



# INTENT *and* ENERGY

The precursors to any equine interaction, a knowledge of intent and energy will revolutionise your horsemanship, writes Vicki Jayne Maris



Horsemanship communication is dialogue, prefixing an appropriate request with intent and energy before eye contact, body language and then physical touch. Given practice, touch is often not required. Harmony is what everyone is looking for with their horse and the key to unlocking this is for you and your horse to work together with calm, relaxed, balanced energies.

A calm, balanced leader offers their horse stability, safety, security and a relationship built on mutual trust. Horses thrive with training that uses, among other things, intention and an understanding of energy. An essential skill to develop when working with horses is the ability to read your horse's intent and to appropriate with your own. Learning how to project and absorb energy unlocks another refinement level. Horses have evolved to read very subtle energy signals within their own species as well as that of others; their survival and wellbeing has been dependent on getting this right for millions of years.

Watch and notice subtle intent

signals, energy level changes and body language that prefix any touch actions within a herd. There is a lot that goes on between two horses before any physical pressure. Despite this, touch is often the only level most humans use when training a horse. Layers of refinement are there within intent and energy. That is the key to the magical connection we seek.

The starting point for refined horsemanship is to learn how to achieve a balanced energy alongside a quiet mind that uses intention before any training 'technique' is applied.

## TUNING IN TO INTENT

Intent can be defined as 'having your mind and will focused on a specific purpose'. It is about thoughts, feelings and emotions, and the state of one's mind at the time an action is carried out. Horses know if you are feeling passive, assertive, anxious, distracted, etc. They are sensitive creatures and pick up on our intent, feelings and emotions very quickly. Stepping into a training context with human negative emotions will not help any training. Your horse will reflect right back at you



your emotions, and life issues.

If we are focusing on positive, progressive training and building confidence in our horse it is our responsibility to turn up to a session emotionally balanced, leaving our issues at the gate. We will be better placed to read our horse's intent and know what they may be struggling with. When I say leave it at the gate I do not mean being false or wearing a mask. You can't fool your horse and any sign of incongruence in you will rattle them. Try to deal with the root cause of your issues - your horse will thank you.

Intent is hard wired into every horse. See if any of the questions below resonate with you, it may be that you are more tuned into the concept of



intent than you thought.

- Have you ever experienced your horse doing something when you only thought it? Maybe he stopped while you were riding and all you did was think about stopping?
- Have you noticed how someone loading a difficult horse will cause a different reaction if their intent is to help them overcome any fear or anxiety rather than someone who is just determined to get the horse loaded in any way possible? The horse is reading the human intent.
- How often have you seen someone try to trick a horse into doing something with no luck? You may get away with it once when the horse's guard is down but he will be ready for you next time. Horses can read your true intent.
- Have you ever experienced how your horse responds when you change your intent? For example how does your horse react if you change from being passive to

assertive?

- Watch a group of horses. How do they react to each other's intent? Have you ever seen a lower ranking horse use his intent to get on with higher ranking horses? How do higher ranking horses use their intent to communicate with lower ranking horses and assert their leadership? You need to watch for very subtle cues, spend time looking and you will see horses using intent in their communication.

Despite their heightened senses, horses are not mind readers, although if you have the bond right with your horse it can feel like it. When developed, intent in horsemanship is very powerful. It is far more likely that when we think about something with intent we give away very subtle cues that the horse reads. For example science has been able to measure the electrical impulses that travel from our thoughts / intents to the muscle groups we use to perform a task. From my own experiences I know intent plays a very big role in how horses react to situations. Learning to tap into this opens up horsemanship to a much more refined level of communication.

## TUNING INTO ENERGY

You only have to look across cultures to see how energy is embedded in every day life: health, religion, martial arts etc. It is present in all living things and horses offer opportunities to learn about its effects on yourself, your equine partner and in life beyond.

Energy is something horses pick up on very quickly. In the wild, horse's read energy levels within a herd to know when to run from predators and when it is safe to relax. You will have noticed how excitement is infectious among a group of horses and also how some people have a calming influence on them while others wind them up. Not only do horses read equine energy, they read our energy too. Being aware of your energy and learning to use appropriate levels makes a huge difference.

Balance of energy is not just physical it is emotional too. Horses and humans can struggle with energy imbalance. Many people that I meet are excellent horse people, clearly skilled, yet struggling with their horse. Some find it hard to switch off from lives that are packed with fast paced stimuli, heavy responsibilities and never ending to do lists. They feel the strong urge to always be doing. You see in their horsemanship they

are unaware of the impact their busy energy has on their horse. For others it is the high levels of anxiety and stress from non equine matters that affect their state of mind and energy that is damaging their equine relationship. There are many blocks people unwittingly bring to their horsemanship and many have lost touch with simply 'being,' slowing down, doing nothing, relaxing, being calm and finding inner peace.

Energy imbalance needs addressing. My work is about restoring this balance and building a strong relationship between horses and their human counterparts. To introduce the concept of energy and intent in horsemanship to my clients I hold one end of a rope and ask them to hold the other. I then send different intents and energies down it which they can feel. It is a revelation for them to feel it and understand how infectious and powerful it is to a horse. You can learn how to read, apply, absorb and project energy. It isn't magic!

## GETTING RELAXED

Getting in touch with your mind and balancing your energy is not easy. It takes time, dedication and seeing it as a priority in life. However, it has many benefits including bettering communication, opening minds and fuelling creativity. It also enables faster, clearer learning, easier problem solving, removes drama from situations and leads to a balanced state of mind and energy.

There are many techniques you can actively practise. Here are a few to get you started.

- Live in the moment - let go of past and future concerns. When not checked they can lead to energy blocks such as anxiety, stress and frustration.
- Practise being patient.
- Use cognitive behavioural techniques to reshape your thinking and quiet your mind. Your thoughts are a powerful tool, learn to use them positively.
- Each day give yourself a quiet and peaceful time.
- Actively relax - there are lots of methods including meditation.
- Let go of the need to prove yourself to others.
- Stop focusing on imperfections, flaws or what needs fixing.
- Stop blaming yourself, others or your horse.
- Lighten up and learn to have fun.
- Redefine your meaningful equine-related accomplishments. Remind yourself it is only your horse's opinion that matters.

### VICKI JAYNE MARIS

Warwickshire based Vicki Jayne Maris is a nationally recognised specialist in horsemanship, confidence building, equine behaviour and performance coaching.  
[www.inspirationalhorsemanship.co.uk](http://www.inspirationalhorsemanship.co.uk)