

Danee's Horsemanship



Hints...

Playing Jekyll and Hyde

Do you have a hard time knowing when to really get on your horse's case and when to really slow things down? I find that often when people have trouble in this department it is because they cannot go quickly enough from stern to quiet or quiet to stern. Let's say your horse is afraid of something 100' away, so he is acting aggressive in an attempt to persuade you to not lead him towards the scary thing. (I should say 'she' because mares are well known for this smart yet devious plotting!) Whether he is pinning his ears, pushing you with his shoulders, or trying drag you a different direction, that kind of obstinate behavior is simply not allowed. The discipline will vary depending on the horse, the situation, and the skill of handler, but whatever the form, it should be swift and deliberate and strong enough to let the horse realize his behavior will not be tolerated. Now comes the hard part- relax, let down, and go on like it never happened. Too many people need to pump themselves up to be the disciplinarian. To handle a 1200 pound horse you need to be able to deliver a fairly strong whack without being emotionally involved. You must be able to recompose yourself within a second to be a benevolent calm leader- not a nasty jerk on the end of the line. Likewise, if your horse is trying, and you are being quiet and waiting on an answer, and suddenly the horse gives up and tries to get away, or plow through your aids or personal space, then you must be able to step up your game quickly before his sudden lack of try really works for him. I often tell riders they must possess a little Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and more importantly be able to transition between the two seamlessly in seconds. If our behavior can change as quickly as our horse's thoughts we will be successful at making his good ideas a comfortable place and his bad ideas very uncomfortable. This is the essence of making the right thing easy and the wrong thing difficult- but you need to be quick to get heavy and even quicker to return to being nice.



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