

Pennsylvania Cutting Horse Association

February 2022



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This is Therapy Empathy

Herdwork: How to Deepen Your Seat



2022 Show Dates

May 7 & 8 - Keystone Horse Center, Bloomsburg, PA

June 18 & 19 - Keystone Horse Center, Bloomsburg, PA

Sept 17 & 18 - Memorial Cutting - Keystone Horse Center, Bloomsburg, PA

Oct 21 - 23 - Appalachian Circuit Finals - Dream Park, Logan Twp, NJ

Register for PCHA shows online at pchacutting.com/showinfo

On-site registration is also available



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BARB & SANDY CLINIC

March 5-7, 2022: Reined Cow Horse and Cutting Show Clinic
Triple J Ranch, Sarasota, Florida

**Barb & Sandy both have additional clinics & retreats.
Sandy's judging schedule is also posted on her website.**

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Editor's Note: Julie Kenney is an avid horsewoman, former Best Horse Practices Summit board member, and runs Blackberry Farm in Harpswell, Maine.

Julie writes:

My mind meanders during times of deep relaxation. At a recent massage therapy session, it floated like a kite tethered to me in a light wind. I usually picture each muscle that is being stretched and softened, but this time I imagined how similar the experience was to how I like to handle my horses.

Most of us have experienced some form of therapy, be it acupuncture, chiropractic, massage, psychiatric, or physical therapy. Imagine how you feel before, during, and after a session.

There are often similarities among these therapies:

- Ω Office or room is quiet and comfortable
- Ω Therapist is confident but soothing, asking you how you feel today
- Ω The body or mental work may cause you to stretch or ache, but ultimately feels better
- Ω In time, you feel a connection with the therapist and trust their judgement
- Ω When finished, you should feel better than when you started

Can you apply any of the above statements to how you believe your horse feels before, during, and after a session with you?

Picture this scenario:

You grab your horse from the herd or stall in a rushed manner (because you only have just so much daylight/time to work). Without checking in with your horse, you quickly groom and saddle or you go straight to the round pen. Now you free-lunge or drive your horse, using the end of your lead or a whip until they lick and chew and face you, at your predetermined time.

I know all about these methods. I used to think this was necessary every time I caught my horse and definitely before every ride. I still see horses being worked in this manner, often with detrimental consequences.

My horses were quick to lick, chew, and face me. It was not because they were “giving” to my authority, but because they learned how to get me to stop doing all that crazy stuff. I started realizing that just doing ground work prescriptively was not beneficial. I started listening more.

Last year I took a clinic with a trainer I've never worked with before. He asked each of us how much ground work we did. I froze and panicked. What would I say? I couldn't lie, could I? When it was my turn, I blurted out “I don't.” Then I blathered on “well, I know how to, but I don't bother anymore” or something like that. There was a pause that felt like a year. The trainer moved on to the next person. I felt dumb.

As the clinic progressed and we moved through, around, and over obstacles on the lead, my horse listened to the feel of the rope and didn't go through my bubble of space. He did everything I asked and I waited on him when he was unsure. I felt proud that the trust my horse and I had with each other allowed us to investigate new obstacles.

I do believe there is a place and time for lunging and round-penning. I am not against it, but can you observe your horse to determine if it is beneficial? Is he feeling more balanced, mentally and physically?

Back to the massage therapy:

Your therapist is looking for your responses. We can certainly tell them. But how are we responding non-verbally?

Muscles relaxed? Or rock-hard, tight muscles?

Steady, even, deep breathing? Or shallow breaths?

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Can you imagine if your therapist chased you around the room, flapping their arms or throwing a rope at your rear end, then asking you to relax? What would your heart rate be like? How long would it take to relax and trust? Would you ever return to that therapist?

I've made some changes in 20 years of working with horses. I've learned new things. I've had different horses with different needs. I've met some trainers, like Amy Skinner, who has put into words how I feel about training. I've listened to Jec Ballou about using ground poles to evaluate and condition the horse's core muscles.

I'm seeing results that show me I'm on the right path. My horses look and feel more balanced and relaxed. They are willing to leave the herd and their hay or grass to come with me. They have soft eyes, where maybe before there was distrust or anxiety. They calmly rejoin the herd when released.

In the end, as Amy Skinner has asked (and other trainers probably have as well), is the horse better when you are done than when you began? Can you equate how you feel after a therapy session to how your horse appears when you are finished with him for the day?

Post Note:

I want to acknowledge Amy Skinner of Amy Skinner Horsemanship for her ability to explain her training in a manner where we can all learn.

Jec Aristotle Ballou's book, *55 Corrective Exercises for Horses*, has been instrumental in rehabbing my horses by creating new postural habits, developing core muscles, and alleviating mental anxiety.

I also wish to thank my massage therapist, Abi Maldonado in Brunswick, Maine for sharing with me the non-verbal responses he looks for in determining if the body work he is doing is beneficial.



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Barbra Schulte **Herdwork** *How to Deepen Your Seat*

This week, this question came up: “What does deepen your seat mean?”

Now, that’s a GREAT question.

That’s what this short podcast is all about.

Our seat is the most fundamental part of our riding, and it is multi-dimensional. It is our most direct line of cueing and communication with a horse. It is the center of our balance. And when our body is aligned, our limbs are loose, and we are focused; it’s as if we are one with a horse.

When we understand all that’s involved with our seat, we can continue to develop this means of communication with our horse for a lifetime.

1. Experiencing your seat in unison with your horse...
Expand the concept of “seat” to mean the lower trunk of the body.
The hip bones are aligned with the shoulders and down to the ankles for much of the time in the saddle.
When a horse is moving, our seat moves in a variety of ways and rhythms with a horse (depending on the gait, speed, situation, etc.).
2. Use your seat proactively with your eyes and breath for...
Slowing down
Stopping
Speeding up
Turning
Smoothness in all maneuvers
3. How-to reminders:
Keep your body loose
Give your horse time to feel your seat
Go to your seat/eyes/breath first for communications and transitions
Legs/feet come next as cues
Hands are used as support last

Before I go, I want to remind you that learning a new skill or deepening a skill has many layers.

First, you learn what you want to do and why it’s important. In this case, we’re talking about riding with an active consciousness of your seat because it is the most direct line of communication with your horse; it is how you develop feel, and it can help you stay calm and focused on the inside as you stay softly anchored in the saddle.

But here’s another critical point. It’s not just understanding what we’re doing and why it’s important that allows you to grow a skill. It’s the practice of the new behavior day-in and day-out and refining your technique indefinitely.

You come to any riding session with your own positive behaviors as well as things you need to improve – and so does your horse.

This is the spot where many people neglect cultivating a skill to higher levels. If they only understand that a behavior is important but don’t really practice it strategically over time, they return to their default skill levels – for better or worse. No true progress is made.

In the case of developing more feel through our seat, it’s easy to want to move on to more complex maneuvers and just assume that we know about our seats and what to do.

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We offer a variety of sponsorship packages providing visibility and access to our PCHA events and members. This can include banners hung up at shows, social media shout outs (we have over 1.7k followers on Facebook alone), class naming rights, show announcements, or logo displays on the website and in our monthly newsletters.

You can help PCHA grow our sponsor network by...

- Ω Reaching out to businesses you think would benefit from having their name in front of avid cutters, and horsemen.
- Ω Rounding up a few fellow members to jointly sponsor a class together.
- Ω Considering sponsorship of a class in honor of the memory of someone who inspired you – or inspired some of our cutters throughout PCHA.

Check out the various sponsorship opportunities and sign up to become a sponsor @

<https://www.pchacutting.com/sponsor-info>



PCHA

Pennsylvania Cutting Horse Association

2022
Membership &
Nomination
Application

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Primary Phone:		Alt. Phone:	
Email:			

Membership Applications \$25 per adult

\$15 per youth*

NCHA # Adult 1		NCHA # Youth 1	
NCHA # Adult 2		NCHA # Youth 2	

All nominations include rider and all horses shown by PCHA member. Award recipients must participate in 40% of the PCHA approved classes. The rider and owner of any horse must be a PCHA member for points to count for year end awards. Only money won after paid nominations will count toward year-end awards.

NOTE: Youth are required to be PCHA members for points to count towards year-end awards, but the owners of horses they ride may be non-members.

Nominations \$75 per adult

\$25 per youth

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Adult 2:		Youth 2:	
Adult 3:		Youth 3:	

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