



HORSE/HUMAN PARELLELS

Meet and Lead

Drawing on her experiences as an NLP practitioner, **Laira Gold** explains how horses are no different to humans in their need to be understood before being asked to try a new behaviour



ABOUT LAIRA

Laira Gold is a Certified Monty Roberts Instructor and a qualified Neuro-Linguistics Contemporary Psychotherapist and has worked with a variety of challenging clients - horses and humans. Exploring the connections between NLP, Equine Guided Psychotherapy and the Monty Roberts method of horsemanship was the catalyst that led her to travel the globe for three years to study Monty Roberts' methods in depth. For more on Laira visit www.lairagold.com/ www.humanthroughhorses.com or call 0780 153 8088

Horses are always asking 'who is leading now?' From the horse's point of view we are unable to lead unless our sensory channels are fully open, aware of every little rustle in the bush and movement in the shadows. Within the herd this is a matter of survival. It is the lead mare's job is to take the herd away from danger to safety.

If we were to ask a horse to do something unfamiliar, such as putting on the first saddle of their life, before acknowledging their natural flight instincts, we are much less likely to have a willing partner that is happy to stand still while we carry out our work. By creating a training environment where the horse can be encouraged to explore their flight instincts safely, the trainer (or therapist) can stand back and feel at ease no matter what the horse does.

Most training is made up of this delicate art of accepting what is and then stretching the horse's ability sufficiently. It is when we get this balance right that we create an optimum learning environment. Too much accepting of what 'is' can create boredom and a stagnation in learning for the horse and us. On the other hand too much leading, pushing or stretching on our part can create stress not only for the horse but for the trainer too.

In Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) we

explore the relationships between how we think and how we communicate. The therapist monitors patterns of behaviour and emotion and works with their client to transform the way they think and act. It is said that an NLP practitioner cannot lead before they have paced. This means that we first need to acknowledge the client's current experience (pace), do it again (pace), and then lead with a thought or suggestion of our own. Hypnotherapists use this all the time. It's what is sometimes called a hypnotic suggestion.

Part of my job as a psychotherapist is to meet and work with the client's experience in the current moment. In the psychotherapy culture I come from, great emphasis is placed on working with the client's ever-changing somatic (body) experience, perhaps more so than on past analysis or etiology (the cause of the problem). This only really happens if we are truly present, gaining rapport through observing and responding to all the non-verbal information happening within the client in that moment.

When I break rapport with a client, it is often because I have mismatched that client or tried to lead them without acknowledging their current experience of reality first. I recently worked with a high achieving professional from the advertising world. She came to me in a state of distress because her marriage was in ruins. She

had been rewarded for most of her life by thinking analytically, even around extremely painful issues such as death. She presented well thought through arguments to each possible pathway that she felt she had available to her. She was operating at a cognitive level. I knew that the type of thinking required to solve this kind of problem was very different to the one she had been used to throughout the rest of her working life. Part of our work together was to enable her to access intelligence of a more somatic nature (the ability to sense and appreciate one's own body and to relate to the needs of others). However, I needed to lead her into this way of thinking gently. It was only once I was able to acknowledge and respect her existing way of coping that I was able to lead with any suggestions of my own.

The parallels between successfully working with

CASE STUDY

In these series of images you can see me working with a young Icelandic pony that, until this point, had very little leading experience. In the second still you can see her going through a dilemma. Should she stay true to her natural instincts and stay away from predators or should she take a chance on me? The reason she goes against her instincts and accepts my invitation to 'join-up' with me is because I first acknowledged (or paced) her natural flight instinct. In other words, I met her in the moment and then I led with a suggestion of my own.



humans and horses is an area I find fascinating. Once we can understand the psychology of the horse and work with his energy rather than against it, we soon realise there is very little reason to get upset. It's the same for psychotherapy work. Maintaining an attitude where there is no such thing as a resistant client, only a resistant therapist, can be a very helpful and humbling place to work from.

MONTY SAYS

As events progress, I continue to be very impressed with the substance and thoroughness of the work of Laira Gold. I have had great hopes for many of my students in the area of human to human work. For many reasons, these have been less than I would have expected them to be. It appears to me that Laira Gold is grabbing the baton and carrying it with pride and competence.

It is exciting to await the next move of this bright student. This is an area that is near and dear to my heart as my doctorates are in behavioral sciences. Since meeting and working with John Grinder (co-founder of NLP) it is all the more exciting to observe the Laira's work.



LEARN MORE

To learn more about the Monty Roberts method of horsemanship and this way of thinking, Laira is offering a two week introductory training programme limited to six participants, from 25th July - 5th August, on the Buckinghamshire/Oxfordshire boarder. Visit www.lairagold.com for more details.