as they're watching from the sidelines) reading the horse, experimenting with influencing a

change through non aggressive, nor disrespectful behavior from the human, and watching how quickly the horse can make an emotional shift and mental change towards the person.

Many horses don't even look physically like the same horse by the end of the session, because of the "release" from rushing, unclear communication to specific and intentional clarity from the human. For those auditing it can be such an amazing opportunity, without the "pressure" of having to do it yourself with your own horse, and have the opportunity to gain many useful tools to work with our horses in a respectful way. It isn't about "Sam's way of doing things." Folks it is about learning "horse."

Many auditors by the end of the day are so excited to go home and try out what they've seen, but the difference is, because I'm able to break down the how, why, when we're doing what we are with our horses, it means something to the human. It is NOT teaching conditioned responses, or obedience training imposed by the human. Rather offering thoughtful conversations between the human and horse.

The difference from watching a trainer with "free videos" online and attempting to mimic the behavior seen, or buying the "fix it" halter/stick/rope/gadget, is if the human does not understand BOTH the big picture and the small details, the more "instant" expectations they have for their horse, the worse and more unclear the communication gets leading to frustration in the human and defensiveness in the horse. If you are training in a "step by step" process, you'll be unable to understand what to do, if your horse offers a behavior that you'd hadn't seen before. If instead you were able to read what the horse is asking, you'll then know what he needs from you to support him through his learning and education. So whether you don't have the finances or time to participate in a big clinic, if you find a trainer whose methods you appreciate, take the time, put in the effort, grab a notebook and pen, and sit and WATCH. You won't realize just how much you've absorbed without even trying. Your horse will thank you for it.

Why read the blog?

Enjoy browsing the blog with my thoughts, theories and some funny stories. I've added an option (scroll the right hand column near the top of the homepage) and you'll find the option to "Follow by email." You'll automatically be notified via email of any new entry I make. Please click [HERE](#)

Moments on the farm...



Some things to ponder...

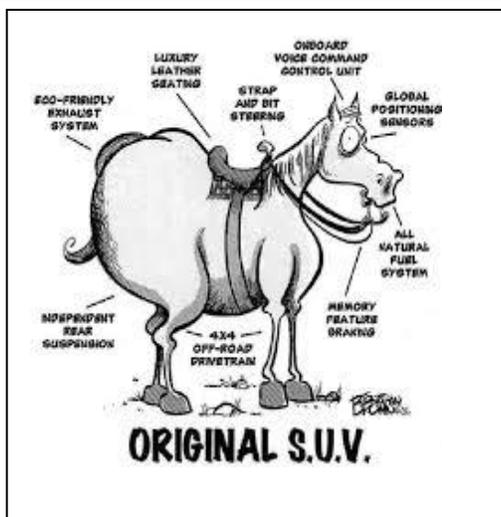
Clients will often ask how I know when to get on a horse for the first time and I tell them, "The horse simply tells me." The first time should not be eventful, should not be exciting, and should not feel like you are containing the horse or making them tolerate you imposing yourself on them. The little Mustang wanted to be nowhere near me initially. A slight twitch of my finger as she was loose in the round pen would send her "over the edge" fleeing. We went slow, looking for quality sessions rather than accomplishment of tasks. First was to get her to feel better about being in close proximity to me. Then encouraging her to have an opinion and to express it without fear of reprimand. Then was to spark a curiosity about me, wanting to be touched and even if she "fell apart" wanting to come back and try again, without it being the "lessor of two evils." From there things evolved. And then I went out one day and from the start of her presenting herself in the pasture, she told me she was ready. If anyone had showed up to witness the first ride, they'd never know it was her first. She was mentally, emotionally, and physically relaxed. Happy expression, soft muscles, quiet breathing and ending the session with her wanting more. Here's to keeping it boring.

Over the past few days I've heard "feedback" from clients both in the States and abroad. If you've ever read anything from my blog, website or posts on FB, you'll quickly realize I do not offer the "quick fix" or "easy answers" in my approaches to helping horses feel better about life. It is slow, intentional communication, and often it requires a rebuilding of the foundation of the partnership, in order for the rides to be successful. I always say I try to teach and offer "tools" in how we communicate with our horses so that clients don't "need me", but rather they can assess, think through, and then help their horse through scenarios in order to have a positive, confidence building outcome for both the horse and rider.

I LOVE hearing stories of success; not because "my way" works, it isn't about me or the ways I've found to be successful, it is about owners/riders being open minded enough to put their own egos aside, and to BELIEVE their horses when they are troubled and when they ask for help. Time and again, those who support their horses through uncomfortable moments, rather than challenge them through them, see amazing, long lasting changes.

So "Good on you," as I say, to those folks dedicated to being open to having an honest conversation with their horse, patient enough to respect what the horse is saying, and kind enough to search within themselves to how best to help their horse.

That is how we reach those almost perfect moments of being completing in sync with our equine partners, and it makes it all worth it. Happy riding!



Consultation Call

What is it? Don't let distance hinder your learning experience! You have the option of a private half hour or a one hour phone consultation. I will address any equine related questions, videos or pictures previously submitted by you.

How much is it? You can choose from a half hour session (\$40 fee) or an hour session (\$60 fee), payable via PayPal; click here to [register](#). Once you make a payment, an emailed confirmation will be sent. We will then schedule a day and time to for the consultation.

How do you sign up? Please click the [link](#)

Looking Ahead: Winter 2017/18 Scheduling Clinics Now

I have been teaching consistently in the East San Diego County over the past four winters. I'm also looking for possible other facilities to continue and expand the opportunities to offer monthly sessions and clinics at. There are many options from Full Immersion Clinics (intensive, full day sessions, limited to eight participants, ranging from three to five days), individual lesson days, private farm visits, etc. If you have a facility or would like to learn about hosting a clinic early in the month of November 2017 or February 2018, please let me know. My schedule is booking fast, and I don't want folks who I've had the opportunity to work with over the last few years to miss out! Please see the "How to host a clinic" for details or [email](#) me with other inquiries. The dates currently scheduled at the end of this newsletter can allow for extra dates to be added at other facilities.

Sam's Social Media...

Alternative Horsemanship
Blog learnhorses.blogspot.com
[LinkedIn](#)
Facebook [Learnhorses](#)
Twitter [@Learnhorses](#)

Alternative Equestrian Assessments
Web [AlternativeEquestrianAssessments](#)
[LinkedIn](#)
Facebook [AlternativeEquestrianAssessments](#)

The Equestrian Center
Facebook [TheEquestrianCenter](#)

Sam's Fall/Winter Schedule 2017/2018

October

October 26-30
Oakzanita Ranch
Descanso, CA
[Email](#) for details

November

November 16-20
Oakzanita Ranch
Descanso, CA
[Email](#) for details

December & January

OUT OF THE USA

January 2018

January- 25-29
Oakzanita Ranch
Descanso, CA
[Email](#) for details

February

Private Facility
Durango, CO
Dates TBA

Full Immersion Clinic
San Diego, CA
Dates TBA

To stay current please visit the [Calendar](#) page



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