



## ***Horse Wisdom for the Human Heart***



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**- The power of letting go -**

A recent client brought home to me the importance of letting go. Working with this person on letting go of negative energy and releasing the hold of limiting beliefs of the self, brought on by a lifetime of living with criticism and low self-esteem, reminded me of the importance of reclaiming our personal power. A limiting self-image often means a limited life – one filled with regrets, anger, resentment and unexpressed dreams and wishes. So often we find ourselves trapped in relationships that diminish our self-esteem, our divine gifts and talents. Perhaps we grew up with controlling elders that constantly reminded us of our shortcomings, only fuelling our fear of failure and helping us become strangely competent in choosing one significant relationship after another that simply reinforces the same limiting self-belief. A very personally powerless place to be.

Ever notice how when you are stressed you yawn more? Lots of people say we yawn because we are not getting enough oxygen to our brains. In part probably true since when we are stressed and tired we often don't breathe deeply enough. But the cause of the yawning is our body's need to release stress and tension, increase deep breaths and let go of negative or limiting energy. When you watch horses they sigh, blow and yawn quite openly – a sign of releasing stress, anxiety and any discomfort. So it is easy to see when a horse is not well, or full of nervous tension, they often spend a lot more time yawning. They aren't bored or tired, they are simply trying to release the stress and tension they experience. Now when a horse does this around her human handler more than any other time, either the handler is the cause of some of the stress or the handler is full of stress and tension and the horse is trying to assist her in letting some of it go. A pretty powerful message! Horses know that when we hold on to negative or limiting energy (such as anxiety, nervous tension and high levels of stress) we have the power to “poison” our system. Stress-related illnesses account for many modern-day human ill health. The levels of depression, suicide, family violence and a myriad physical ailments are very high despite our vast medical knowledge and access to healing modalities. A healthy level of stress is good for us, it keeps us sharp and alert, so couch potatoes with no stress aren't exactly healthy either. Balance seems to be the key, and of-course we achieve this when we have awareness. On a scale of 1 to 10, our stress should sit at about 2 or 3, but often people who are finding it difficult to cope with all of their responsibilities report levels of 8 and 9. Forgetfulness, lack of energy and drive, lack of compassion, extreme negative emotional responses to the slightest glitch in the day, hopelessness, and other symptoms could all indicate a stress response that is limiting health (please note it is really important to seek medical advice to rule out any physical ailment that may produce the same symptoms).

So what do we do to let go? A healthy system requires play – activity that produces endorphins. Endorphins - the feel-good hormone that is needed to feel joy and hope and a sense of well-being. Horses will start a game at any time of the day for a little stress release, and healthy activity. Even old and injured horses play. When they play horses snort, and blow and generally raise their heart rate. They also run up and down and chase and use their whole body. They deepen their breathing, and roll and kick. And then stand to finally shake it all off. You might try a little of that in your day. Meditation, yoga, tai chi, and visualization exercises all help with bringing awareness to your breath – a very powerful practise of increasing energy in the system and releasing negative energy. Guided meditations are very helpful to get you started. Or spend some time running around in the field with some horses when next you feel the need to release some stress.

If you are struggling with low self-esteem, or limiting self-beliefs, find a good mental health practitioner to assist you to begin to release some of the negative energy and attachments that continue to limit you in your life. Make sure that some of the relationships/friends you have encourage you to be your best self, build you up and remind you of your strengths and abilities. Join a group where a positive attitude to life is encouraged and practical ways of making a difference in your life and other people's lives is part of the expression of service. Get a life coach who can help you keep promises to yourself. Or come and join an Equine Facilitated Personal Awareness workshop at Mizpah Farm Retreat to help strengthen your capacity to cope in your life. Sometimes seemingly small positive personal changes can produce unexpectedly large and powerful changes in your life and relationships.

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