



Becoming a Horseman

By Pat Parelli

How can you describe a horseman?

A horseman thinks like a horse.

A horseman understands the horse's perspective and does not blame him for behaving like a prey animal.

A horseman knows how to have special relationships with horses based on love, language and leadership.

A horseman is a teacher for horses, with unlimited patience.

A horseman is half-horse, half-man. He has savvy. Real horse savvy.

The journey to becoming a horseman may be one of the most challenging and rewarding ventures you will ever undertake. It's about developing yourself mentally, emotionally and physically, and becoming the kind of human your horse would respect, trust, and admire. It means so much more than just becoming a good rider. It means learning how to savvy horses – inside and out.

Most people are focused on training horses, and while horses are “trainable,” to think only as far as this leaves a huge area of untapped potential. I'd like you to think in terms of starting a relationship and developing a partnership that is based on love, language and leadership.

Horses are extremely intelligent. When encouraged to think and use their brain they come alive, their Horsenality shines through, and they have as much fun being with you as you do with them. Instead of training, I want you to start “communicating.” Once you have a language with your horse, you can ask him to do almost anything... and you'll never have to train him again.

In developing this program, I have retraced my steps for the past 40 years and looked at the insights and lessons I've learned that were turning points for me with horses. With over 100,000 students in my program at the time of this writing, I have continued to hone these insights to find their essence.

I developed this program so people could learn the same foundation of horsemanship that I learned, but in a tenth of the time; my program won't take you on those long and confusing detours that I went on while searching for the truth!

This program is designed to teach people to teach their horses. To be a good teacher for a horse, you have to think like a horse so you can present things in a way he will understand and appreciate.

Horses are also wonderful teachers. They are a wonderful metaphor for learning communication skills that will impact your personal and business relationships, too! Many of our students report that this program helps them to improve their relationship with spouses, children, students, employees, etc.

The Process of Change

Developing as a horseman is a fascinating, wonderful, and sometimes painful process! I am not going to pretend for a moment that there won't be

times that you'll feel frustration, doubt, and anger - some more than others. But it's all growth. It's all the things you need to see and experience in yourself in order to overcome those limiting emotional barriers.

There are many people who come into this program because they are frustrated with their horse, and want him to change. But as they progress, their biggest breakthroughs come when they realize that they are the ones that need to change. There's a great saying: "For things to change, first I must change."

When we think and act more like horses, we create a thing called "rapport." Horses like people who act more like horses. In learning how to create rapport and understand horses, you have to let go of ego, or "shoulds" (my horse should do this or should do that). You have to take responsibility for when things are not going right. Either you weren't clear; you didn't set the horse up for success; you didn't have enough preparation; you asked him to do something he wasn't ready to do. There's a hundred ways to take responsibility, and this is usually the hardest part for many people at first. It's easier to blame the horse! But that won't get you anywhere.

There are often four distinct phases a person tends to go

through before they make a change:

1. Denial
2. Blame
3. Anger
4. Chaos

Denial - "It can't be me, it must be the horse." Or, "I'm not having a problem," really means I just don't go there! This one is called avoidance behavior and it will keep you right where you are... no progress!

Blame - "Yep, it's the horse." "He's stubborn, ruined, incapable, lacks talent." Or maybe, "It's the program! I never had these problems before." Usually because you've never touched this part of the horse before - his mind, his emotions - and he's been holding out on you!

Anger - Beating the horse, kicking him, jerking on the reins, and things much worse than I'd rather bring up. On the other hand, some people may experience self-anger, and this is just as destructive to oneself. You don't need to blame the horse or yourself to the point that it upsets you.

From here, it's easy to plunge straight into chaos. This is the darkest hour before the dawn. This is when there is only one way out, and that's to accept

responsibility for being part of the problem. Only then is it possible to make the change, and strangely enough, it's only then that the horse will make the change!

This may seem like an extreme example and I'm not suggesting that it's going to happen to you. But I've been around long enough to be able to identify the patterns. If you can become conscious of the process of change, you'll learn to recognize when you are experiencing one of the phases and make the adjustment you need to.

Knowing this has helped many of my students. As soon as you find yourself in one of those phases, identify it, name it. Make a conscious statement that is the opposite of that thought and laugh about it! Cut it off at the pass. Don't let it drag you down the road toward anger and chaos.

Seek help and support; do whatever you can to get out of it. At the same time, don't be surprised by it. You know now that it could happen at any time and at any stage of your development when you get frustrated or your ego gets dented. Be open and willing to change. Whatever you do, don't give up on your horse or yourself!

Above all, don't be hard on yourself or think you've failed because you let it happen.

Rather, see yourself as being on the verge of a breakthrough. It's a very exciting place to be. And thankfully, horses are very forgiving.

Everyone is doing the best they can with the information they have. This program may ask you to do the opposite of many of the things you do now. It's going to ask you to make changes, make mistakes, and have experiences full speed ahead. If you can follow the program without trying to analyze or compare it to what you normally do, you'll have a better chance of avoiding the phases of denial, blame, anger and chaos, and you'll see the results more quickly.

You've seen the results people are experiencing with the Parelli Program, and to get the same results all you have to do is follow the program. Every time you find yourself saying "Yeah, but I usually do it this way," or "My horse can't..." you're going to stop making progress.

Our Most Successful Students

We have studied our most successful students and found that once they willingly accept their responsibility in the horse-human relationship – that the way their horse is responding or not responding is in direct proportion to their level of savvy – they make progress at warp speed.

They have a lot of try. They can laugh at themselves. They see every challenge the horse presents them as an opportunity to learn. They are focused and not easily distracted. They are goal oriented but not impatient or direct line. Rather than focusing totally on the result, they can take things one step at a time, systematically and patiently building their skills, until the day they can do amazing things with their horse.

This is not a common attitude to learning, but it represents the ideal learning attitude, as it shows flexibility and a willingness to change. To optimize learning, we need to learn how to open ourselves to new information.