



## TANJA MITTON

Do you let your emotions get in the way of your competitions?



Let's start by dividing riders into two main groups: one group which is driven by emotions and the other group which is driven by tasks.

Which group do you belong to?

In the first group, driven by emotions, the rider will typically depend on the outcome of each ride/each competition in order to feel happy and gain in confidence; the emotions are generally in the way and the rider, instead of becoming consistent, is more likely to be up and down. We can compare this with a roller-coaster ride, where there is very little consistency; instead things are either going really well and the rider is on an absolute high or things are going really badly and the rider is completely distraught.



Riders in this group will also be more likely to take each outcome personally, gaining and losing confidence rapidly and depending on moral support from others to keep going.

Riders who are driven by their emotions will often be more inconsistent in their training: some days they feel like riding and other days they don't feel like getting on the horse and therefore their training is not what it should be. This, in turn, affects the outcome of the ride and the competition that follows.

It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

I think most riders can identify with this group and can remember a time in their riding career where they might have been stuck in this rut.

The riders in the second group, the task orientated riders, behave very differently. These riders are much more focused on the overall outcome on their ride. For example, if the training is going in the right direction and the horse is showing some improvement from previous rides, these riders are satisfied. They don't get flustered when something goes wrong, but instead they look for ways to make it better; task orientated riders are able to focus more on the big picture and break down training sessions into steps without getting worried if things go backwards for a little while. They have a high degree of self-confidence and belief in their own ability.



These riders are more consistent and self motivated. Most importantly, a task driven rider is more

disciplined in their training; rather than saying, "I don't feel like riding today and therefore I will give my horse a day off", they will stick to the training plan and therefore get better outcomes.

This training is far easier to sustain as it has fewer ups and downs compared to the roller coaster of the other group.

In order to become more successful and consistent as riders, we have to learn to become less emotionally involved in our outcomes. This is not just for riding: you can take this into any other part of your life.

So here are some simple steps to help you become more task orientated:



- \* Set more specific goals for your horse and yourself
- \* Break them down into smaller steps
- \* Set a timeframe for each goal

After each ride ask yourself:



- \* What did I achieve in this ride?
- \* What has improved since last time?
- \* What can I improve on in my next ride?

Be disciplined when it comes to training in preparation for a competition:



- \* Ride in the heat of the day (you can't choose what time you are competing)
- \* Ride in the wind and rain (it might be windy or raining when you are competing)
- \* Practice riding in an environment that distracts you (warm up rings are often chaotic)



If you do become emotional ask yourself:

- \* Why am I reacting like this?
- \* What is triggering these feelings?
- \* Is my emotional state helping me achieve what I want to achieve?

If your worst fears come true, i.e. you ride a bad test or round, ask yourself if the outcome is detrimental to your horse and yourself or are you simply exaggerating your fears?

Remember, in order to learn you have to make some mistakes; only then can they be avoided the next time.

Horses and horse riding can give us excellent life skills in so many areas, so enjoy your riding and competing.

Cheers

Tanja





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