

Focus Determines Your Reality

Focus is one of those words that can be used different ways in a sentence. In riding, we mostly think of it as “something to pay particular attention to” or “the center of interest or activity”. Focus also applies to vision and though it may seem an abstract comparison, the definition “the state or quality of having or producing clear visual definition” is important. You want to have a clear path and a clear visual definition of what you are trying to achieve. Vision is an important part of exteroception. Not just what you are currently seeing with your eyes, but what your mind is seeing as your goal.

Horses are masters of synchronization and mimicry. They also communicate perfectly well without talking. Focus is one of their superpowers! Use it to your advantage. You can learn to communicate with your horse with YOUR focus.

1. As you watch the video, think about how you normally communicate with your horse. Do you just pull the rein or give a kick? Are you conscious about forming an intent in your mind before you ask your horse for something?
2. Start slow with this exercise on the horse. Make sure your mind and body are asking for the same thing. If your mind is saying go right, but your body is tense and not moving to the right, your horse is going to be confused!
3. As you get confident riding like this at the walk, you can increase the speed. Again, if you feel insecure, slow down. Fix the issue, and then go forward again.
4. To test your focus, you can use markers for riding to or lengthen your reins. Just make sure you aren't cheating by using your hands even when the reins are long! If your hands are grabbing, they are not feeling.

Once you feel comfortable with the basics of steering with your focus, you can add more complicated exercises. Make sure you form a vibrant image of what you want the end result to look like. As you ride the exercise, hold that image, and focus on how you feel the horse responding. For example: if you are leg yielding left, is your horse staying straight? Is the shoulder going fast, are the hindquarters lagging? Is your horse speeding up? If you find several of these are true. Focus on correcting ONE thing. You may find that as you correct ONE thing, something else improves or you may find, something else gets worse. Try fixing each of the issues separately and you may find you really only have one problem. As you hone the focus skill, you'll start to FEEL which parts need attention. If you feel like you can't make a correction at the speed you are working, slow down until you can, even if that means doing it from the halt.

The more consistent and diligent you are with THINKING about how your horse is responding and FOCUSING on the correct response, the quicker your horse will learn whatever you are trying to

teach. If your focus is consistently on what is going wrong with your horse or going wrong in your life and not on the positive outcome you want, your horse will always worry. All the horse knows is what emotion you are focused on, not why.

Video 3 is a great exercise for you to try. It's also a little preview of my theory on proprioception, balance, and coordination. Give it a try and notice what you learn, about YOU and your horse!

"Focus on the
possibilities
for **success**,
not on the
potential
for **failure**."
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