

power of The [^]Balance of Power

by TTEAM/TTouch Instructor Edie Jane Eaton
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In the "old days", it was commonly thought that a good horseman made sure his horse understood who was boss (not the horse!) and resistance was considered a willful attempt to get the better of the rider. Luckily the "new days" have no room for this kind of thinking, and there are a lot of horses out there who are grateful for it.



A more generous approach is to assume that there are reasons for resistant behaviour. Behaviour is a symptom of how an animal feels and bad behaviour, rather than being caused by a specific trigger, is often the result of an accumulation of stresses or concerns.

The apparent trigger is no more than the last straw. In the process of the TTEAM work, we look at the whole animal, recognizing that because of the interconnectedness of the whole being, we can bring about change in one area and have it influence the big picture. We don't have to focus on "The Problem" to have it get better.

A very basic connection is the relationship between physical, mental and emotional balance. Poor physical balance can cause issues with the farrier; tension that interferes with fluid movement; an inability to stand still - especially when being mounted (think about trying to stay in one place on a bicycle: it's much easier to balance when moving!); challenges with the horsebox - or even a tendency to be "lazy". Horses with poor mental balance tend not to focus well (it's not that they're in need of psychiatric care!). They might be described as having short attention spans, being ADHD, slow learners - etc., etc. Lack of emotional balance may be behind fearful, needy, or compulsive behaviours sometimes labeled "neurotic".

Rarely does one issue stand alone. We find that if a horse exhibits poor focus, for example, he will also show some other behaviour, such as not standing still. Helping this horse to be able to stand still may help his focus!

TTEAM work comprises ridden work, ground work and body work (TTouch). One of the most intriguing tools we use during all three phases of the work is the Body Wrap. It can make a difference with hyperactivity, "stubbornness", fear, boxing issues, gait irregularities, rebalancing, lead changes, straightness and handling the feet of babies to name a few. There's a lot of discussion of why the wrap works, and we cannot be sure, but it causes the breath to deepen - allowing more flexibility in the rib cage for movement, and more oxygen for the brain to use for learning. It softens the hindquarters, affecting movement and helping to overcome fear. (Fear is almost always associated with tension in the hindquarters and a clamped tail). It connects back to front, allowing the horse to carry himself better. It may simply act like a hug, and give a feeling of safety. Who knows?

It sounds quite magical, doesn't it? Not at all. The magic is in the the horse: If we can find ways to make it easier for him to do what we wish - he will!

How do you put on the wrap?

Here is a picture of Beau wearing a figure-eight body wrap - on top (literally) of equipment used when neckline driving (a rebalancing exercise). In this case the wrap has been used



to help him cope with the lines along his sides and the new situation in general. The wrap - two 3" elastic bandages tied together - is around his chest and hindquarters, and is only tight enough so that he feels it when he moves. If your horse is familiar with a blanket it should not be difficult for him. If he is not, then be mindful of his response. Have a friend lead him and put it around his chest, holding it in your hand at his withers and walking a few steps. Put another loop around his hindquarters - over his tail - and walk again. If you feel that this is not an issue for him, tie it with a quick-release knot and then slip his tail out.

If you feel that the wrap around his hindquarters may be too much for him you can do a "half wrap". The front loop is, as before, around his chest, but this time the second loop is around the girth. This has a big influence on the breath, is great for preparing horses for saddling and helping to overcome saddle issues. It can be every bit as effective as the full wrap.

You might like to see how your horse responds to the wrap under saddle. You can use the figure-eight - passing it under the top flap of the saddle, or use just one wrap around the hind quarters and tie it to the billet straps or the stirrup keeper - with a quick release knot. Before mounting ensure that your horse is not frightened, so have him walk and trot in hand. Then get up - and enjoy!

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