

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Public Relations Contact:
Training the Whole Horse™
WHolistic Horsemanship with Missy Wryn
503-630-3744 Phone
503-630-3751 Fax
Info@WHolisticHorsemanship.com
WHolisticHorsemanship.com
IRONFREERiding.com

HOW TO'S of IRON FREE Riding

Part 1 of 3

“Iron Free Riding simply means no bits no spurs, but it means so much more than that”, Missy Wryn Founder of WHolistic Horsemanship explains. “Iron Free Riding is the next step for the Natural Horsemanship (NH) enthusiast as the “ultimate” in riding. Natural Horsemanship has been a great catalyst for gentler techniques, the use of herd dynamics and body language expression, inspiring horse enthusiasts to work with and train their own horses in a gentler and profound way. The NH trend has opened the hearts and minds of horse enthusiasts to a whole new level of thinking about the horse’s experience and how that affects their relationship with humans and the overall riding experience. The awareness of the horse’s sensitive body and the use of pain and force to train do not make sense to the NH enthusiasts. So why would the use of bits and spurs be ok? There are all kinds of reasons and the most prominent one is bits and spurs are required for many horse shows, drill teams and other competitive equestrian sports. But for the everyday trail rider and NH enthusiast the use of bits and spurs does not make sense within the context of Natural Horsemanship’s gentler, no pain or force training.

The most common thought and biggest myth is a rider has better control of their horse with a bit. Most horse people can tell you a story of being on a runaway horse or know someone who has, and the bit didn’t make a bit of difference (pun intended). If a 1000 lb animal wants to make a run for it out of fear, excitement or simply barn sour no amount of pressure from a bit is going to stop a determined horse. A horse can gape his mouth or chomp down on the bit and run full out no matter how hard the rider pulls back, and sometimes the pain of the bit can set the horse off running even faster. The mouth of a horse is where the most sensitive tissue of the body lies, just as it is in our mouths. Bits were designed to “break” horses when they were used as beasts of burden for agriculture and ranching. It was a quick way to “break” the horse by inflicting pain to get them to listen and get to work. Today we have all sorts of bits from kinder to harsh, sweet to twisted and every once in a while I hear “my horse loves his bit”; I don’t doubt that, just as some horses love to compete and others do not. However, I receive more comments from people that are astonished how happy their horse is when they changed from using a bit to riding with just a

rope halter. Given the opportunity to learn the rider's cues with just a rope halter and no bit, a horse generally will respond with great relief and a new enthusiasm to perform and please.

To train a horse to ride with just a halter and lead rope can be done easily no matter the training, age or style of riding the horse has had. It all begins on the ground with five fundamental ground techniques that easily translate under saddle for safer riding without the use of bits. But first I want to touch on three foundational requirements that I teach every horse to be safer around me. When a new horse comes into my training program the first thing I do is introduce myself and the environment to the horse with a WHolistic Joining. This is not round penning or running the horse in circles, but a method that invokes the horse's natural instinct to recognize me as their herd leader by moving the horse from one location to the next with instant release of pressure when the horse simply complies. I'm acting just like the herd leader which the horse's instinct creates the "follower" impulse naturally without using fear, exhaustion or choices for the right answer – instinct is not a choice (see article WHolistic Joining vs. Round Pen). After the horse recognizes me as their herd leader I then go straight to my Three Foundational Requirements which are Backing Up, Leading and Pressure & Release with Bonding. With these Three Foundations established I have a safer horse who naturally respects my leadership, my space, and is ready for the Five Fundamentals for IRON FREE riding.

One would think that backing up and leading are no brainers, but there are foundational reasons to teach your horse to back up and lead safely. It is important to understand that horses are genetically wired to require a herd leader at all times which includes humans as part of their herd. When you are in your herd of two, you and your horse, you need to be the herd leader your horse is genetically wired to require at all times. You've established yourself as your horse's herd leader with WHolistic Joining, and to build confidence and trust it's as simple as moving your horse's feet "*he who moves the other's feet first is in control*". Therefore, backing up your horse with just the slightest jiggle of the lead rope not only keeps you safer by establishing your personal space, but it also reinforces to your horse that you are their herd leader. I want to be able to back up my horse no matter where I stand whether beside, behind or in front, with the slightest jiggle that communicates "back up please". And as for leading I insist that my horse be at least a half horse length behind me; never will I lead directly under the chin or at my shoulder, that's a sure way to get knocked down and stepped on if my horse spooks.

To back up your horse I want you to stand facing your horse about 5 feet away and slightly jiggle the lead rope until your horse takes a step back. You will need to amplify your jiggling if your horse isn't moving, and for the horse that has no clue and simply lifts his head to get away from the pressure you will want to "snake" your lead rope up and down causing a ripple effect making

the lead rope bump under their chin while you step towards your horse with a look that your body says "MOVE BACK" (I recommend using a lead rope that has an eyelet for connecting to the halter, not a metal clip). As soon as your horse steps or leans like he is going to back up, STOP, stop all you're asking dropping your pressure and I want you to bow to your horse which removes your eye contact and body pressure *horses learn from the release of pressure not the pressure itself*. Be careful what your body is saying your horse is watching closely; that's why I want you to bow at the waist which drops ALL body pressure for an instant release and accompany the release of pressure by verbalizing your appreciation for him/her "good boy, good girl" (appreciation is at the top of my Four Core Emotional Concerns that humans and horse share whether you appreciate with your voice or by touch, as it accelerates learning. You know how better you perform when you are appreciated for your efforts, so does your horse). Your goal is to be able to back up your horse with just the slightest jiggle of the lead rope. I encourage you to play with your horse using backing up as a game with appreciation and neck strokes as the reward (stroking the neck releases a chemical response that is relaxing and I believe accelerates learning). Your horse will quickly learn that you are a trusted competent herd leader since you control his feet.

HINT: keep your training sessions short. I typically train 20-45 minutes per day focusing on only a couple things during the session to avoid burn out and boredom for the horse. Sometimes if a horse "gets it" I end the session at that moment allowing the horse to soak on what just happened. During rest a horse's dendrites in the brain continue making connections which explains why you'll notice your horse is way ahead in his training from where you left off a day or so ago. Rest is very important to training. Remember the journey (how you reach the goal – no pain, no force) will determine the depth of trust and confidence your horse has in your leadership. It's the difference between your horse standing by you when you fall down vs. running off to visit the neighbors leaving you behind.

Now for leading a horse I want the horse a half horse length behind me or more as a safe distance, and when observing a herd you will never see a horse pass the herd leader or hang out at their shoulder without being invited and getting reprimanded otherwise. As my horse's herd leader I must portray these disciplines to build confidence and trust in my leadership and to keep me safer. When leading my horse I use my peripheral vision to keep track of where my horse is and jiggling of the lead rope to keep him back as I taught in backing up. If my horse is creeping up within reach of my shoulder I'll jiggle the lead rope while I'm still walking and tell him "BACK". If the horse is still creeping into my space I'll put my hand up while I'm walking and pat the air in front of his face telling him "BACK". If I've got a horse that is really pushing into my space, not listening to the jiggle of the rope or hand in his face I'll take the end of the lead rope and twirl it in

front of me like a helicopter so the horse then makes the choice of stepping into the rope or getting back. The point is, keep your horse a half a horse length behind you as a matter of respect for your leadership and safety.

The final foundation that is an absolute must for IRON FREE Riding is Pressure and Release with Bonding. This is the beginning step to the set up of a one rein stop which is my horse's emergency handbrake. I start this on the ground making nose to girth the safe and loving place we go when we are in trouble. I will ask the horse to flex his neck bringing his nose close to his girth area while my body language is relaxed and there I exchange breath nose to nose. Horses greet one another exchanging breath through their noses so why wouldn't I do that? I am the herd leader therefore I need to act like a horse with my human body so exchanging breath is a way of greeting and relaxing with one another and it's something I can actually do like a horse. I will put my hand over the nose guiding it towards the girth while I stroke the girth area with my other hand; like tapping someone on the shoulder they will turn their head to look, the same is for your horse. Some horses are a little stiff or scared to do this so if your horse starts to move his feet stay with him while you gently hold onto his nose stroking his girth area cooing and staying relaxed. You may only get your horse to flex his head slightly, but as soon as the horse is soft in your hand RELEASE. Your release is everything; remember *horses learn from the release of pressure not the pressure itself*. Each time you bring your horse's nose around to his side wait for the slightest softness or your horse touching his nose closer to the girth and then RELEASE. Stroke the horse's neck telling him/her "good girl, good boy". Repeat the flexing on both sides of your horse and keep in mind if the horse is real resistant and moving a lot on one side, stop and try it on the other. It's a myth that you have to get it good on one side before you go to the other. If it's not working very well don't take it to the point of the horse melting down or you getting mad, just stop and try it on the other side and then go back to the more difficult side. I promise you will not ruin your horse, that's another myth. When learning something new there are no mistakes, just learning.....

Once you've got your horse bringing his nose to his girth willingly and softly you can add disengagement of the hind feet. This is when a horse crosses his inside hind foot in front of his outside hind foot. Inside means the side you are standing on, so flex your horse's nose with the lead rope and with your other hand place your thumb where your heel would be in the saddle and press gently holding the pressure. Keep in mind that where you apply pressure on your horse's body must translate under saddle with your foot so be very aware where you are applying pressure. Increase your pressure if your horse isn't moving, but as soon as your horse moves his hind feet release your pressure instantly rubbing the spot where you were just applying the pressure which will communicate to your horse to stop moving his feet. Don't release the nose

until your horse's feet stop moving and then wait until your horse is soft on the lead rope or dips his nose towards his girth, and then RELEASE the lead rope verbalizing your appreciation and stroking the neck. The inside hind foot doesn't have to cross the outside the first few tries, that will come eventually. Just getting the horse to move his hind feet is your starting point and refine as you go. You are now teaching the basics of a one rein stop on the ground which will translate under saddle as your horse's emergency handbrake. Getting it good on the ground is Key to building confidence trust and understanding between you and your horse. It's the journey so don't pressure your horse to perfection, you'll get there.....

Once you and your horse have the Three Foundations down smoothly you can move on to the Five Fundamentals that translate under saddle for a safer ride. The Five Fundamentals will be taught in Part 2 of the HOW TO'S of IRON FREE Riding.

For high resolution pictures of the Three Foundations and Five Fundamentals contact Info@WHolisticHorsemanship.com or call 866-821-0374.

Missy Wryn is the founder of WHolistic Horsemanship *Training the Whole Horse*[®], IRON FREE Riding, plus inventor of the ALL-IN-ONE Training Halter Bitless Bridle. Specializing in problem and dangerous horses Missy has developed a unique, fear free, and pain free approach to training horses and riding Iron Free. *Training the Whole Horse*[®] is the foundation to Missy's innovative and simpler approach to training your horse using effective communication that your horse will understand, honor and respect while having fun and being safer riding Iron Free (no bits – no spurs). Check Missy's schedule for appearances and lectures in your area at www.WHolisticHorsemanship.com. Missy's training DVD's are now available to download and watch for only \$1.99 at www.WHolisticHorsemanship.com.

Missy Wryn is also CEO and founder of *Natures Balance Care, LLC*. *Natures Balance Care* is the manufacturer of organic approved (OMRI) fly control products for horses and organic livestock plus organic approved remedies for Dogs suffering from skin conditions related to allergies, bacteria and fungus. Visit www.NaturesBalanceCare.com.