

Learning The Heart of Horsemanship: An Interview with Julie Carpenter

Many people come to Trainer/Instructor Julie Carpenter after searching far and long for help with their horses. Some have had wrecks. Others have green horses and are green themselves. Still others just want to improve their skills.

The one thing all of Julie's students have in common is a natural desire to do the right thing for their horses. "No matter where each person is in their horsemanship, they all have a lot of the same issues," says Julie. And lucky for them that Julie has a lot of ways to show students how to address them.

"Issues are only points of confusion for the horse," Julie explains. Over years of practice and experience, she has learned how to apply *Horsemanship From the Heart* – a non-forceful approach to communicating with horses. More importantly, Julie is able to teach her clients to "speak horse" too.

Following is an interview with Julie on why and how she does what she does:

Q: You don't train a horse unless its owner works with you too. Why?

A: I love training horses. They are easier because they operate on pure instinct and are always in the moment. People over think things.

And, if the owners don't understand what I did or how to communicate, the horse will be more frustrated because I've show them there is a less confusing way. The partnership between horse and rider is the most important part.

Q: What types of people come to you? And why?

A: Whether a person has 20 years or 20 minutes of experience with horses, the people that find me are usually looking for a better way to interact with their horses. They realize that they can have a better relationship with them, but know they need a little help to get there.

Most of my clients have tried other training options that ultimately didn't feel quite right. So they kept searching. I love working with people who are look-

ing for better partnerships with their horses. That kind of person is open to new ideas and is willing to do the work it takes to improve.

Q: What are the most common issues people have?

A: People come to me with everything from young horses to start, to horses that buck or run away. Some have had accidents and need to regain their confidence. But nearly everything boils down to how the owner relates to their horse. I just show them how to communicate what they want better so the horse is not confused. Most horses just want to get along. If they are calm and understand what you want, they will do it.

Q: Better communication sounds simple, so why isn't everyone doing it?

A: Back when people relied on horses to survive, many *were* doing it. But somewhere along the way people started doing things to impress others rather than to be functional and mindful of what the horse needed.

Many of the tactics used today are done out of tradition. I started out that way too. But if you look for a better way and you study how a horse understands the world, a resistance-free way makes more sense. It gets results easier and more consistently.

The hitch is that each individual has to understand and learn *Horsemanship From the Heart*. You can't send your horse away to get it. It requires a lot of time and focus. Some people just haven't thought about it. Others just don't want to do the work. They're ok with the way things are.

Q: How long does it take to learn *Horsemanship From the Heart*?

A: Every person is different. Some work with me for a few hours or join a day clinic and they pick up the skills fairly quickly. Then they go home and work on things and just come back when they get stuck or want to go further. Others need more help and have to practice a lot more to get their timing and

focus where it needs to be to support their horse.

Horsemanship is a never-ending process. There is always another level of communication skill that can be achieved. That's part of the fun of horsemanship. I still learn from horses every day. And, I take time every year to continue my own education.

Elements of Horsemanship From the Heart

Clear Communication (Intent)

Timing & Feel

Consistency

Focus

Practice, Practice, Practice!

Communicating well with your horse requires these basic skills. While they appear to be simple, they can only be learned by doing. Julie breaks down each skill into its simplest parts (just like she does for the horse) and walks students through the process of learning and improving these skills. Developing them is an evolving process. As long as a person is persistent and willing to make changes for the horse's best interest, they will progress.

Q: So what really is *Horsemanship From the Heart*?

A: It is not just one thing, or a program of study. It is more a way of thinking about every part of our interactions with equines. It gets down to the intent of your actions with your horse. It happens when you are trying to communicate clearly and honestly with the intention of helping your horse understand your requests. In a sense, it is your desire to develop your skills enough to touch the *inside* of a horse. When your actions truly come from this place in your heart, *that is Horsemanship From the Heart!*

