

The Missing Link

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That title may be a familiar term in a theory of human evolution but this topic deals not only with a physical step but with our inner evolution as well. Most of all it is about our journey with horses.

Everything touches, in some way, everything else. Life is movement, growth and change. In building a relationship with a horse or being able to advance while doing things with horses, sometimes apparent non-activity could prove to be just as crucial. If someone explained to me that they were trying to build a better relationship with their horse by sitting in a pasture, I would try to explain that sitting in a pasture is not enough. Weeks and months could go by and all that would have been attained, in terms of relationship, is familiarity. A routine of a person sitting in a chair or under a tree and wind-blown tumbleweed going by would be just about the same for a horse. If you are with an old friend who knows you inside-out, hanging out is not the same thing because the relationship is already there. However, this action alone, of being outside with a horse, or rather non-action, could be very beneficial for you in a different way. It can actually lead to inner developments which will not only serve what you want in the long run, but partially create it all on its own.



Photo courtesy of Edenpics-com - Sacred Water lily also called Blue Lotus, Indian Lotus or Bean of India

An Inner Longing

Important scientific evidence shown in different studies from Japan reveal that exposure to nature dramatically improves physiological and psychological responses. It also significantly reduces the negative effects that are created by the body in an urban environment. Japanese shinrin-yoku, meaning taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing, has produced rather astonishing results shown by blood samples and measuring levels of cortisol in saliva, effects on the immune system, brain activity, pulse and blood pressure. There was also a fifty percent increase of the immune system's natural killer cells and anti-cancer proteins.

There is an increasing tendency by people to seek something more from our daily routine as it predominantly exists. Spending time with horses raises even more questions. From way back, a common term was 'horses are our mirror'. The importance of that phrase is how horses can help us reflect upon ourselves due to our actions. Passion for horses can lead us to extensive study that seems never-ending but while we may know the structure of a hoof, we may not know how many bones are in our own hand. If you want to be able to help others, you have to take care of yourself first. Otherwise, you will not be able to help any one at all.

Once, while giving a private workshop for a family, the teens mentioned that they had seen the movie, 'Avatar'. They were amazed at the beauty of the environment found on the fictional planet named Pandora. When they left the theatre they, and many other movie-goers, turned around and went back in to see the film again. This movie created an unexpected reaction from the public. There were many cases of depression after seeing the film. I suppose it could be described more as a longing for such beauty that is lacking in our 'civilized' world. This should come as no surprise because, although most of us do not realize it, the reasons for those feelings also go way back.





The Beauty of All That We Are

A study at Rutgers University of New Jersey discovered that simply viewing flowers had a substantial effect on people by producing pleasant emotions, a positive outlook, satisfaction in life and improved social behaviour. Add to that, wide open spaces and the sound of running water and we start to feel a sort of inner peace thanks to our primitive limbic brain stem. That may sound like taking away some of the joy and beauty of it, but it is all connected.

In 'Beyond the Dream Horse', I mentioned how our 'spiritual' side, or mind or our inner limitless imagination and depth of possible reflection, is fused or interfaced

with our biological bodies. The mind changes the brain and the brain can change the mind. It is our consciousness that seems to define who we are and the body serves as our very own avatar.

If I take a step back, I always believed that we, humanity, are all students and the Earth is our school. However, the steady expansion and complexity of man-made civilization has further separated us from nature. In our world of processed foods, technology, landscapes of concrete and steel framed towers, we have long lost a vital life-nourishing connection to part of what we are.

Merely the fragrance of a bush of blossoming Hawthorn flowers will open up your arteries. This will help your blood flow to better nourish vital organs and the brain. It provides a boost of vitality, well-being and concentration.

While multi-tasking in a work cubicle or sitting on a freeway stuck in traffic, the brain emits beta waves. Beta waves help us in our daily activities and to think logically but too much beta can overcharge our system by increasing blood pressure, causing anxiety, panic, and make us think a lot about not much at all.

In a walk along a garden path, the brain would automatically switch to emitting alpha waves. A lot of good is said about alpha waves, but as we are interconnected to all around us, so is all not so clearly separated within us. It is usually never either/or. The commonly referred alpha waves or more correctly, alpha-theta waves allow greater concentration, creativity, heightened intuition and awareness. It is similar to the first stage of meditation, permits relaxation and introspection. All this and it requires no effort on our part.



Is it possible that in our belief of being superior, repressing and disconnecting from nature could be a major cause of rampant behavioural problems in society? On a physical level, seventy-five percent of all illnesses reported to doctors are the result of stress-related factors.

Believe In Yourself

In our search for answers, what we usually end up seeking is someone who will hand them to us. The world around us quietly provides so many answers if we

would only listen with our eyes and see with our hearts.

Horses may be considered as prey but it is their directness that makes us step back and question ourselves. Some believe that horses are connected to a higher spiritual or cosmic power. It does not matter if it is a transcendental belief, religion or what the Chinese call Chi. They are certainly connected to the earth and know what is good for them or to seek out what the earth provides to heal themselves. Let us not forget that we also share those same connections. This makes us, both at once, the teacher and the student to ourselves. Another common phrase is 'the horse is my teacher', but horses only indirectly allow us to draw forth the answers from within. Such is the true meaning of education.

Changes can take place if you begin to notice the good things that happen around you and in yourself; acknowledging any markers of success or noticing people who show some kindness. Reflect on the positiveness and imagine it being absorbed into you. The natural activity of neuroscience will build your brain, change your mind, change the perception of your daily life and your relationship with horses and people. The Buddhist monk, Matthieu Ricard, said that if you take care of the minutes, the hours, days and years will take care of themselves.

The references below can help in discovering more about the different points made in this article

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