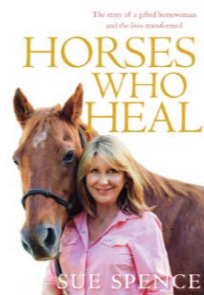


WITH Sue Spence



Sue Spence is a, Workshop facilitator, Educator, Public speaker and Author who teaches communication skills to corporate groups and underprivileged youth using the principles of natural horsemanship. Her business, Horses Helping Humans, and registered charity, the Horse Whispering Youth Program, are built upon techniques she developed to help identify individual personality profiles in conjunction with their specific body language.



Sunny, Yogi, Mindy and Larry

How we relate to others emotionally is also reflected in how we handle those emotions when working with our horses. How do you react when your horse becomes reactive? Do you get angry or anxious? Your personality and emotions not only affect friends and colleagues, but also your horse! You will present with the same reactions when facing difficult human communications, so it's important to gain awareness of how we react so we can learn to turn those reactions into responses.

I have built my program around teaching people to understand, not just their own personalities, but others as well, as we all see and feel things differently. Teaching them also what their "conditioned response" is while under stress, this presents through body language and energy spikes. Realising how we come across to others can help change relationships around us. By communicating consciously at all times, being aware of our body language and energy, we can avoid the confusion that arises when our words and body language are not congruent.

Before becoming an approved placement supervisor for psychology students I was assessed by one of the colleges placement supervisors. I was as surprised as she was to hear (in her words) "I am so impressed as your Theoretical Underpinnings are in perfect alignment with the four temperaments we teach in our psychology college!" I had never heard of these four temperaments up until this stage (could not even pronounce Theoretical), so I was really excited to hear what

"IF YOU STRUGGLE WITH FRUSTRATION AND ANGER RISES QUICKLY, BE VERY CONSCIOUS OF BREATHING OUT COMPLETELY"

I was doing aligned with the psychology world.

The natural leader (Choleric), The Organiser (Phlegmatic), the Nurturer (Melancholy) and the Motivator (Sanguine), I would ask students if they got frustrated easily and liked to be in charge like *Sunny* my Quarter Horse, who is head of the herd here. Or if they were more like *Larry* one of the Miniatures who loves to be organised. He puts himself into place on work days, quietly stands at his post waiting for others to be caught.

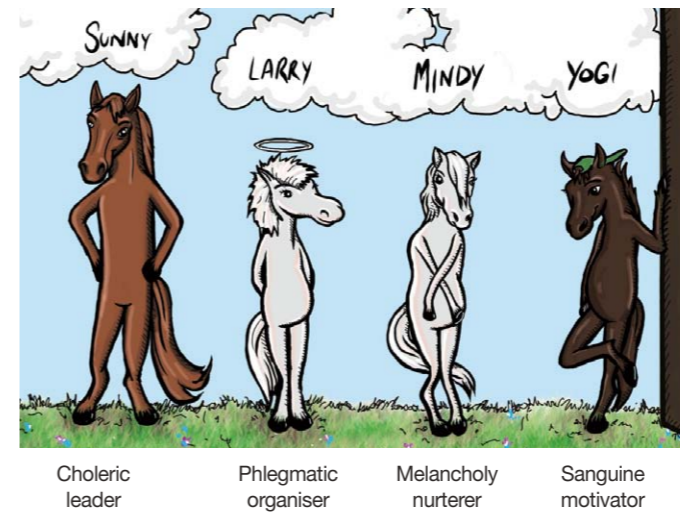
Or *Mindy* my rounded pure white Shetland who prefers cuddles

to any sort of confrontation and when others play rough she take herself off to her stable. Or did they relate to *Yogi* the black Shetland who can't keep his mouth shut while demonstrating how he opens the gates, steals hats and undoes shoe laces. And is only engaged and still when he is on his pink step box!

Working with now thousands of disadvantaged and disengaged young

people and then corporate clients, I became aware of how each personality displays their own conditioned response when under pressure, which shows through body language. This is where my cartoons came from! Of course I don't think my horses stand like this, but it is my way of teaching people how each human personality has their own distinct body language (not humanising horses, but horseanising humans for education purposes). Students are easily able to relate to one or more of the personalities. It helped me immensely in being able to engage with them and open the doors of communication with a sense of humour and without judgement.

"OFTEN OUR EMOTIONS ARE AT THEIR PEAK AT COMPETITION TIME AND UNLESS WE LEARN TO CONTROL THEM IT CAN AFFECT THE OUTCOME"



Choleric leader Phlegmatic organiser Melancholy nurturer Sanguine motivator

Above are body language conditioned responses (Sue form!) *Sunny* can look intimidating when displaying "What's going on," body language. They get frustrated easily and like communication, "Straight To The Point."

Larry can look and feel defensive, "I hope your not insinuating I haven't done it correctly!"

Mindy can look nervous and not confident. "Oh no, here comes *Sunny* in a bad mood!" Anxiety can be seen through closing body down.

Yogi can look distracted with a "Whatever attitude!" which feels disrespectful to others.

We are a mix of all personalities but which one comes out when you're under pressure? What is your natural impulse in times of stress? If you are in a confrontational situation do you advance into it (speak your mind confidently) or feel intimidated and back down or avoid/retreat? Can you say 'No' easily, or is it difficult?

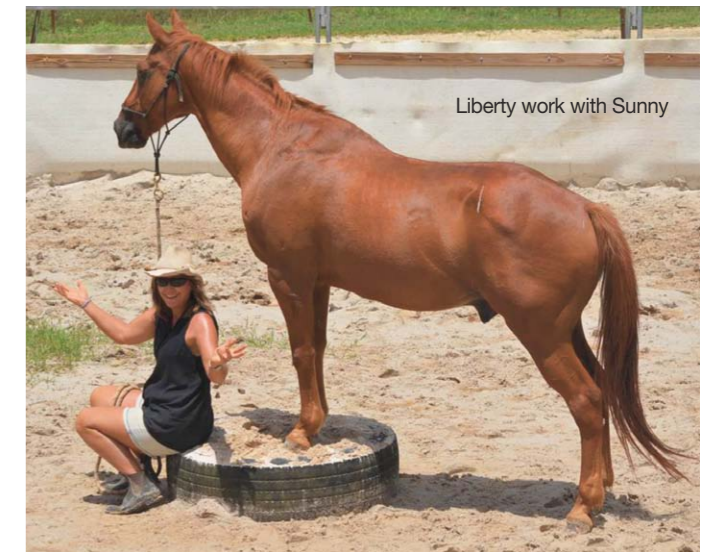
Let's take a look at how you may come across at stressful times and what you can do to adjust yourself for better communications with your humans and your horse. Often our emotions are at their peak at competition time and unless we learn to control them it can affect the outcome! The way you breathe around horses and humans is as equally important as adjusting your body language. Firstly for all personality types, dropping your energy from a "Reactive" state to a "Responsive" state is crucial before you enter a room to speak to people or enter your horses paddock!

Our emotions will sway from Frustration, Anger, Anxiety, Defence, Hyperactivity, all depending on our personal makeup. When we become reactive, blood is pumped to our muscles, our stomach slows digestion down (our brain and stomach are in constant communication, hence stomach cramps and butterflies when we are nervous), so you are ready to either Fight or Flee. The problem is, we don't want to be in Fight or Flee, we simply need to have that conversation with someone or spend time or compete with our horse calmly and in control of ourselves.

Our stomach holds so much tension as a result of our emotions, it is so important that while you are focusing on breathing slowly and deeply, it is just as important that you focus on completely relaxing your belly at the end of every exhale (just let it flop). This encourages blood back into your

stomach, reducing the tension and helps you gain a calmer state quicker.

When I work with my beautiful *Sunny* at liberty it never fails to amaze people, who have never seen horse/human connection before, how I can bring *Sunny* down to the walk from a canter in a round yard, simply by breathing out and relaxing my belly completely. Never underestimate how much humans, as well as horses, can feel the tension you hold when you have reactive emotions running. So breathe it all out and relax that belly as soon as you start to get reactive!



Liberty work with Sunny

If you struggle with frustration and anger rises quickly, be very conscious of breathing out completely before asking your horse or human to do anything. If you don't, all that energy will come across as a "Tell" and doors of communication will quickly close. More sensitive anxious personalities (horse and human) will shut down, as they will feel intimidated. Be very conscious also that you don't have "Agenda" energy, especially when trying to float a nervous horse. Relax your whole body, even your feet, as they will stride your agenda into the room or paddock and set off reactions. Imagine changing yourself from a Karate instructor to a Tai Chi instructor! >>>



Soft connection with Mindy

Doors of communication open so much more when you realise that your strength lies within your ability to be soft.

Many of my students present here due to problems with controlling their frustrations and anger. Watching them become conscious of how gently they need to ask *Larry* to complete the ground skills we teach and then seeing them realise that they have been responsible for making *Larry* feel safe and calm is usually a turning point. They realise softness is not weakness, it's such a strength to make others feel safe. If you lose focus easily (usually *Yogi* humans), learning the art of "Laser beaming" is a great exercise for keeping on task, not just with our horses, but in jobs we struggle to hold attention in. When your eyes move a lot when trying to apply a task, your brain follows. Next thing you may have lost concentration in your work, or forgotten an exercise in your dressage test.

If you imagine you have laser beams coming out of your eyes like torch beams shining on to what you have to apply yourself to, or where you need to ride to, it seems to turn on the focussed part of your brain, as when your eyes have less movement, so does your brain! Your horse will feel your focus, and teamed with your belly breathing you appear much calmer and more and focussed. Some students who attend here have never been able to focus and achieve anything. By teaching laser beams when completing ground horse agility exercises, they very quickly get a huge sense of achievement and satisfaction from completing a task. They then go on and use that same technique when they re-engage with study.

If you tend to get more anxious when working with your horse and humans it's important that you also remember to breathe out completely, as nervous energy feels just as uncomfortable to others as frustrated energy. Make your body wider by standing with feet shoulder width apart and not locking your arms into your sides. Closing your body language down (as well as making you look not confident) will also make you feel less confident. It's amazing the difference in how you feel once you have adjusted your body language.

Jake (right), was trying to get *Sunny's* attention to back up (*Sunny* wasn't listening at all until I changed Jake's body language). He got *Sunny's* attention and went on to use this body language in successful work presentations.

If you have a problem saying 'No', using this same open body language helps immensely. You now look more decisive and it reduces the risk of a disrespectful person thinking they can wear you down to say, 'Yes!'

This will also relate to you being pushed around at your horses feed time or your horse constantly pushing into your personal space. It is essential for physical safety with your horse and for your emotional safety with colleagues that you present with a more confident body language. When you hold your arms tight into your sides or hold them across your body, you appear physically smaller and not confident (like the photos of *Jake*). If you walk into the paddock and your horse usually barges into your personal space and almost pushes you over it's time to get some help ASAP! Have someone help you or attend some ground skill horsemanship lessons to learn the techniques to gain your horses respect and to build your confidence and keep you safe while you are learning how to develop healthy boundaries, especially at feed time, as it's the most common time for people to get hurt, as their horses have not learned to stay back until they are invited in to eat. I remember seeing a lady being shoved by her horse every now and then at a horsemanship clinic. It was nearly knocking her off her feet and each time he did it, she gave him a pat, thinking he was being affectionate. She was shocked to hear that it was a far from affectionate gesture. It was wonderful to see the change in her once she realised he was simply being disrespectful and how empowered she felt once she learnt to back him out of her personal space and he listened to her!



Simple body language adjustments create confident body language.



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