



The Whisper of a Horse:
**LIFE TRANSFORMATIONS
THROUGH EQUINE THERAPIES**

by Diana Gogan

For centuries people have written poems, songs, tributes, and books about the magic they experience with horses. I venture to guess that for every written tribute, there is an uncountable number that is never shared, only held dearly in the heart of the beholder.

What is it about horses that has such a powerful effect on us? Is it their physical presence? Their smell? The soft touch of a muzzle on our cheek? The power we experience when horseback? The vast depths of connection to be found when looking deep into their eyes? Perhaps we simply call it their “essence” – a magnificent blend of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual qualities.

The essence of a horse has the power to transform lives, create powerful moments of self-discovery, and touch us deep within our souls where we rarely let others in. Sometimes this essence presents itself as a whisper; other times it presents as a boisterous, attention-getting yell. No matter the volume, it often strikes a chord within us that can lead to transformation.

How can this be? After all, we don’t speak horse and they don’t speak our language. This isn’t a limitation. It’s an opportunity to expand our communication to a greater level of understanding, which includes body language,

Right: “When souls connect at the heart, time and space do not hinder communication.”



energy, and emotion. It's an opportunity to experience a knowing that resonates deep within our body and our heart.

Equine therapy, a growing field, comes in many shapes and sizes. It's powerfully effective in many situations from personal development to addiction, for people with special needs to programs for returning military veterans. Its applications are vast, the results profound. Equine therapy taps into wordless communication between two beings that results in new insights and understanding. It helps us experience and discover new ways of "being" and is often a catalyst for empowering life changes.

There are many ways people experience the power of equine therapy, from personal sessions to group activities. It often occurs in formal settings dedicated to this type of work. To better describe the power and insight of working with horses in this type of setting, I'd like to share with you a couple of experiences from our program at Fire Horse Ranch in Phoenix, Arizona.

Stand By Me



Above: "Sometimes the best conversations are not filled with words, but with silence."

The full moon lit up the night as Ann approached the round pen. Butler and Princess, two of our horses at Fire Horse Ranch, waited inside. As Ann entered the pen, these normally friendly and curious horses immediately moved away. When she walked toward them, they again moved away, wanting nothing to do with her. No matter her approach, their response

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was the same. This scenario continued for several minutes, with Butler and Princess clearly shunning her repeated attempts at contact.

It was clear Ann was bothered by the reaction of the horses. Her shoulders slumped and tears began rolling down her cheeks. "I finally get it," she said in a wavering voice, "If I'm not willing to stand by me and commit to myself then why would anyone else?"

You could see the weight lifting off her shoulders as her heart, mind, and body realized and accepted this new awareness. Within a few short minutes, in a form of communication far more effective than words, Ann discovered the answer to a question she had sought for a long time. It was going to change her life forever.

Boundaries

Dealing with divorce is a life transition that can leave one feeling vulnerable and uncertain. Shelley was experiencing just that, and was drawn to work with the horses.

In a large stall, Shelley was instructed to walk slowly toward Princess and interact with her in a manner that was comfortable. It was Shelley's



responsibility to keep the interaction safe and within the boundaries she set. She could stop the experience whenever she felt uncomfortable. Shelley walked up to Princess and touched her shoulder a few short moments after entering the stall. Princess softly leaned into her, causing Shelley to take a couple of steps backward. Shelley continued to stay with Princess, enjoying the attention and closeness.

Princess gently herded Shelley around the stall during their time together. Every now and then Shelley found herself quickly moving her feet out of the way, taking an extra step to catch her balance, or being moved into a corner or fence. Not once did she ask to stop because she felt uncomfortable or concerned about being pushed around.

Afterward, Shelley shared that she had, indeed, experienced moments of concern about being stepped on, knocked over, or pinned against the fence. Yet, because it had happened so gently, she allowed Princess to push her around. As soon as those words crossed her lips an empowering new understanding came into being.

When others assertively and aggressively tried to cross Shelley's boundaries it was easy for her to resist and hold her ground. When someone nicely or gently crossed them, however, she allowed it to happen.

We discussed what had happened as she embraced this new insight. You could see her stand a little taller as her confidence grew. She asked to repeat the exercise. This time she quickly came to recognize the signals she felt in her body, and became aware of her emotions when Princess pushed her around. Embracing her new awareness and confidently standing her ground enabled her to clearly restate her boundaries and make corrections with Princess if they were ignored. Due to her clarity and confidence, Princess would quickly oblige when corrected, shifting the dynamic of their interaction.

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The possibilities are endless, and the experience unmatched. The touch of a horse on your heart makes a lasting impression and creates beautiful moments of self-discovery. The essence of their presence knows no bounds. No two experiences are ever alike, and the effects are far reaching into all aspects of your life. An anonymous quote, I believe, says it best: "Let a horse whisper in your ear and breathe on your heart. You will never regret it." ♡



About the author:

Diana Gogan is the founder of Fire Horse Ranch, a Reiki Master, a teacher, and a writer. She combines traditional and metaphysical resources with teaching and mentoring to bring women, animals, and nature together to connect and heal. www.FireHorseRanch.com Join her on Facebook at Fire Horse Ranch.

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