

Thal Equine Client Handout: Equine Behavioral Workshop

*Some Take Home Points from our October 15, 2011 Equine
Behavioral Workshop*

I owe the late and great Ray Hunt a debt of gratitude for first opening my eyes to a new way of seeing horses.

- It's never the horse's fault. Always look inward to find the reason (variation on RH).
- Be suspicious of anyone who tells you there is only one method or device needed for getting something done. You will form your own methods.
- Recognize all time with your horse as relationship time and all interactions as important. Your time with your horse doesn't start and end when you might think.
- You will immediately establish a relationship. Make it one in which you are the leader.
- Set your horse and yourself up for safety and success (a variation on RH).
- Identify what you know about the horse (hear-say, past experience, etc.) then drop pre-conceived notions (labels) and be present with the horse.
- Show a boundary and show an open door. This is how you develop trust and respect. RH said "Make the right thing easy and the wrong thing hard."
- Manage your own fear and confusion. If you do get confused (and we all do) STOP. Manage it. Breathe.
- Break tasks into smallest components or steps. Achieve those individually, sequentially, and meticulously, and your task will be complete.
- Follow the "2 Minute – 30 Second Rule" i.e., if you aren't able to describe the progress you are making,

STOP, think, change. Have multiple tools in the toolbox.

- Use meticulous timing with pressure and release to achieve lightness and build trust.
- Use gradients of intensity in interaction, starting with the lightest.
- Maintain ongoing trust, progress and consistency by asking the right things and succeeding.
- Observe and respect the equine cost/benefit equation that horses live by (i.e. security).
- End every micro-interaction on a high note.
- See even the seemingly difficult as just one more opportunity to teach your horse. Seek those experiences rather than shunning them.
- Your time constraints mean nothing to horses.
- The horse is the ultimate arbiter. All of our notions ultimately don't matter. Is the horse improving? Is the horse achieving what we are asking? That tells you how you are doing.
- Recognize that we all have blind spots. Always seek to improve and grow. See this not so much as a goal, but as a lifelong path.
- Have fun. Developing a good relationship with horses is a life-long endeavor that I have always greatly enjoyed – as a horse owner and as an equine veterinarian.

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