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Loving Horses & Living Leadership Series  
Training the Whole Horse® with Missy Wryn  
Part 4 of 4

FIVE FUNDAMENTALS THAT TRANSLATE UNDER SADDLE FOR A SAFER RIDE

We left off last time experiencing the *safe and loving place* as the set-up to our horse's emergency handbrake or otherwise known as a one rein stop. We've bonded and helped our horse understand that nose to girth is a loving experience which she wants to willingly go there when we ask with the slightest pressure. You are now at the understanding of the Three Foundations and why they are so important. You can see how the Three Foundations fit into your everyday life with your horse so let's get to riding.

Before I go for a ride I ALWAYS run my horse through my Five Fundamentals that Translate Under Saddle for a Safer Ride. The Five Fundamentals start with WHolistic Lunging. I call it WHolistic because I am working with the WHOLE horse. I lunge by having the whole horse's attention on me which consists of eyes, ears and mind. Since horses are prey animals they are designed to see independently with each eye receiving input separately into their brain allowing them to be alert for predators from either direction. Therefore I stand in front of my horse to begin lunging so I have both eyes on me with ears forward at full attention. Standing in front of my horse about 8 to 10 feet away (out of her blind spot) with the lead rope in my left hand I will lift the lead rope to the left, cock my head to the left, look directly in my horse's eyes asking her with my body language to move left (her right). As my horse looks at me trying to figure out what I'm asking I will lift my training stick with my right hand and ask again with a cluck or kiss maintaining my "move left" body language. If my horse does not respond by moving I will tap her left shoulder with the end of the training stick once while making the cluck sound and then tap again continuing to tap until she takes a step in the direction I'm asking. As soon as my horse takes even one step I instantly drop all my pressure, (stop asking) by dropping both hands down and bowing at the waist dropping my eye contact and saying good girl. Then I will drop the training stick and come up to my horse's shoulder and stroke her neck. If my horse licks and chews all the better, but if not I will stick my fingers in the corner of her mouth where there are no teeth and I will feather her tongue to get a lick and chew, and then continue stroking her neck and expressing appreciation.

HINT: Licking and chewing means “ah ha, I’m thinking on that” and is a relaxation response. I want my horse to be relaxed and not frightened by my asking to lunge. Remember the stick is simply an extension of your hand which is for loving and applying measured pressure (AMP). If you have a horse that is afraid of the stick, please read the section about desensitizing before attempting to use the stick.

I will ask again and maybe this time I won’t have to tap my horse to move, but I will not hesitate to tap on her shoulder to get her moving. If you raise your training stick you must be prepared to follow through and use it. It’s like another horse nipping asking “move”. Don’t hit your horse, just tap and increase the tapping (AMP) until your horse moves her feet. Once you’ve got your horse stepping in the direction you are asking keep the horse moving by swinging the training stick behind her to add pressure asking “keep moving please”. Remember to praise verbally as your horse responds to what you are asking. I always drop the hand that is holding the lead rope down to my side relaxed in the neutral position once my horse is moving/lunging. The horse will learn that she needs to keep going and that you have simply stopped asking to begin lunging. Once your horse starts to lunge stop asking so go into the neutral position. If your horse stops moving her feet simply raise the lead rope and ask again. Keep the energy flowing and don’t be hard on yourself – your body is learning new techniques so it will take some time to get a rhythm between you and your horse. Praise yourself for trying.....

Now that I’ve got my horse lunging I will move onto the second Fundamental which is a One Rein Stop on the ground, my horse’s emergency handbrake which will translate under saddle. As my horse is lunging around me I drop the training stick, take my right hand and grab the lead rope behind my left hand (not in front of my left hand) and start pulling the lead rope through my left hand, gathering it in long loops in my right hand as I walk towards my horse’s girth area. My horse will most likely continue walking as I walk towards her. As I get closer I will flex my horse’s head towards her side and girth area. I slide my hand down to about 18” from the shank (where the lead rope attaches to the halter) and flex my horse’s head towards her girth resting my left hand on the saddle as my point of reference. I move with my horse if she is still moving her feet, but I do not release her nose until her feet stop moving. I will exhale my breath releasing my energy and talk softly to my horse “ho ho” or “whoa whoa” while stroking her neck with my right hand. Stroking my horse’s neck will calm, soothe and promote relaxation and a stop. Once my horse’s feet stop moving I do not release her nose until she “gives” which is either slack in the lead rope or her nose bobs towards her girth. As soon as I get a “give” I open my left hand and drop the lead rope like a hot potato. I am still holding the lead rope with your right hand however, but I have instantly released the pressure with my left hand giving my horse her head. I [raise and stroke her neck allowing her “soaking time” while she thinks on what she did. If she’s not licking and chewing I’ll feather her tongue with my fingers to get her to lick and chew. I will even ask for her head down with slight pressure

on the lead rope as I taught in the Three Foundations to get my horse to drop her head, relax and think – *Where the mind is the body follows.*

The secret to training is instant release and allow for soaking time. I often will only work with my horse 10-20 minutes and put her away for the day to soak on the lesson. There are dendrites in the brain that make neuro-connections when learning and research has found that during rest the dendrites continue making connections. That's why you'll notice sometimes your horse is farther in his/her training if you've returned after a day or two.

## DESENSITIZING

Desensitizing is a very important Fundamental for a horse to be safer around people. I do this with compassion and nurturing helping my horse get over the scary thing without pushing them into a meltdown. There is no shame in getting off your horse and helping her face the horse eating mail box or garbage can. I don't believe in forcing my horse to "just get over it", instead as her leader I will check it out with her stroking her neck as I open the mail box door, bang it with my hand all the while talking in a soothing relaxing tone. I will show it to her from both sides so each eye can get a chance to process it. I will help my horse to get over the scary thing and then get back on and ride to and fro past the scary thing which by this time my horse could care less. Building confidence is a balancing act between creating a dependent horse and a confidence horse. I think it is mean to force a horse to just "get over it" without taking the time to show the horse they are going to be ok nurturing and loving them through it. I cannot tell you how many times simply respecting my horse's fear, getting off and checking the scary thing out how this has paid off. Often times it only takes one time to show them and you are back to your adventure.

I want to get as much desensitizing done on the ground to flesh out problems and issues so I don't have to discover them in the saddle. So to begin desensitizing I want my horse to get used to my training stick first. I'll start at my horse's left shoulder with the lead rope in my left hand and my training stick resting in my right hand pointed down to the ground. I'll shorten the lead rope to 18-24" gripping it overhand which is little finger towards my horse and thumb towards me with the end of the lead rope draped over my thumb. I reach up with my left hand and stroke my horse's neck telling her "good girl" keeping her nose tipped slightly in my direction. This position allows me to desensitize my horse more safely since at any time I can pull my horse's nose towards me sending her hind end away and keeping her from running off. Stroking her neck is a good way to get my horse to calm down and relax while having the lead rope in my hand to react quickly if necessary. Standing at her shoulder stepping a few feet away is a safer position when desensitizing so I can pull the nose towards me if she tries kick out or to block her with my hand lifted up at her eye if she tries to push into me all the while keeping the lead rope 18-24" from the shank.

Now I take a few steps to the right away from my horse, but keep her nose tipped slightly towards me and begin introducing the stick by gently rubbing her foreleg working my way up to her shoulder and back. I want to keep her nose tipped towards me so if at any time she tries to kick out or take off I can pull her nose towards me which sends her hind end away from me. I stroke her neck if she gets a little worried while I keep loving her up with the stick all the while I'm saying to her "the just wants to love you". It's very important that I stand at my horse's shoulder when desensitizing as a matter of safety. If at any time my horse gets scared, I simply put my left hand on her neck and stroke her telling her she's ok and I may ask her to drop her head if she starts to get really upset. I never push her to a melt-down, but simply go back to a starting point and take baby steps rubbing her with the stick if her fear starts escalating.

This is just one of the many things I will desensitize with. Get creative. Twirl your lead rope around, slap it on the ground while using the same techniques of keeping your horse's nose tipped towards you and rubbing their neck if they get scared. You'll be amazed how quickly a horse gets over the scary thing when you take the time to nurture them through it. My ultimate goal is that I can slap the ground with my stick and string with a flag on the end of my stick while my horse just stands at liberty not worrying about it. That takes time, patience and compassion, but you will have a willing companion who trusts you through the tough times.

#### YIELDING HIND & FOREQUARTERS

The purpose of yielding hind and forequarters is first to help your horse connect his brain to his feet. When your horse is aware of where her feet are she is much more sure footed on the trail and in the ring. I want my horse to move her hind end away from me with just a point of my finger. Also, refining the hind quarter yield will translate under saddle when I'm teaching my horse the emergency handbrake, the one rein stop, by pointing at her hip when she isn't responding to my heel pressure. When I touch her girth I want her inside foreleg to cross in front of her outside foreleg which will translate under saddle when I ask for a side pass, half pass and turn on the haunch. A purposeful look at the hip is true refinement in communication and you will soon develop that with your horse once she responds to the point of your finger. Everything I teach on the ground will translate under saddle so I want to get it good on the ground first.

To begin yielding the hind quarters I stand at my horse's left shoulder, tip her nose towards me slightly with my left hand and raise my training stick just above and behind her hip (above the left side of her rump) and start tapping the air while counting 1-2-3, 1-2-3, then I gently tap my horse's bottom with the end of the stick counting 1-2-3. As soon as my horse takes a step with her hind feet away from me I instantly rub her bottom with the tip of the stick (extension of my hand) telling her "good girl" and stroke her neck with my left hand. Remember stroking the neck releases a chemical response that accelerates learning and supports my horse to be calm. I'll pause while my horse licks and chews thinking of what

just happened. I'll invoke her thinking if she's tight mouthed by feathering her tongue with my finger as described in Part 3.

If my horse isn't moving her feet away from the tapping on her bottom, AMP (applied measure of pressure - increase) I keep tapping while I count and as soon as she moves her feet I rub her bottom with the stick until she stops moving her feet and then stroke her neck telling her "good girl". The release of pressure is everything so I am **instant** with my release of pressure/tapping while I praise her verbally profusely.

What I do on one side of my horse I repeat on the other side starting from the beginning using the stick as an extension of my hand. As my horse's response gets to the point of just raising the stick and she's yielding, I drop the stick and point at her bottom with your finger with intensity in my body language and cluck if I need to. It is amazing how she will move her bottom away from the pressure with just a pointed finger.

HINT: your horse doesn't have to "get it" the first session. Just have her yield her hindquarters a couple times on both sides and then stop and go for a walk with her. The fastest way a horse learns is short periods of training and lots of support with praise and touch. Also, when on a walk with your horse it's a good time to practice the Three Foundations. I often stop, back up my horse, ask for her head down and then resume walking. My horse must pay attention to me as the herd leader even when the neighbor horses are showing off.

Yielding with just a point of your finger will translate under saddle when you ask your horse for a one rein stop and for whatever reason she is not moving off the pressure of your heel you can add the point of your finger which will instantly remind her to move away from the pressure.

Now I've got my horse yielding hindquarters so I'm going to move onto yielding forequarters. It's very important to be aware of the placement of pressure so it will translate under saddle. When asking my horse to yield her forequarters the placement of my foot under saddle is on the girth or slightly in front of the girth. I use my toe and upper side of my foot right behind the shoulder which depending on the horse I'm riding can be slightly in front of the girth or on the girth. Short backed (short coupled) horses tend to have less space between the girth and their arm pit compared to longer back horses; horse training is not an exact science since each horse is unique in shape and temperament so keep in mind the point of pressure you apply will need to translate under saddle where your foot, heel or toe may cue her.

To begin training my horse to yield her forequarters I start with my horse facing the arena wall, or a fence. This allows me to ask her to move sideways without stepping forward to get out of the pressure. I'm going to teach my horse to follow her nose as my starting point while I apply pressure at her girth with my

thumb. Eventually I'll only apply pressure with my thumb and my horse will yield her forequarters which will translate under saddle with my foot.

To yield the forequarters is to have the horse cross the inside foreleg in front of the outside foreleg. So with my horse facing the fence and me standing on the his left side with the lead rope in my left hand (over hand), I'm going to apply pressure with my right thumb at her girth where my foot would be in the saddle and raise my left hand palm open at her eye level. I'm going to press with my thumb which probably isn't going to mean anything to my horse at that moment so I'm going to then pat the air with my left hand towards her eye which will invoke my horse to move her head away from hand making her move her feet to follow her nose. As soon as my horse takes a step away from me I will stroke her neck with my left hand while rubbing her girth with my right hand praising her verbally. By the way this is all done at first without a saddle on my horse so she can feel the pressure at the girth. Repeat this with the saddle on.

If my horse is simply not moving away from my patting the air towards her eye I will bump her cheek with the heel of my hand so she'll move off the pressure. I may have to AMP my bumping until she moves away, but I will not take it to the point of hitting, just bumping. If my horse simply doesn't understand I will grasp the shank directly under her chin with my left hand and turn her nose away from me while I press with my right thumb pushing her to follow her nose and step over. As soon as she takes a step I rub and praise her. This can take a while so have patience. Remember you are teaching your horse a new language and she's struggling to understand what you are asking. It's ok if your horse doesn't cross her feet right away, just stepping away is the beginning. Once your horse does cross her feet praise her profusely and let her soak on it working her mouth.

Depending on the horse I will quit after only a couple successes especially if the horse has had a real tough time figuring out what I'm asking. I'll come back the next day or two and try it again asking this time with just my thumb pressure. If my horse doesn't understand I will go back to the beginning with my hand raised at her eye level and repeat until just the thumb pressure is sufficient and she's crossing her inside foot over her outside foot. Eventually I will want my horse to yield her forequarters without using the arena wall or fence to keep her from moving forward. Getting this good on the ground will make laterals, side and half passes that much easier for my horse as it directly translates under saddle.

## CHANGING DIRECTION

The last of the Five Fundamentals is *Changing Direction*. This means changing direction while lunging and the reason it is a fundamental is because it creates agility, suppleness and above all brain development. Changing Direction is the start to dancing with my horse on the ground. It's rhythmic and fun and is a playful time that builds confidence between me and my horse.

Changing Direction starts with the WHolistic Lunging. By now my horse should be able to lunge without the stick, but it's ok if I need it from time to time; I can use the stick while changing direction it just takes a little extra coordination. But before you start with your horse I recommend doing the dance steps without your horse so you've created new pathways in your brain first. Let me suggest tying the halter to a gate or fence post so you can practice. I want you to stand as if you are in front of your horse and get your horse lunging to the left (I'm trying to be consistent with you starting everything from the left, but you don't have to start on the left every time with your horse). Now I want you to step your left foot to the side about 18-24", but don't move your right foot. Your feet are spread apart giving you stability. Notice how you can shift your weight between each foot from side to side with stability. Be loose and comfortable with slightly bent knees. Next reach overhand across your body with your right hand and grasp the lead rope about 18" in front of the left hand and then lift the lead rope to the right asking your imaginary horse to now go to the right. Your imaginary horse is now lunging to the right; pretend your horse has gone one full circle around you, now step with your right foot to the side 18-24", reach over with your left hand about 18" in front of your right hand lifting the lead rope up and across now asking your horse to go to the left. Practice a few times both directions until you feel comfortable with the moves. When you are ready try it with your horse. There will come a time with you and your horse that all you have to do is step to the side and give your horse "a look" and he'll rock back on his haunches, pick up his front feet and hop over changing direction – that's when it's dancing.....

With my horse I want to first teach her to stop in front of me before she changes direction. As my horse is lunging left I take a step with my left foot, reach over with my right hand about 18" in front of my left hand and pull the lead rope across in front of me and bump, bump bump the lead rope under her chin asking her to stop and face me. As soon as she stops and faces me I put my feet together, drop my countenance, lowering my eyes and bending slightly at the waist bowing while I'll praise her profusely. Then I walk up to my horse and stroke her neck with a smile on my face and delight in my voice.

When my horse stops in front of me I make sure her rump is out of my eye line meaning I can look straight down her body and her rump is not hanging to the right or left. If her rump is hanging out to the side I yield her hindquarters by pointing and clucking with a purposeful look in my eye directly at her rump. I want your horse's body to be in a straight line with eyes forward paying attention to me. A rump sticking out is an attitude of disrespect and since I've taught my horse to yield her hindquarters with just a point of my finger she will line up her body respectfully. I maintain my horse's respect by controlling her feet as I watch for body language that represents disrespectful behavior. My horse is going to be relaxed and trustful so long as I am the herd leader she genetically requires.

Once I've got my horse stopping in front of me respectfully with attention, the next step is to ask her to change direction. So I ask my horse to lunge to the left, then step and reach stopping her for a moment then lift my right hand with the lead rope and ask her to go the right. She may stand there for a moment and then realize I'm asking her to lunge, but if my horse is resistant to lunge here's where I incorporate my training stick. The trick to the stick is to pass it under the lead rope as I switch hands. So my horse is lunging to the left and the stick is in my right hand. I step to the left, pass the stick under the lead rope to my left hand then reach out with my right hand and grasp the lead rope as I described in the Wholistic Lunging, then lift the stick for added pressure as my horse changes direction. She'll respond quickly and respectfully so long as I have followed through using the stick in the beginning.

I actually have to use the stick with Benny, my Autistic horse, when changing direction by simply lifting the stick straight up to keep him from coming into me. Benny has a lot of draw which means he likes to be close to me, too close, so when I ask to change direction he wants to come towards me, but simply lifting the stick straight up, not even pointing it at him, he respects the stick and rocks back on his haunches as he darts in the direction I've asked. Don't hesitate to use the training stick as an extension of your hand to guide your horse and to keep you safer.

I've completed the Five Fundamentals on the ground and by now they will translate under saddle. The first application once I mount my horse is a one rein stop under saddle which is my horse's emergency handbrake. Upon mounting I flex my horse's head to one side, reach down and stroke her head reminding her of the *safe and loving place* we go when we're in trouble. As soon as my horse dips her nose toward her girth or there is slack in the rein I instantly release the rein **instantly** releasing pressure. The way I flex my horse is I slide my hand down the rein and gently pull her nose to my foot, but not all the way since I want her to flex on her own the last 1/3 of the way or so. When pulling the nose to the girth I bring my hand to my hip as my point of reference so as not to pull my horse's nose up, but to the side. Pulling a horse's nose up like to your knee level can tip a horse over like the stunt horses in the movies, so I just pull to my foot gently since my horse should be good at flexing all ready as I taught her on the ground. I flex each side before we start moving forward loving my horse up. Next I want my horse to understand the one rein stop in a walk, trot and canter so I'll ask her to move out a few steps at a walk and then reach down sliding my hand down the rein and flex her nose towards the girth while pressing my heel behind the girth asking her to disengage her hindquarters. TIP: Remember to put your heel where your thumb was when you taught this on the ground (translating under saddle).

If my horse does not disengage, then I reach over with my other hand and point to her rump and cluck asking her to yield. Once my horse disengages I release my foot pressure, but I do not release the rein until my horse's feet stop moving and she has "given" to the pressure of the flex just like I taught her on the ground. I repeat this in the trot and canter getting my horse's emergency handbrake good under

saddle. Stopping my horse in a crisis is not about pulling back, it's about shutting her down with a safe, responsible one rein stop controlling her feet. If I had a bit in my horse's mouth when performing a one rein stop the bit can slide through the mouth popping the entire bridle off her head (I've had it happen), not to mention the tearing of sensitive membrane and tissue in my horse's mouth from the bit. Bitless riding is a safer, painless way to ride my horses and when the Five Fundamentals are good on the ground first, I can ride my horses IRON FREE. Loving Horses & Living Leadership on the foundation of DO NO HARM provides me a richly deepened experience between me and my horses.