

Horsemanship for EFW – The Generation Farms Approach

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The man doesn't believe he has any effect on anything...his own life, other people. He leads the miniature horse towards a small obstacle. In his mind he pictures him leaping it with exuberance – and he does! He is amazed at this influence he didn't know he had.

Practicing the Generation Farms Approach is often simple, but not easy. Simple experiences that keep people safe and create healing opportunities involve a lot of skill and knowledge on the practitioner's part. Horsemanship brings another level of skills to understand and apply. The following is intended as an introduction.

Core Concepts of Generation Farms Approach EFW Horsemanship:

1. Respectful Relationship
2. Window of Tolerance
3. Relationality
4. Body awareness
5. The horse as co-facilitator

The main Generation Farms Approach core concepts also apply!

What do horses want from horsemanship?

- Fairness
- Clarity
- Consistency
- Comfort
- Connection
- Enjoyment

What do we want from relationships? *(See above)*



What is Horsemanship for EFW? – The Generation Farms Approach

Horsemanship for EFW involves utilizing horsemanship skills to provide learning opportunities for a participant. It can be a vehicle for learning life lessons, creating change in the body, and

healing trauma, and is not solely for skill development. The specifics of this will look different for different practitioners based on their philosophy, experience level, and horses.

An important point to consider is that participants are generally looking for help with self or relationships to other people NOT skills with horses. Luckily, many aspects of horses and horse/human relationships are great models. However, some of the ways that horses interact with each other are NOT a helpful guide. Some of the horsemanship skills that are common to horse people do NOT translate well to learning about human relationships although some of these may be entirely acceptable to the horse (and some NOT!). Strive to eliminate methods that can be triggering (either in method or philosophy).

**Remember to look at horsemanship in EFW through the lens of
healthy human relationships.**

Abilities of an Effective Horsemanship Facilitator

1. The ability to be in the present moment with the horse, the client, and yourself while facilitating a horsemanship session.
2. The ability to address any behaviors in the horse that arise during the session, **while maintaining the session**. For example, a horse that is unresponsive, spooky, grumpy, highly sensitive, etc. This includes the ability to keep your client, the horse, and yourself safe.
3. The ability to hold both an awareness of horsemanship as a process *as well as* the process of the client and what they need to get from the session. (FLEXIBILITY IS KEY!) This may not be horsemanship as you would do it on your own. **What is the clients' need and learning?**
4. The ability to keep your horse happy in his work and confident with horsemanship skills outside of sessions. Clients' sessions may include doing horsemanship in a different way than you normally would, and your horse needs reminders of your expectations of him.
5. The ability to notice and track patterns in the body of the client and themes in how he/she relates to the horse.
6. The ability to keep activities simple and add pauses.

Sessions are not a place to show off your own skills – don't give clients the feeling that they can never achieve what you can do! Often approximate, simple demonstrations are much more helpful than detailed ones. Give a "taste" of the exercise.

Examples of Horsemanship in Sessions

The child is so easily frustrated, so hard on herself. She feels so IMPATIENT! The horse is not responding. She has to be perfect! She learns to be patient for him, and to breathe, and to wait. To feel frustrated without getting mad. Soon she learns to be patient with herself.

1. Using phases of pressure to understand sensitivity and the idea of "asking before telling".
2. Moving the horse (for example, moving the hind end with body language) as a way of directing focus and intention, or bringing energy up.
3. Learning to release the pressure when the desired result has been reached, rather than pushing for more. What happens when we notice the "try" or the small successes? We get more success, and a horse that understands what we want. How does that relate to relationships with people or situations in our clients' life?
4. Building on skills in a systematic way (not skipping steps). How does this relate to relationships and creating a foundation? How do we start by building trust and move to other phases while maintaining that trust and relationship?
5. Using horsemanship to teach lessons to the nervous system of the client (from the bottom up). This is especially useful with clients that do not process well verbally. The nervous system picks up lessons about using energy, boundaries, assertiveness, etc and will translate that into other areas of the client's life without it being a cognitive process.
6. Learning horsemanship skills with a simple and sensitive horse and later transferring those skills to a more challenging horse. What has the client learned about him/herself that translates to a more challenging situation? How might those skills be used in the clients' life?

Examples of Exercises and Lessons

Core Exercises	Further Exercises
1. Trust building 2. Boundaries 3. Sharing space 4. Moving the hind end with hand (phases) 5. Moving the hind end with body language 6. Backing 7. Leading	1. Inviting then setting a boundary 2. Moving the front end with hands 3. Moving the front end with body language 4. Advanced leading 5. Connected longeing 6. Active roundpenning 7. Obstacles, trail experiences, etc 8. Invisible leadline

Lessons from Horsemanship that develop organically rather than from setting up a specific exercise

- Pause
- Tracking the body
- Empathy
- Safety
- Assertiveness (without aggression)
- Setting an intention
- Follow through
- Knowing when to wait
- Lifting and lowering energy
- The ability to be truly present (however that is)
- The ability to be relational
- The ability to be engaged and connected
- The ability to be OK when connection is not happening
- Connection to self before other
- Focus on the process as well as the result (or instead of)
- Development of spiritual connection to self, horse, nature, etc

Your Own Horsemanship

Wisdom from a student: "I am learning not a method but an attitude"

Most of us who have been working in this field have our regrets and went through a process of unlearning by letting go of ideas, patterns, expectations, etc. in order to find a new way. In IEFW training we expect that some of you are finding yourselves in a similar position. Be gentle on yourselves! And keep seeking. It is a journey for all of us.

Some things to consider:

- Deeply consider whether you and your horses are responding to each other relationally, or whether you rely solely on cues (particularly those which do not "make sense" as far as body language is concerned).
- Think about what your actions and your horse's reactions might look like to an outsider (particularly someone who is NOT a horse person and may come from a perspective that says "who are we to ask ANYTHING of the horse?") For example does your body language or cues have brace/aggression/agitation? Do you give your horse time to think and make choices? Do you give your horse room or does he feel blocked, cornered, confused or nervous? Can your horse engage or does he tend to shut down?
- How do your morals/values/beliefs translate to horsemanship? Is what you value being played out? Can you stand behind what you do from a relational perspective? How can you support yourself in your journey to more understanding?
- Good relationships are fluid, not static. There is movement. Things are negotiated. As in horsemanship. Everything does not always look perfect. How do you maneuver when things are sticky? Does this fit with your beliefs and values? Often the places where things get challenging are where the relationship moves to a new level. This is also when old patterns may come up for us (aggression, fear, etc).
- Being connected and conscious does not mean everything is always easy and soft. It is important to remember that they are horses...and horses are clear, and both energetic and physical. Using methods that truly make sense to the horse and that are not aggressive are important in order to deal with unwanted behavior. If you are emotional about it, damage can be done. Horses know if you are not willing to "go there" with

them.

- Don't change your horses too much! They have a core personality and tendencies that go with that. Have an appreciation for that. Horsemanship that is too regimented and focused on results can prevent a horse from being himself. His ability to be his true self will help him in this work.

Know that ANY method CAN be triggering for some clients