

FEEL

the Difference

A Publication of the FEEL Alumni



Photo: Andre Leclapieux

What is Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning (FEEL)?

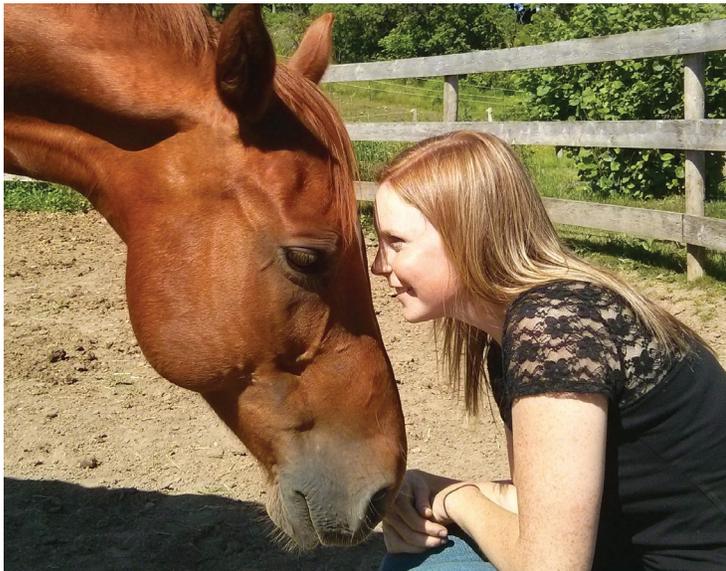


Photo: Brenda Jelkins

The desire to learn why we are the way we are and do the things we do is a big step on the path to personal growth.

FEEL (Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning)[®] is a leading-edge modality for developing human potential. In experiential interactions with horses, whether in individual, group or workshop sessions, people gain self-knowledge and acquire skills leading to personal growth through positive life changes.

FEEL is:

Powerful ~ providing clear, concise insights on life

Restorative ~ helping us to connect with nature, horses and Self

Engaging ~ encouraging us to experience our true nature through authentic interactions with the horses

FEEL is the difference between thriving and merely surviving. It is the gift you give yourself when you want, and need, to see your life in a different light; when you have a desire to change the way you are in the world and wish to attract more positive outcomes to your life experience.

FEEL ~ the difference between thriving and merely surviving

FEEL is a journey ~ a path of personal growth and development for some; a healing inner awakening for others. As such, it has the potential to change lives in deep and meaningful ways.

Is it time to give yourself the gift of expanded living and answer the call of the horse?

Who can benefit?

Organizations wishing to develop more empathic leadership, team building and communication practices.

Individuals seeking to build their self-confidence, develop leadership skills, nurture emotional agility, manage stress, strengthen relationships and improve well being.

First responders, health care providers, veterans, trauma survivors, at-risk youth, struggling couples and more have all benefitted from time spent receiving the clear, consistent and non-judgemental feedback of the horse.

“The fastest way to freedom is to feel your feelings.”

Gita Belin

Witnessing a Miracle

Hillary Schneider

Carolyn did three sessions with me, beginning last year when she was 22 weeks pregnant. At the time her doctors had said that her son had a 20 per cent chance of a safe delivery.

Carolyn arrived at the retreat centre to solicit the horses' help because she wanted to be able to hold onto the belief and strength that her son would make it to a safe delivery time, and live.

During her first session Carolyn connected with Tareena, my lead mare, who reminded her of her strength, and with my other horse, Nazir, who came in to connect with her son. It was beautiful to witness, and Carolyn left the session with hope and the belief that she could carry her baby to a safe delivery.



Photo: Hillary Schneider

Now with a healthy one-year-old boy, Carolyn tributes the horses with helping to create this happy ending. In her own words, Carolyn relates her feelings on this profound experience:

“... I am feeling so much more grounded and positive. Had another specialist appointment today and despite all the “external” information I was able to manage it much better and still come back inward, staying in tune with my body and baby. Like you said, our session was still “in my cells” and I could really feel that being confirmed today. For the first time in I can't even tell you how long, I felt alive again today.

Hillary! Just had to thank you again ... ~ it was profound; it was magical; it was exactly what I needed! I feel like I can move forward now.”

Carolyn Creed

*Hillary Schneider is the Founder and Creative Director at the Epona Rise Retreat Centre in Ladner, B.C.
~ www.epona-rise-retreats.com*



Photo: Dorothy Chiotti

The Horse as Healing Partner: The Mirror Never Lies

Dorothy Chiotti

Horses are the ultimate reflective device. As prey animals they are acutely aware of their surroundings, reading and responding to energies, positive and negative, in the blink of an eye; in the moment. They see truth by reading our body language. They feel truth by paying attention to the energies around them.

Horses miss nothing and are completely authentic in their responses.

It is this innate ability and their non-judgmental aspect that makes the horse an effective and indispensable

partner on the healing and personal growth journey. Meeting energy with energy, they reflect back to us who we are in the moment and ask only that we connect with what's really going on inside. That we identify with our authentic selves; be in touch with our true feelings.

Sure, put on that sunny face, but if you approach the horse with fear be aware ~ it's not the smile the horse reads, but the feelings behind the mask. It's the energy behind the intention that gets his attention. Whatever we project, however unknowingly, is the energy

the horse sends back.

Perhaps we are afraid of the horse in front of us. He doesn't know that. What he senses is the fear and so he reacts fearfully. When we become congruent, accepting responsibility for the feelings that live within, the horse senses the change and matches our energy. When we relax, the horse relaxes. As a result, we can instantly recognize our true nature in the mirror that is the horse.

But how do these incredible beings so accurately detect the feelings from which we are disconnected?

It's all about heart.

According to **HeartMath Institute**:

"... the heart is the most powerful generator of electromagnetic energy in the human body, producing the largest rhythmic electromagnetic field of any of the body's organs. The heart's electrical field is about 60 times greater in amplitude than the electrical activity generated by the brain. This field, measured in the form of electrocardiogram (ECG) can be detected anywhere on the surface of the body. Furthermore, the magnetic field produced by the heart is more than 5,000 times greater in strength than the field generated by the brain and can be detected a number of feet away from the body in all directions ..."

What's amazing about this is that the electromagnetic energy coming from the horse is five times greater than

our own, making their sensitivity to the energies around them that much more acute. It's a matter of survival. They have to know if there's a hungry predator lurking in the distance so they can make their escape.

The other fascinating thing about the horse is that their heart beats three times slower than our own, inviting us to slow down and actually experience what's going on inside of us.

What does all of this mean?

It means we must be every bit as aware of our thoughts, feelings and behaviour around horses as they are of us and their surroundings if we are to create harmony in the connection.

Being able to accomplish this in the presence of the horse puts us in a better position to do the same in our lives: in our own environment; with the people we gather around us; the experiences we have. Learning to be aligned with who we truly are and not who we, or others, suppose ourselves to be, for good or ill, gives us authentic power to live our truth without apology or compromise.

It is a beautiful thing.

How long does it take to create a harmonious connection with the horse?

Why not open your heart and find out? The ultimate non-judgmental mirror patiently awaits.

We call this "horse time."

*Source: www.heartmath.org

FEEL: The Key to Empathic Leadership and Teamwork Dorothy Chiotti

We get promoted at work. We take on a leadership role in our volunteer organization of choice. We're nominated to lead a project. Really heady stuff. And that's just it ... it goes to our head and lives there, when really we need to adopt a more empathic approach. For only by functioning from this place of "understanding both the emotional and logical rationale that goes into every decision" are we able to be the trusted and empathic leader that inspires those around us to be better and more effective at what they do.

Leadership can easily become the ego's territory, demanding and relentless. But what if the team you're leading doesn't trust you? Or doesn't resonate with your leadership style? Do you even know what your leadership style is?

Understanding how to get things done without manipulating, coercing, bribing or otherwise engaging in less than desirable practices is key to being a good leader. But how do we do this?

First we must gain some self-awareness by identifying and nurturing our leadership style. Doing this puts us in a position where we can begin to work from a place of authentic power and

opens the door to the empathic approach.

And from whom can we learn this important lesson? Look no further than the horse.

As prey animals, horses are always seeking a reliable leader ~ equine or human ~ someone upon whom they can depend to keep them out of harm's way. The basis for this relationship is trust. They're always reading our body language to see if we're being congruent. They don't hear the words we speak, they read the energy behind them.

How do horses do this? They constantly test boundaries and awareness to see if the proposed leader is paying attention and consistently aligned with their purpose. "Can I trust you?" is their mantra until the bond has been established. Having said that, as soon as we fall out of alignment with that trust the horse immediately lets us know.

"Be here. Be in the moment. Understand what I need and I will follow you to the ends of the earth."

And so it is in our leadership of others.

A relationship built on anything but trust is doomed to fail, and horses know this implicitly. So, when working



Photo: Victoria Sambleson

with the horses to identify and develop our innate leadership style this is where they start.

If you have a desire to be a grounded and empathic leader, whether in the workplace, a volunteer position, or in your personal life, the horses will show you how.

To take your leadership skills to the next level, contact your local FEEL practitioner.

*Source: www.forbes.com, May 30/13 "Why Empathy is the force that moves business forward"

"We learned through the horses that as a team we all have different experience and management styles. We should be more open to other's suggestions. Your way isn't always the right way."

K.B., Bank of Montreal (BMO)

Submitted by: Andre Leclipteux, FEEL Practitioner
~ www.horsespiritconnections.com

Horse Spirit Connections: Birthing a New Relationship with Horses

Dorothy Chiotti (with Wendy Golding)

The trajectory life takes while we're making seemingly inconsequential decisions can often surprise us. Little did Wendy Golding, co-founder of Horse Spirit Connections, realize when she stepped into the stirrup again as a 30-something that that moment would mark the beginning of an important personal journey. A journey that would eventually lead her and her business and life partner, Andre Leclipteux, to the creation of an equine experiential learning program so profound it would change the lives of many.

Passionate about horses all her life but away from them for a number of years, Wendy joined the Governor General's Horse Guards in Toronto, where she participated in the precision riding of military parades and the grace of musical rides. "I loved the thrill of galloping down a field, sword at the ready, piercing a target and raising it high in triumph!" she exclaims. "However, after a while my interest changed and I turned to polo instead. I relished the incredible trust that exists between horse and rider when engaged in such intense sport."

Monty, Wendy's first polo horse, was her teacher in life, especially regarding the development of a deeper relationship with these incredibly spiritual beings. "Monty met life head-on with a feisty, fiery manner," she notes, "which gave me trouble on the polo field. It was while I was attending a polo clinic that a consultant told me Monty was a highly intelligent horse and didn't respect me. He said that until I earned his respect, we would not have a good relationship. His words made me stand up and take notice."

This marked the beginning of Wendy's connected journey with horses and forced her to undo and rethink everything their relationship had been built upon to that point. It was not long after this that Wendy and Andre followed their dream of having their own farm.

After a bad fall and serious neck injury in 2000,



Photo: Andre Leclipteux

Wendy was told she could never ride again. This life defining moment was the turning point in both their lives with Wendy seeking another way to express her passion for life yet stay connected to horses. Shamanism (relating to the spirit world and animals) was part of the answer for both Wendy and Andre. "We learned about the interconnectedness of all things and a way of seeing from the heart for the purpose of accessing spiritual guidance," says Wendy. "After studying with inspirational teachers for 12 years we became Shamanic Coaches, guiding others in fostering a deeper connection and relationship with nature and Self."

Following her heart, Wendy discovered Linda Kohanov's *EponaQuest* and attended a workshop in Arizona. She experienced horses of many different breeds and ages working as wise teachers helping people become whole again. During Wendy's apprenticeship, her relationship with horses expanded in ways she had not imagined. Witnessing

this transformation, Andre was convinced of the power of the horse/human relationship and proceeded with his own *EponaQuest* training.

Horse Spirit Connections was born in 2006 as a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to bringing the teachings of horses to people. Wendy and Andre, building on their initial training, explored additional horse methodologies and created their own program: **FEEL (Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning)®**. FEEL is a new way of being in relationship for horses and people. It's a heart-centred connection which often creates a new and profound understanding for people of themselves.

Wendy notes, The vision of Horse Spirit Connections became *'Horses helping People and People helping Horses'*, and we immediately saw the incredible impression the horses were having on the lives of adults, troubled youth, and organizations alike. Transformation happened. Impact was made for

thousands of people as they experienced the magic of connecting with our extraordinary horse teachers."

In 2008, an intensive six-month FEEL Certification training program was developed with the help of many talented and gifted instructors. "In 2008, an intensive six-month Certification program was developed with the help of many talented instructors. It's suitable for mental health and wellness practitioners, life coaches, educators, equine professionals and others looking for training in developing FEEL programs in the expanding field of Equine Guided Healing."

Wendy and Andre delight in seeing a horse transform into a wise teacher and healer. "It is hard to describe in words," shares Wendy. "It's a feeling, a knowing when a horse teacher gazes into your eyes, sends energy into your heart, and does something unusual to reflect back to you a life lesson. Each horse journeys to this place in a different way and manner. It's truly magical."

With the vision Horses helping *'Horses helping People and People helping Horses'* it soon became time to help the horses. "With more and more horses being abandoned, found starving, or going to slaughter, we decided that whenever there was an opening in our barn we would rescue and rehabilitate a horse, helping it come back into a place of balance mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually," Wendy explains. "There is nothing more rewarding than seeing an abused or neglected horse come back to life, full of pride, thriving in the knowledge they have a purpose and can make a difference."

Every day Wendy and Andre are inspired by the power of their magical horses to teach and heal, and the courageous people who choose to create a life aligned from their heart.

And it all began with a foot in the stirrup.

For further information on **Horse Spirit Connections**, contact Wendy Golding ~ wendy@horsespiritconnections.com www.HorseSpiritConnections.com

From the Field

"This therapeutic approach is completely different... working with the horses created such a deep insight regarding myself and my past. It was so much easier working with the horses and having them reflect back to me in a gentle manner. I found this to be a very healing experience."

Carolann ~ Red Deer, AB

Submitted by: Michelle Neaves, FEEL Practitioner ~ www.heartandmindcounselling.com

"I saw my wounded heart reflected in the eyes of the horse and was able to grant myself the forgiveness I didn't realize I needed to move forward. Being so close to these huge magnificent animals was a dance with vulnerability that taught me about truly being present. So much grief was released from my body and soul after working with these beautiful and wise teachers."

Teresa McDonald-Thuro ~ Toronto, ON

Submitted by: Lynda Watson, FEEL Practitioner ~ www.horsetouch.ca

"I found the horses to be some of the most insightful creatures. I had never expected that a horse could steer my direction so profoundly just through a few interactions."

This is for anyone who is on a journey towards personal wisdom and fulfillment. If you are into energy work, then these horses will blow your mind."

Mary Engel, President, The Management Coach, Founder and CEO, GPMI Inc., Toronto, ON

Submitted by: Jennifer Garland, FEEL Practitioner ~ www.themaneintent.ca



Photo: Lynda Watson

"Having spent time with the horses has translated into meaningful personal development for me. It's allowed me to face the issues that are affecting me professionally and personally."

Steve Elliott, Executive Director, Protegimus Group, Millbrook, ON

Submitted by: Cheri Davidson, FEEL Practitioner ~ www.horstediscovery.com

The Gift of Horses: Teaching Humans to “FEEL”

Suzanne Coleman

One of the most powerful experiences I’ve had with the teachings of the horse was with a woman named Manuela.

When it was time to enter the sand ring with Leo the horse, Manuela froze. Overcome by fear, she felt unable to do the assigned “Reflections Activity”. This exercise requires the client to enter the round pen and share with the horse her heart’s desire. Manuela’s heart’s desire was to learn to let go of fear.

I decided to offer to go into the round pen with Manuela. She graciously agreed. Leo was already standing quietly in the pen and looked as if he was trying to appear as small as a 1,000 pound horse

could. Manuela and I stopped in the centre of the pen; took a deep breath together. Leo immediately went to work. With deliberate intent, he walked towards the exit gate, turned to face us, and strategically backed up, pressing his behind into the gate and sprawling his front legs as if he were a tripod.

Manuela took one look at Leo and tears began to well up in her eyes. I checked in with her to see if she was ok. She shared with me that as a trauma survivor wherever she goes she always feels “stuck at the exit.” She never feels safe, and knowing where the exit is keeps her from fleeing.

Leo so clearly demonstrated this point.

Leo then walked quickly towards us in a very forceful manner, almost intimidating. He stopped about a foot in front of us and then proceeded to use his head to push me away from Manuela. I told her that he wanted me to leave. She acknowledged that she understood his message and gave me permission to step aside.

I kept reminding Manuela to breathe as this will help her to remain in contact with her body. As I gave them space, Leo gently placed his head against her heart and Manuela brought up her hands to caress his head. They stood quietly for some time. Suddenly



Photo: Doe Kelly

Manuela began to cry. All her fears began to wash away with her tears. She was able to let go of the fear from her past, the fear of her unknown future, and fear of this horse. Leo allowed her to see her own bravery, and in doing so, she was able to embrace this beautiful teacher with pure love for another spirit.

Suzanne Coleman is a certified FEEL practitioner in Flamborough, Ontario ~ www.horseandhands.com

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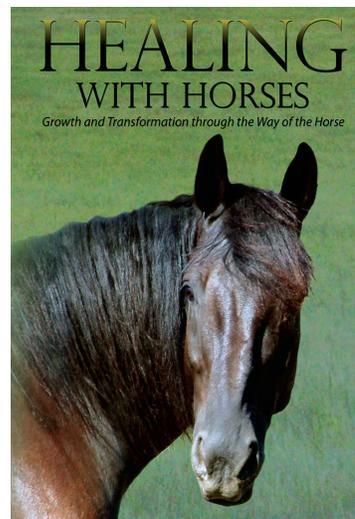
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New Release ...

The FEEL (Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning) Alumni Association presents *Healing with Horses* ~ an inspiring new collection of true stories about the extraordinary connection between horses and humans. Step into and delight in the healing world of horses through the heart-warming personal accounts to be found in this enriching book.

Price: \$24.95, including shipping within Canada.

Order your copy today by contacting Andre@FEELalumni.com or speak to your FEEL practitioner.



“When we’re able to align our intention, with our own energy; when we recognize the disconnect between the face we present to the world and the way we actually feel inside, the horse shows us by instantly changing his energy to reflect our new state. They mirror the energy that has walked into the room and respond accordingly. And they never lie.”

~ Dorothy Chiotti

Your local FEEL Practitioner