

Loving Horses & Living Leadership Series
Training the Whole Horse® with Missy Wryn
Part 2 of 4

INVOKING YOUR HORSE'S INSTINCT - WHOLISTIC JOINING

Since horses are genetically wired to require a herd leader at all times even in my herd of two, me and my horse, I needed to be the herd leader to be safer. The catchy phrase *he who moves the other's feet first is in control* became my mantra. I had seen round penning methods used to invoke a horse's instinct to recognize the human as their herd leader and it seemed all most magical as the horse finally followed the trainer around completely at liberty without a halter and lead rope. But it didn't make sense to chase the horse around giving them the choice to be with the human who is scaring them, or continue being chased around scared and exhausted. In my **Do No Harm** approach how am I going to do this?

I decided to mimic what I learned in the herd which I noticed the herd leader simply shoos any unwanted horse away from a spot that the leader wants, like the best food, best shady spot and then turns away as soon as the other horse moves off. For instance; a new horse comes into my training barn and on the first day I release her into my 96' training arena. My objective is to invoke her instinct to recognize me as the herd leader which will cause her to follow me wherever I go instinctually – she doesn't even think about it, she just does it. Only then do I have the *Whole* horse focused to begin training. So the new horse is running around checking things out sniffing and visiting while I'm standing in one area of the arena that I've claimed as mine – by the way this is a great way to introduce a new horse to new surroundings – *curiosity replaces fear*. As the herd leader my berth is very wide and I get the best of all the food and places to stand and things to look at; that's what goes on in the pasture.

So the new horse is milling around and I decide as the herd leader "I want that spot" so I run up, run off the new horse and instantly turn away, dropping my pressure because she just ran off giving me what I wanted. The horse will probably toss her head, bucking or kicking at me, but she ran off nonetheless – I got what I wanted. I don't care if the horse is snotty during this process so long as they are not charging me – that's another series for another time. After a few minutes I decide "I want that space too" and run off the horse where she is standing. I'm acting just like the herd leader and after a while the horse's instinct takes hold and she turns to me with an "oh you're the leader so what do you want me to do" look on her face which I immediately turn my back and praise the horse. Turning my back to the horse is instantly dropping pressure since horses learn from the release of pressure, not the pressure itself. And let me add that every time I run the horse off I praise her verbally letting her know that was the right answer as I turn away

dropping my pressure – expressing **Appreciation** is the first of the **Four Core Emotional Concerns**.

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When the horse turns to me and I've dropped all pressure I will then reach out my hand, lower my head and eyes, turning my body sideways walking up with my shoulder towards her praising quietly. I will allow the horse to sniff my hand and then I'll gently stoke her face or neck, just a stroke or two, and walk off. If she begins to turn away or run off as I approach I will run her off making it my idea which affirms that I'm the herd leader in control of her feet – *he who moves the other's feet first is in control*. I will repeat this process a couple times unless the horse begins to follow me right away. If not however I will reach out my hand toward the horse's nose and ask her to follow me as I turn and lead her as if there is an imaginary lead rope. If she follows voila I am the herd leader, if she walks away I shoo her off making it my idea she moved her feet. It can take from 5 minutes to 30 for a horse to join with me, but once I have a horse recognizing me as her herd leader I can move on to establishing my Three Foundations that every horse must learn to be safer around me. Herd leadership accomplished without scaring my horse all the while creating a friend who can trust me and who **wants** to be with me without the use of fear, pain or force.