

The Fragile Leaf

by Michael Bevilacqua

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Photo by Catherine Scott

In the past month a similar question has been asked to me three times. The question is whether my life with horses has changed the overall perception of life and other people.

That recurring question shows how we share so much in common and yet often think that we are hiding personal thoughts or notions. The same thoughts that are felt by so many. Spending so much time with horses and seeing their own character allowed me to choose to respect that individuality. It caused me to listen closer. With the recognition and acceptance of what a horse can convey to us, it helped me to increasingly adjust to the moment. It did change how I view life and people. It helped slow things down for me which allowed me to see and experience and appreciate a lot more.

Being with a horse, reading off each other and learning the subtleties of expression permits us to become like an intimate couple who can instantly read so much information, or at least get a clear message, with a mere, quick glance.

It can help us to accept the way things are and to relate with another in any given situation. Aside from joy or satisfaction, we are often so disappointed, frustrated, or even angry due to adherence to our own expectations. This is where appreciation should come in instead. We tend to have expectations from others and it could often result in judgement, animosity or resentment or lingering bitterness. Whereas we can share with one another, we do each have our own lives and purpose. Yet, we are all connected and even if a specific situation or person disappoints us, or rather, does not meet our intended expectations, the situation may have created an important event or benefit for someone else. It may unexpectedly present something new to us. It may also cause us to be strong and stand on our own or make new connections with others to force self-growth or achieve a particular goal.

Best of Both Worlds

With horses or people, being demanding, and/or critical will not make you many friends. To reach altruistic levels or higher spirituality or understanding we must embrace our humanity. However, high-minded thought and reality are often separated. That is what I meant when I wrote a section in the book, 'Beyond the Dream Horse', about our spiritual and biological sides being interfaced. It starts with our own inner peace and that can also be achieved through activity outside of ourselves. Many separate the two with high ideals, but outside of a cozy, peaceful meditation room (or bubble bath or any quiet spot), daily reality can stir the 'animal' in us. Especially a time of crisis can create a feeling of helplessness or anxiety or fear and we often need or demand immediate results or answers. There is often a sense of desperation to fix something that we feel has changed or has been lost.

Adjusting to the moment, can only prove to be beneficial. If we allow ourselves to take a step back and view what we must do, time will inevitably take its course and lead us to a desired resolution. Thus, avoiding passionate, hasty, radical, foolish or even dangerous decisions that would certainly affect our future and possibly eradicate the possibility of any desired outcome.

We can all learn something from each other. Awareness and an attempt to understand another does not have to lead to lifelong, intimate friendship. It could be as simple as how you react to, or treat, a new cashier after you have been standing in the checkout line for twenty minutes.



Blending Above and Below - courtesy of edenpics.com

The Shared Experience of Our Hearts

Over the years there have been a few people who have convinced me to give private instruction. In conversation, they demonstrated such in-depth comprehension and needed only guidance or reassurance or a little more clarity or insight to build a relationship with their horses. Sometimes I would be uncertain due to observed disassociation between the words and the actions of the person. I have, nevertheless, acquiesced when some would practically beg

me for private classes and then they abandon the path with the horse.

I have come to realize that I should not be disappointed. Perhaps that experience was only a stepping stone in their own lives. Instead of feeling that I wasted my time, I am happy that they have moved on having overcome some obstacle within themselves or their lives.

I realize, that for them, it was an opportunity at an inopportune time. It was not wasted and it was not for me to judge after agreeing to give of myself. For, years later and thousands of miles apart, some established the life they wanted, including horses, and thanked me. For others, I realize that something, somewhere motivated them to make a connection to some aspect of life with horses. They did grow, they did learn but it was about a personal issue to which I may be totally unaware and had nothing to do with horses to begin with.



Good ingredients can form but only blend at the right time - photo by Catherine Scott

The way of being embodies many of the traits of what Native Americans call Deer Medicine. It includes a respectful connection to nature; to not be pushy to others to change; no ulterior motives or hidden agenda, appreciation of the beauty in balance for strength in unconditional love and compassion; to touch the

hearts and minds of wounded beings, to know what must be done and overcome obstacles, among others.

To share with you an answer to a related question about my favorite Zen Koan, “The Stingy Artist” would aptly reflect such an openness or non-judgemental acceptance to the world around me. Avoiding, most of all, assumptions. As [Ashida Kim](#) explains on his website these koans, or parables, were translated into English from a book called the Shaseki-shu (Collection of Stone and Sand), written late in the thirteenth century by the Japanese Zen teacher Muju. There you can find a straightforward list of koans.

All good traits to which to aspire. In any case, I am no Zen master. That is why I focus on doing things with horses and hopefully, through action, allow that beautiful, innate awareness and potential to unfold within people and to recognize and appreciate it within our horses.

References:

Ashida Kim - [Zen Koans](#)

Beyond the Dream Horse - www.beyondthedreamhorse.ca

Deer Medicine - birdclan.org