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# Riding Instructor

Official Publication  
of The American Riding  
Instructors Association

Spring 2021



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Stable Managers*

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# Riding Instructor

Spring 2021

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## American Riding Instructors Association Welcomes New Director, William Watson

Charlotte Kneeland is delighted to name an outstanding successor to her role as Director of ARIA.

Bringing fresh energy and expertise to ARIA, William was selected because of his devotion to the high standards for which ARIA has long been known. "I was instantly comfortable with him from the moment we met. As he's been here beside me learning the job, I've continually been impressed by his intelligence and calm, focused demeanor. He also has all the hi-tech knowledge I lack! I could not have found anyone more capable and have full confidence that he will serve our members well."

A true entrepreneur, William is motivated by helping small businesses grow and excels in multiple disciplines including business management, information technology and finance. Most recently, William has been responsible for business operations for Raddl, an e-commerce reviews startup. Previously, he was a partner at a woman-owned IT consulting startup, an energy consultant for an energy procurement startup, and contributed to his family's remanufacturing business. A New Hampshire native, he earned his undergraduate degree in Business Administration with a dual option in Finance & Entrepreneurial Studies from the University of New Hampshire. As he joins ARIA, William is committed to carrying on a 37 year legacy of serving the nation's finest riding instructors.

Charlotte and William will continue to work together to insure a seamless transition, with Charlotte serving as an ongoing consultant and mentor.



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A few of the geldings on summer pasture at CHAPS Equine Assisted Therapy in Sheridan, Wyoming. Photo courtesy Kristen Marcus.

# Susan E. Harris,

## Renowned Centered Riding® Teacher, Has Died

**March 9, 2021, Bloomfield, CT** – Centered Riding® Inc. is deeply saddened to share news of the death of Susan E. Harris, a well-known Centered Riding instructor. After a brief illness, Susan passed away on March 8, 2021, in hospice care in Ithaca, New York.

“The passing of Susan Harris is a great loss to the Centered Riding community and beyond – a loss that is made all the more painful simply because Susan was such a kind and amazing person in so many ways,” said Peggy Brown, President of the Centered Riding Board of Trustees, and a Level IV Clinician. “In 1989, when Sally Swift chose Susan as an apprentice, she certainly chose well. Susan’s dedication to Centered Riding, and to

the well-being of horses and riders everywhere, was boundless. A friend and mentor to many, Susan will be deeply missed.”

Susan earned widespread, deep respect as a Centered Riding teacher, mentor, volunteer, and humanitarian. She was a renowned international instructor, clinician, author and artist/illustrator. Susan played a major role in helping to develop what is now a global community of close to 1,000 Centered Riding instructors – many of whom she taught and mentored personally.

Susan was selflessly dedicated to Centered Riding. As a volunteer with the organization, she served in many roles over the years. At the



time of her passing, Susan was a Senior Level IV Clinician, Secretary of the Centered Riding Board of Trustees, Editor of Centered Riding News, and member of the Level IV Advisory Committee.

## The Heart of a Horse – A Tribute to Susan Harris

©Peggy S. Brown 2021

Susan E. Harris departed this world on March 8, 2021. She made her transition with the same quiet, peaceful balance with which she lived her entire life. I was honored to be allowed to be with her in her last hours, a situation that had been made difficult by the COVID regulations at that time.

In the late afternoon, I met a new hospice nurse, named Meenu, who had cared for Susan over the previous weekend. Meenu had been so taken by Susan’s grace and spirit that she actually asked to be reassigned as Susan’s caregiver. Susan’s room had large glass doors which opened out to a view far across the fields and hills outside of Ithaca, New York, near Susan’s home town of Homer. The room was well decorated by photos of Susan’s beloved horses Max and Popov.

Meenu told me about several conversations she had had the previous day with Sue. She told me she felt that Susan was not like other people. She said she believed Susan held a special spirit, with a strong connection to the animal world. Meenu said she believed Susan did not have the heart of a human being, but rather that Susan possessed the heart of a horse.

Horses were the most important facet and passion of Susan Harris’s life. While she held a

strong devotion to family, her home town, and her friends, Susan lived fully within the body and spirit of horses. Her remarkable illustrations and art work reflect her acute knowledge of both the inside and the outside of the horse. Her scientific knowledge and research enabled her to capture the essence of horse movement and balance. Her horse heart allowed her to see deep inside, and to understand and to capture the emotions and the raw spirit of the horse. She knew horses inside out.

Susan’s mission in life was to promote the humane treatment of the horse, and to improve the lives of horses worldwide. She accomplished these goals by teaching people how to read and understand horse behavior and movement, and to learn to work and communicate with the horse on the horse’s level, to bring out the best of the horse.

Susan was the consummate horse woman; she admired and respected all breeds and disciplines within the horse world. Susan believed horses should be used for sport, for competition, and for pleasure. She believed horses should work – not be coddled, but worked in such a way that it is done in a fair, understanding and humane fashion. This is what she taught us.

Using the methods and techniques of her mentor Sally Swift and Centered Riding, Susan taught people how to take responsibility for the use of their own body, and their own balance and emotional responses, to allow the horse to move freely, in balance and with understanding. Susan almost never publicly criticized a rider, but rather she elicited change in riders guiding them almost imperceptively toward a quieter, more humane understanding of how to ride and how to work with horses. By changing the rider, Susan could change and improve the horse, and she could make the life of the horse happier and better.

Susan Harris was an activist; she rallied against the unfair treatment of human beings, animals, and especially horses. While she believed horses should be used and worked, she also believed they should be used fairly and humanely in all disciplines. She stood firm and tall against abusive horse training methods and care, and abusive competition techniques. Susan was known for her strength, but also for her profound, unwavering fairness to all, and for her ability to lift the self-esteem and confidence of both human and animal alike.

Susan Harris had the heart of a horse. She lived in the moment. She forgave the transgressions and mistakes of others. She did her best to embrace the beauty of the earth, of balance, of movement, of love of life, community, family, and most importantly, the love of her life, the horse.



Photo courtesy Camp Illahee

# Fun in the Sun! Summer Camps 2021

By Donna Hartshorn

Are your students looking for an “away” summer camp? These camps provide a variety of activities for your students. Many are also looking for instructors for their summer classes. Check out the ARIA E-news for more instructor opportunities!

## Camp Illahee

### Information about your camp:

(Founded in 1921, Camp Illahee establishes an environment for girls to develop and flourish. Our motto “Be a Great Girl” inspires campers to develop qualities that will serve them for a lifetime: confidence, conviction, integrity, and an abiding respect for the wonders of the natural world.

In a supportive atmosphere, Illahee girls forge friendships and experience a wide array of activities that encourage self-reliance, faith and self-esteem. We also strive to foster imagination, help campers develop a strong sense of self and promote the importance of community.

### Helpful tip(s) to share with other instructors on running a successful camp:

Smile often and organization is key!

### One activity that your campers like the most:

Riding, Vaulting, Tennis, and Riflery (we offer over 40 different activities!)

### How is your camp managing the COVID-19 crisis: (fewer campers/more instructors/alternate location to allow for more campers, etc.):

Our facility in Brevard, NC is entirely open air. We will be using our outdoor space, social distancing, and masks when necessary.

### CONTACT INFORMATION:

Laurie Strayhorn  
☎ 828-883-2181  
Laurie@campillahee.com

# Red Pine Camp for Girls

## Information about your camp:

At Red Pine Camp we place emphasis on the individual and a ratio of at least one counselor to every 4 campers makes possible the small groups and close camper-counselor relationship that keeps this goal in focus. At Red Pine you do not just ride on a horse, you are taught how to ride properly and confidently and so it is with all of our activities. Your daughter will have the opportunity to grow in skills and confidence throughout a fun filled summer. We pride ourselves on professional staff, safety, quality food, excellent maintenance and a warm, happy and most importantly, fun atmosphere. Our staff is trained and certified in the various activities that they teach from riding to swimming, sailing, canoeing, backpacking and more! They are trained to handle the physical, social, emotional and intellectual characteristics of the various age groups, with some of them pursuing careers in teaching. We also meet with or talk to our camp parents and listen to their concerns and discuss ways to help their child have a successful camp experience.



Photo courtesy Red Pine Camp



Outstanding Girls' Summer Camp in North Carolina seeks **Riding Director, Barn Manager** and **enthusiastic staff** for Hunt Seat Program. Contact us or apply today! [www.campillahee.com](http://www.campillahee.com)

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**CONTACT INFORMATION:**  
**Nancy Jones**  
**☎ 706/862-2231**  
**info@valleyviewranch.com**  
**www.valleyviewranch.com**

Photo courtesy Valley View Ranch

# Valley View Ranch Equestrian Camp

## Information about your camp:

Horse-lovers paradise! Since 1954, the purpose of Valley View Ranch has been to help each rancher have the full opportunity of horsemanship through instruction, time in the saddle on trails, and the care and responsibility of having her own horse, a top Lookout Mountain in Cloudland, GA.

We offer several riding programs and encourage each camper to participate in all of them: English and Hunt Seat; Western Stock Seat and Barrels (Gymkhana); Trails and Vaulting. CHA instructors teach beginner to advanced riders. Each girl can spend up to 6 hours a day riding and caring for their OWN camp horse, or she can bring her own. Ranchers will find the facility comfortable, safe, and spacious being located on 600 acres of lush pastures, wooded trails, and panoramic views. Girls from 8-17 years of age are eligible and enrollment is limited to 50. The Jones family are third generation horse lovers, camp administrators, and equine educators making girls' dreams come true!

## VALLEY VIEW RANCH

*Equestrian Camp for Girls 8-17*  
*A'top Lookout Mountain Since 1954*  
 600 acres of wooded trails and panoramic views





• Equitation lessons in English and Western for Beginner to Advanced riders



• Spend up to 6 hours a day riding and caring for your OWN camp horse





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# Sponsor Spotlight

By Donna Hartshorn

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## What is MIPS?

*Written By Alangley, courtesy of One K Helmets*

### **MIPS is a Brain Protection System – Engineered to add protection to helmets**

The MIPS Brain Protection System (BPS) is found inside the helmet, generally between the comfort padding and the EPS (a high-quality foam used to reduce energy). For certain impacts, the MIPS BPS can reduce harmful forces transmitted to the brain.

**MIPS stands for Multi-directional Impact Protection System.**

### **Why Do I Need MIPS?**

Injury statistics show that when you fall and hit your head, it's most common to fall at an angle, compared to a linear fall.





Alex Abella. Photo by Michael Robinson-Chavez.



Photo of Alex Abella by Michael Robinson-Chavez

# A Tribute to Stable Managers

## Alejandra “Alex” Abella *Edgewater, Maryland*

**What are the ten most important things you do to make your barn run smoothly and efficiently?**

As soon as I decided to start teaching riding, I sought certification because as a European, I was surprised that it wasn't a requirement at the national level in the U.S. Certification was most important to me because of safety: it must come first at all times when you work with horses. As a stable manager, safety and health must be at the forefront of everything we do and my top ten elements for efficient operations are all related to those tenets:

1. **Have an operations manual.** I worked several years for Equestrian Services, LLC, an equestrian planning and design company, and when the company started a management arm, the first thing we did was write a comprehensive operations manual to include abso-

lutely everything that is necessary to run a stable. From instruction protocols, to horse health, to customer service, and everything in between, it even included all the forms that a stable would need and that manual still lives on as a book today. An operations manual guarantees efficient and safe operations, even through shift and staff transitions and into the future of a stable.

2. **Raise the standards.** We are very lucky in Maryland to have a very active and supportive Horse Industry Board (MDHIB), as part of the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The MDHIB has a unique Horse Discovery Center (HDC) program for stables that have been deemed to have the highest standards of safety, horse care, instruction and professionalism. When I took over the stable I manage now, I was grateful that raising the standards in this state had a guide available for me to follow, and so we prepared for a year to apply and pass the HDC program review. Certified staff and the HDC badge tell our clients that we reach for the best, even when it is not required.

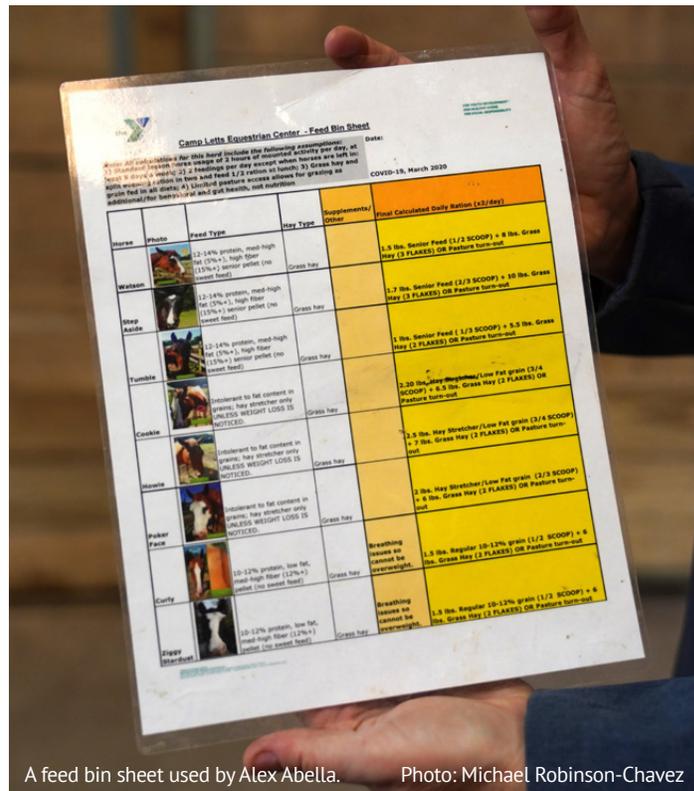
**3. Safety first.** I insist upon our instruction being a full horsemanship program so that all aspects of equine husbandry and the importance of safety are taught to all our students. We don't allow leading without a lead line or without closing the clips on halters, we teach that all gates found closed must be closed, we ask all riders to take their horses on a walk about the ring every time before mounting, etc. We teach "soft eyes" and ask students and staff to always try to walk a mile in the horses' hooves, to understand how they might be seeing and reading a situation. The best way to not have accidents is to think about how to avoid them at all times.

**4. Nutritional calculations.** A correctly fed horse is a happy horse. We all know what it feels like to have to work with an empty or upset stomach, and we have the luxury of throwing up food that doesn't agree with us! I don't even want to imagine the pain of colic or ulcers so again; the best strategy is to try to avoid problems with careful calculations and feeding practices. I do all the mathematical calculations for the rations of each of our horses, adjust them seasonally or based on each horse's situation as needed, and place feed instruction cards in each feed bin. All staff must follow the feeding guidelines and all students and volunteers are taught about them as well. We even teach ration calculation math in our Horses for Homeschool program!

**5. Cleanliness and order.** For the health and safety of horses, staff and clients, stables must be kept clean and in order. Stables are fairly open buildings out in nature, so dirty feed buckets attract vermin and items strewn in the aisles can lead to accidents. Having to look for things when one needs them is also a waste of labor hours so staff and students must learn to always place things back where they belong after use, and keep all buckets, bins, bits, etc. clean.

**6. Discipline.** This is related to cleanliness and order, and we teach our students that discipline is not a bad word. Discipline is order, maintaining efficient and regular operations, whether in the man-made stable or the horses' herd. Aristoteles' Horror vacui, the physics principle that states that nature abhors a vacuum, rings true in stables. Without discipline, rodents move into the vacuum of order in a feed room, confusion moves into the vacuum left by inconsistent training, and chaos moves into the vacuum left in a herd hierarchy when change isn't handled carefully. Discipline is not only helpful, it is a beautiful, useful tool.

**7. Protect the land.** Whether it is pastures or trails, horses are inextricably connected to the land upon which their physical and mental health depends. We make sure to seed, fertilize, drag and mow our pastures as required to keep them healthy and following the required guidelines of our nutrient management plan,



A feed bin sheet used by Alex Abella. Photo: Michael Robinson-Chavez

including testing the soil at the beginning of every plan. We also protect the trails from degradation by not riding on them when they are too wet or too dry. Luckily, we have several western-style dry lot pens that we can use during inclement weather, to avoid the horses being stuck in stalls. I wish every stable had some version of covered areas with engineered footing; it's a very necessary and versatile design element.

**8. Work smarter, not harder.** The best designed stable is one that is planned to be run with the least number of staff, with carefully thought-out traffic patterns that minimize labor. When that is not possible, the right equipment and operational protocols can help. Putting rapid-opening valves at the end of hoses, having a four-wheel vehicle or tractor, creating chutes and adding gates for horses to move safely and quickly through...anything to work smarter helps with time and avoiding labor injuries.

**9. Keep good records.** From daily feed and horse use logs, to veterinary records and everything in between, keeping a written record of operations is essential for smooth and efficient management. We know exactly how much work a horse has done on any given day, who was working what shift, and exactly how long it takes to do any given task.

**10. Pick the right staff for the job.** I've had many successes and a few failures with selecting staff throughout the years because caring for horses is not rocket science if you know how to be around

them, but it is a serious 24/7 commitment. The horses must always come first and while working with them sounds fun, when the job means you lose time to ride, or hang around the barn chatting, or be home for dinner, not everybody can handle it.

Alex is the Equestrian Center Director at Camp Letts in Maryland. She joined Camp Letts in 2017 and is an ARIA-certified riding instructor and stable manager. She holds a BA and a CC in Equine Science, and her graduate studies were in Animal Science. Alejandra has over three decades of experience in the horse industry - including several riding disciplines - as well as in equestrian facility and land planning and management, marketing, and brand building. She is also an author and illustrator of children's books on dog behavior, and has designed courses on animal behavior and interspecies communication. She is passionate about nature, horses, art, travel and languages. Alex won the American Riding Instructors Association Instructor of the Year Award in 2004, and she speaks five languages fluently.



Peggy Brown has a rapt audience as she discusses bridling

## Peggy Brown Maumee, Ohio

One of my first horse experiences as a small four-year-old child was to visit a thoroughbred farm in Lexington, Kentucky. If you have ever been to one of those breathtakingly beautiful farms, you know how perfectly and immaculately they are kept. This was my first impression of a horse stable and, without my realizing it at the time, that first stable visit established my lifelong standards for my own stable.

Here are ten things that help my barn and my business run well.

1. Keep the aisles clear and swept. I remember once being told that if you always keep your kitchen clean and always make the beds your house will always look presentable (even if it really isn't). It's the same with your barn. Keep the floors swept, yards raked, and the aisles clear and picked up and anyone entering the barn will have a good first impression.
2. Have a designated place where each tool is kept and insist that tools are replaced neatly after use. Tools are a mainstay of our operation; think how many tools you must own in order to care for your horse and farm. Lost tools waste time when trying to find them and waste money when having to replace them. Missing tools can be a disaster in an emergency situation. Each tool should be hung neatly in its designated spot or kept in its designated tool box, cupboard or drawer.
3. Cobwebs are not to be tolerated. Any fireman will tell you that dust and cobwebs are incredibly flammable and often the start of barn fires. Keep your buildings dusted and swept. At least once a year I vacuum down rafters, walls, nooks and crannies of the stable and storage areas then I use my websters weekly to keep dust

Peggy Brown explains harnessing before a carriage driving lesson



and cobwebs at bay. Really dirty surfaces are washed or wiped down with a damp rag. Two special must-have tools in my barn are my websters and my stable shop vacuum.

4. When it breaks, fix it now and fix it correctly. Things will break around the farm and, when they do, they should be fixed right away. A T-post pounded into the ground with a broken fence post tied to it with baling twine is not a correct fix – it could be an emergency measure – but if it has been there more than a week, something is wrong. Horses break things, boarders break things, things just wear out, it's a huge part of owning your own farm and as soon as you start putting off repairs, or making do with poor patchy fixes, you will get behind. The further you get behind the more difficult it is to catch up and some folks never do. When it breaks, fix it or replace it now! And remember if you need to replace something throw the broken or worn-out tool away, farmers are terrible hoarders and hoarders eventually have to face a terrible day of reconning.
5. Stalls and day yards must be picked and cleaned every day. There is a stable near me that cleans stalls two days a week for boarders who pay a regular price. For extra money they can pay to get their stalls cleaned four days per week. Yikes! Talk about a messy stinky boarding barn and poor horses stuck in ammonia stench stalls. Manure happens, it never stops (we hope), and letting things pile up is a recipe for disaster. Keep up, don't get behind because catching up is so hard to do.
6. Tack must be wiped off, if not actually cleaned, and stored correctly

with stirrups run up, bridles figure-eighted, harness kept straight on its rack, saddle pads hung on airing racks to dry, and extra things either hung on appropriate hooks or cleaned and stored correctly. I still have *and still can* use some tack that is over fifty years old! High quality leather, hung and stored correctly and kept in good repair will last many many years. I recently visited a stable where I saw a Stubben saddle laying on the ground in a tack room, on its back, under a leaky roof; you can imagine my impression of that stable owner and instructor – certainly no horsewoman or businesswoman here. Buy the best quality tack you can afford; with proper care it will last longer. Cheap tack looks cheap and will not age well. You can find some middle of the road brands that may serve you nicely but look closely, choose wisely, always take good care of whatever you own and never let anyone handle your good driving whips except yourself!

7. Build and organize your stable with horses in mind. Stalls, gates, and doors must be heavy and horse proof and hardware must be especially heavy duty in order to survive the demands of large animals. Make sure that doors and gates can easily be opened by even the smallest person, no dragging on the ground or rusty sliding door tracks. The stable must be bright and airy with good ventilation, good light, and plenty of convenient frost proof water faucets, and protected electrical plugs where you need them – no extension cords or hoses running here and there. It goes without saying that all floors and yards must be dry but not dusty, and a muddy yard or riding arena makes life a misery. Water is the enemy of all buildings, a leaking roof, bad gutters or downspouts, leaking faucets will destroy your building get them fixed!

8. Two of the most valuable pieces of equipment that I cannot live without are my big solid pipe stock wash rack and my round pen. Having a stocks, which doubles as a wash rack stall, allows me to confine my horses for bathing, soaking legs, and vetting. My horse dentist and my veterinarians love working at my stable because they can work with horses who stand still in the stocks and thus are safe to work around. I have had a round pen for over fifty years and would not like to have horses without it. I don't use it much, but when I do need it for training or exercise it has been a wonderful safe tool. Trying to lunge a recalcitrant horse in a big space is a recipe for trouble. Make sure your pen is big enough so that you are not working circles that are too small, which is hard on horses' joints, and make sure the walls are of sufficient strength and height. A good properly built round pen is excellent for those first beginner lessons as well.

9. Turn your horses out every day. Horses do not do well in confinement. Horses need fresh air, plenty of it, they need to move, they need plenty of roughage to chew on, and they need friends. Horses who are kept confined or isolated are guaranteed to create problems. Problem horses break things, hurt themselves, hurt people, and hurt other horses. Turn your horses out or better yet set up your farm for 24/7 outdoor horse keeping. Your horses and your clients will thank you for it.

10. Teach your horses good manners and expect them to be respectful and careful of you! Life is too short to own a stupid horse and your life may be too short if you insist on owning a dangerous or erratic horse. Understand that not every horse is trainable and not every horse has a good sound brain. If you must take on a risky horse go ahead, give it a chance, but if you cannot begin to fix the problem within 6 months, let it go! Getting hurt by horses can happen but it is avoidable by insisting that the horses in your barn have been selected wisely and with care. Ponies and horses

must be trained to behave themselves and to be respectful and careful of people. Remember that horses that cannot be used are horses that continue to eat and continue to cost your business money. Take care to use your common sense and your business brain, and do not allow your hopes or your heart to cause you to become "horse poor".

You don't have to have a fancy barn or a new barn (mine is well over 100 years old) or have paddocks with painted board fences in order to have a nice place but you do have to have a clean, safe environment for your horses that is built with horses in mind and is well maintained and kept in good repair with your tack and your tools kept where they belong and kept neatly. Keep up with the work, own horses who are good citizens, and remember that catching up, after you've gotten behind, is hard to do.

Peggy Brown is a Level IV Centered Riding and Driving Clinician from Toledo, Ohio. She is classified as an Expert Instructor and Instructor Educator by the American Riding Instructor Association and was honored to be named the 2005 Instructor of the Year. Peggy generously shares her years of experience in competing, handling and training horses and riders. A firm believer in solid foundation training for horse and rider, Peggy helps riders learn to use their bodies wisely to prevent injury and to communicate clearly in balance and harmony with their horse. Working domestically and internationally, Peggy as the Visible Rider<sup>®</sup> wears a bone suit that helps riders learn more about their own bodies and how the rider's position affects the horse's body. Peggy's goals are to help horses improve performance and comfort levels by helping their riders and drivers understand and develop sensitive, balanced, independent seat, hands and minds.

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## Sheryl Jordan

### *Delaplane, Virginia*

Here are the ten most important things I do to make my barn run smoothly and efficiently:

1. Maintain Checklists, Calendars, Vet, Farrier Appointments, and Feed/Hay Orders.
2. Keep paperwork and files organized and up to date.
3. Safely set up the stable tools and manure disposal to minimize steps. Every step costs time and payroll.
4. All members of the team hang the halters & lead ropes, blankets, bridles, saddles, and saddle pads the same way. Consistency is key!

5. All tack, groom kits, brushes, feed buckets, and supplies are kept clean and labeled. There is a place for everything and everything has its place.
6. All barn tools are kept spotless after use.
7. Blankets, saddle pads, leg wraps, etc. are kept washed with detergent free products.
8. Bathing supplies are safely kept within reach of the wash area.
9. Team meetings and a communication board. All members of the team are encouraged to be mindful of their energy and the importance of staying calm and centered at all times in order to foster a serene environment for horse and human.



10. Provide healthy snacks and beverages for the team, as well as good water. We also enjoy team group lessons, fun outings and special lunches like pizza!

Extra things I do that I find are very important (It is hard to limit it to 10!)

Night Check and quiet, quality time with each horse as I pick their stalls. I use this time to closely check them out, observe their behavior, condition of the stall and manure, and water and hay consumption.

## Kristen Marcus Sheridan, Wyoming

Happy, Healthy and Sane Horses - Children, Horses and Adults in PartnerShip (CHAPS)

Back in 2017, CHAPS' Executive Director, Kristen, was at the PATH International Conference & Annual Meeting where she attended a session from Agape Therapeutic Riding Resources about rating riding lessons for horses. The session was intriguing and got her thinking about how to adapt a similar program for the CHAPS herd. The idea was to rate the lessons so that no one horse had all the "hard" lessons and no one horse had all the "easy" lessons. They were able to give each horse a variety of lessons based on the rating.

CHAPS had recently undergone a total staff change and these ladies

Sheryl's professional experience includes the management of breeding, boarding, lesson, hunt, and event stables. She was the Director of the Nemaquin Woodlands Resort & Spa Equestrian Center for over 10 years, during which time she was awarded the coveted "Manager of the Year" title for excellent customer service, achievement of financial goals, and execution of superb standards of the stable facility. Under her direction, their top lesson horse, Dancer, was named School Horse of the Year with the American Riding Instructor's Association, or ARIA. She also produced and successfully implemented equestrian events including 3-day horse shows, clinics, polo matches, rodeos, and corporate equine trade shows.

Sheryl is ARIA certified since 1998 as a Level III in Stable Management, Recreational Riding, and Stock Seat, and a Level II in Dressage and Hunt Seat. She feels strongly that every person who teaches horseback riding in the U.S. should be required to be certified to demonstrate high horsemanship standards and focus on safety. "I would not be who I am today, nor would I have achieved my career goals without my ARIA certifications."

Sheryl and her program EquiSpective™ have been featured in the Sunday Business Section of the New York Times under Vocations, Fortune Magazine, numerous other publications, and filmed live with Good Morning Washington. EquiSpective™ has been filmed by Animal Planet with the Discovery Channel and showcased at the Washington International Horse Show.

wanted to focus more on horse comfort and health in order to provide high quality equine assisted services. Many of the horses were older and had some special needs, but a few were simply burnt out and cranky.

When Kristen returned from conference, she immediately went to the team to discuss the practicality of adapting such a system and how they could go about it. Fortunately, Kristen's team is truly dynamic and they were able to brainstorm through different ideas and variations until they came up with the system they put in place for spring 2018.

While tracking the lessons is super important, Kristen and her team felt that other aspects of the horses' daily routines should be monitored, as well, to give a well-rounded picture of the horses' daily lives. Thus, the CHAPS rating scale was born.





Cody is getting chiropractic work. All the blue dots show where he needs adjustment. Photo courtesy Kristen Marcus.

being hot shod) or having a reaction to a vaccine (mild is a 5 and intense is a 10).

6. Exercise refers to any use focusing on conditioning such as using donut reins to build up the back and abdominal muscles (7) or lunging to build strength (5) or a trail ride to get the horse out and reset the body and mind (2).
7. Schooling refers to anything the horse needs a touch-up on. This could be reintroducing the lift (9) or working on gaits (4) or standing still at the ramp (2).
8. Training refers to introducing anything new. For some reason the ramp on the trailer is terrifying! When training to get in and out of the trailer, we find the horses are stressed very much from the ramp and moving through a single door, instead of a stock

trailer door. This is a 9 on the scale. Training for the lift is a 10 because the motor makes terrible noise and they have to stand at the ramp for longer periods while a rider is lifted, positioned and adjusted before moving forward.

9. Body Condition Score – this plays a part in the horses’ daily stress. If they are overweight, it puts stress on the joints and they are not able to perform as well as when they are fit. In the same way, being underweight has a disadvantage in that the horse will not have as much energy, won’t feel as well and has a higher probability of getting sore. At CHAPS a 5-6 BCS is a 1, while a 1 or 9 is a 10.
10. Age – while on a lesser scale, age does attribute to some stress of the horse. We know our older horses (28 years) are not able to take heavy loads, work as long or compensate for unbalanced riders as well as the horses who are 15-17. For this reason, age is also assigned a rating with 14-17 being a 1 and ages on either side going up. Younger horses don’t have the life experience to be as “OK” with some things as older horses so they are at a disadvantage in that respect.

Since implementing the rating scale system, CHAPS has seen a significant reduction in burnout, bad behaviors and horse turnover. Prior to using the scale, horses would bite regularly, pin their ears to be saddled, not want to be caught, stop in the center during lessons, etc. Now, the horses are easily caught, saddled and take good care of the clients and volunteers during lessons.

Staff knows that if a horse is exhibiting a bad behavior, something is wrong and the horse is letting someone know. Usually, a chiropractic adjustment or acupuncture will address the problem and the horse is better right away. If that doesn’t fix it, staff knows to look deeper. Is there a problem in the pasture, does he/she have something physical going on or does he/she simply need a break? In the case of needing a break, the weekly rating for the horse may be adjusted to a lower

Weekly Horse Rating - 9.24 thru 9.30													
Horse	Riding Lessons	Driving Lessons	Unmounted	Special Events	Vol. Training	Turnout	Maintenance	Exercise	Schooling	BCS	Age	Total	Max Value
Lynx	15	N/A	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	1	27	44
Sabre	23	N/A	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	1	2	33	50
Feather	0	N/A	5	0	0	10	2	0	0	3	2	22	45
Winston	12	N/A	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	1	1	21	45
Tili	25	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	11	5	4	50	60
Cody	18	N/A	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	4	28	45
Shorty	7	0	10	0	0	7	0	0	0	1	1	26	50
Dennis	18	N/A	5	0	0	7	4	0	0	2	2	38	60
Sureen	8	5	5	0	0	7	2	0	0	2	2	31	50
Ped	13	10	5	0	0	7	2	0	0	1	1	39	60
Sampson	5	N/A	7	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	4	22	44



Gina Marchese fitting a saddle. Gina is also an ARIA Level 3 Stable Manager, and works alongside Kristen Marcus at CHAPS in Sheridan, Wyoming.

number. The CHAPS Barn Manager is quite in tune with the horse's needs and will let the instructors and ED know her recommendations for that horse. It is imperative that your horse person knows the horses intimately so you know when there is a problem.

It took two years to figure out each horse's maximum value for the week, but now it is figured out and provides a great framework for how much the horses can do in a week. For the first two years, CHAPS staff kept track of the ratings for each horse as well as thoroughly documented dates for negative behaviors, lameness, burnout, etc. In doing so, the staff were able to see a pattern for a threshold for each horse and that became his/her max value. As horses age or receive diagnoses or are put into new programs, the rating scale is adjusted. The rating scale stays fluid so it accurately represents the daily life and meets the needs of the horse first.

To personalize your own system, think about what your horse is used to, how he or she behaves and take into consideration every aspect of your horse's daily life. Everything has the potential to be a stressor and it only takes one to be the tipping point into a bad behavior.

Please feel free to contact CHAPS for more information or to help with questions. Kristen can be reached at [info@chapswyo.org](mailto:info@chapswyo.org) or at 307-673-6161.

Kristen Marcus was born and raised a Wyoming cowgirl. She grew up on a 200-acre ranch and learned at a very young age that agriculture was her passion. Her family raised cattle, horses and pigs as well as certified weed-free hay.

Kristen attended Central Wyoming College in Riverton, WY to receive an A.S. in Equine Science. She then moved to Stillwater, OK to attend Oklahoma State University and received her B.S. in Animal Science (emphasis on equine nutrition & management), Masters of Agriculture in Animal Science and then a Masters of Science in Agricultural Communications.

Kristen is a Certified Riding Instructor through ARIA and holds Level 2 in both English and Western. She holds a Level 3 Stable Management Certification from ARIA and is also a Certified Equine Specialist in Mental Health & Learning from PATH International, and is a trained equine chiropractor. Kristen is the Executive Director for Children, Horses and Adults in PartnerShip (CHAPS) Equine Assisted Therapy in Sheridan, WY. In addition to her administrative duties, she is the instructor for the mental health programs working with veterans.

For more on their programs, please visit [www.chapswyo.org](http://www.chapswyo.org)

# Unique Liability Risks Involving Minors

Julie I. Fershtman, Attorney at Law

[www.equinelaw.net](http://www.equinelaw.net)

This year, I was invited to speak at the American Youth Horse Council's Virtual Symposium on the topic of "Unique Equine Liability Risks Involving Minors - What They Are and How to Protect Yourself." This article summarizes my remarks.

Children and horses have a strong bond. Many of us developed our passion for horses when we were young children. Those who provide horse-related activities for children, such as riding instructors and camps, face unique risks because the law looks at children differently than adults.



Julie I. Fershtman, Attorney at Law

## Liability Waivers/Releases and Minors: Take Caution

Courts in most states have shown a willingness to enforce liability waivers/releases – as long as the documents were properly worded and signed. Still, courts in several states (including, but not limited to, Alabama, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Washington) have held that parents cannot legally release the claims of their minor children. By comparison, a few other states (including, but not limited to, Alaska, California, Colorado, and Ohio) have allowed waivers/releases signed by a parent to bar claims of their injured children.

If you are an equine industry professional, these variations could mean that your well-worded liability waiver/release document may be powerless to stop a claim brought by an injured child, depending on the applicable law. Worse, as explained below, you might receive a child's lawsuit several years in the future.

## Statute of Limitations: It's Different for Minors

Statutes of limitations are laws essentially setting forth deadlines for filing lawsuits. State laws vary considerably as to the time limit to file a lawsuit against a person or entity arising from a personal injury. One state

allows up to 6 years for an injured person to file suit, while a few others allow only 1 year, with the rest of the states falling in between. Limited exceptions apply. When the injured person is a minor, these statutory time limits typically don't apply. Most states allow minors to file suit within

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Those who provide horse-related activities for children, such as riding instructors and camps, face unique risks because the law looks at children differently than adults.

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a certain period of time after they have reached the age of majority (age 18 in most states). This means that your student who fell off and broke his leg at age 8 could file suit against you at least 10 years after the accident. By then, you may have forgotten about what happened.

## Equine Activity Liability Acts

Equine activity liability acts (now found

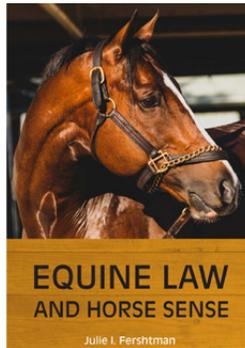
in all states but California and Maryland) sometimes offer powerful defenses against personal injury claims. Laws in Oregon and Pennsylvania, by their terms, only apply to claims of injured adults. By comparison, the majority of these laws could potentially apply to claims of injured children. Whether an equine activity liability act is powerful enough to defeat an injured minor's claim will depend on the facts and the applicable law.

### Risk Management

As you consider ways to control liability risks involving children, here are a few ideas:

- **Use incident reports.** Develop a form that provides information on the injured person, what happened, where it happened, who saw it, what they saw, the horse involved (if any), and more. Plan to secure these documents for several years. Do not destroy them until you are certain they are no longer needed, preferably after you have discussed this with a knowledgeable lawyer.
- **Liability insurance.** Make sure that you are properly insured for all of your horse-related activities. Discuss coverages with a knowledgeable insurance agent.
- **Liability waivers/releases.** Where allowed by law, make liability waivers/releases part of your routine paperwork, but make sure they are properly worded and signed by at least one parent or legally appointed guardian of the child (the babysitter almost certainly doesn't qualify as a "legal guardian"). Just as with incident reports, store your signed waiver/release documents securely. When children reach the age of majority, you can now ask them to sign your documents.

*This article does not constitute legal advice. When questions arise based on specific situations, direct them to a knowledgeable attorney.*



### About the author:

**Julie Fershtman**, one of the nation's most experienced Equine Law practitioners, is a Shareholder with Foster Swift Collins & Smith, PC, in Michigan. She has successfully litigated equine cases in 18 jurisdictions nationwide and has tried cases in 4 states. She is listed in *The Best Lawyers in America* and received the American Bar Association (ABA) "Excellence in the Advancement of Animal Law Award." Her speaking engagements span 29 states. The ABA recently published her new 372-page book called "Equine Law & Horse Sense," and it is available for purchase on Amazon and through the ABA. For more information, please visit [www.equinelaw.net](http://www.equinelaw.net)

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# Chicks and Horses

By *Didi Arias*

Illustration by Didi Arias

It's Sunday afternoon television matinee time, and after browsing through the channels, I settle on "George of the Jungle", because it always makes me giggle. Then it comes, at minute 53 and some seconds, the classic line, that giggle-making piece of prize scriptwriting for viewers in the know:

"What is it with chicks and horses, huh?"  
And I fall about laughing, every time.

Popping another handful of popcorn into his mouth, my husband looked at me and asked, "Well...?"

And there I was, put on the spot once again, just like when the parents of students, friends, schoolmates, colleagues and ex-boyfriends have all asked. It has always been a struggle to pinpoint that one educated an-

swer - I don't even believe there is a "one size fits all" reply. Heck, books and articles have been written on it, college professors and psychologists discuss it and yes, even Hollywood knows about it. It's pretty safe to say that it is an accepted "thing" that there is something marvellous going on between the female of our species and our equine friends (but we already know that here).

To answer all those who asked the "What is it" question, they are really asking "Why", but I'll get that "What" out of the way first. If you apply the definition of "crazy" as being intensely enthusiastic about, or preoccupied with, something, the word surely fits. Therefore, it is relieving to know that neither insanity nor derangement are requisite conditions to be "crazy" about horses. This is most likely good news for the parents who

asked if their daughter's horse obsession was something to be worried about. "Only if you can't afford it" I replied, managing my best straight face. Perhaps parents would be less worried (and perhaps it would be more politically correct) if it was referred to as "involved in the horse culture".

Lots of girls go through the horse phase when growing up, but many, many go on to be lifetime horse lovers and equestrians as well as professionals in horse and animal industries. Of course, this attraction to horses does not exclude boys and men - it is just that girls and women make up the greater numbers. When or how this all began anyone can say, but the human-equine relationship is long known and also the subject of legend, folktale and myth, and though boys and men also feature, the female has a definite role. Suffice it is say that it is not a new phenomenon.

For many of us it began at an early age and personally, my family recalls that I was perhaps three years old when my horse obsession began with the television show "Bonanza". I was so taken by it that I refused to respond to my name and only answered when addressed as "Adam" (the older Cartwright brother). Decker out in my black cowboy outfit, a little holster which hung from my impossibly narrow hips, and some nifty pearl-handled pistols, my imaginary steed and I reigned over the Ponderosa. There was ample television viewing for horse lovers in those days as westerns were hugely popular, not to forget such gems as "Fury", "My Friend Flicka" and "Mr. Ed" (of course, of course!). A few years ago I asked my mother if she thought I then saw my identity as being a boy, being that all those protagonists were male, and she replied "not at all, you just loved horses". What did puzzle my mother was that nobody in our family, to our knowledge, had or rode horses. It was just me, out of the blue, and then my younger sister. My grandmother said it was because we were Irish.

As with many little girls, this passion stayed with me right up through my teenage years

and beyond. The television programs and movies gave us kids who didn't grow up on farms the fantasy of a different life, one full of horses. Then there were the books, oh the books! There were so many that my bookshelves were bursting with an enviable assortment of novels, breeds of the world and riding books. I'm still adding to the collection. When I was young there were loads of paint-by-number sets with horses, and let's not forget the statues: how many Breyer model horses could you boast? Fast forward a few years to *My Little Pony* and all the unicorn-y, rainbow-y stuff you find today – our four-legged equine friends have been strongly marketed to young girls for decades. Next time you are in a department store, see how many items you can spot with horse, pony and unicorn toys, or imaged on clothing. These are all social influences – girls are expected to be horse crazy!

These images are selling a dream, a fantasy, a visit into the imagination. There is a certain amount of escapism involved, and through horses, the mind can just go away to a nicer, safer place away from family issues, school and friend pressures. Haven't horses carried most of us emotionally through some difficult times and situations?

The role of fulfilling our nurturing instincts come in to play – we're biologically wired to care for things, which explains why we will happily spend hours hugging and cooing to, grooming, feeding, mucking out, sweeping and scrubbing to make sure our equine babies have their every need tended to and their surroundings perfectly appointed. As girls tend to have a focus on building positive, loving relationships, it is easy for the horse to become the object of their attention and devotion.

In writing this article, "strength" and "power" were words used by the ladies I spoke with when asked why they were first drawn to horses. They were not only speaking in these terms with regard to the physical, but interestingly spoke of a sense of power and strength that they gained by being around

them. As males tend to physically influence others, women tend to psychologically influence those around them ("You're right about that" my husband concurs). When you think about it, there is a great power to be gained from being able to influence a mind different from your own. It is not about force or domination, it is about trust and relationship, it is about the mind. There is no question at all that many, many men are gifted horsemen, my husband being one of them, but perhaps this helps clarify the Freudian thought about women and horses – to this layman's mind, I believe it is about empowerment.

Horses can give an identity, a super-hero power of sorts, to the child who may have difficulties, school and/or social struggles. Being a kid who gets to ride and hang out with horses sets them apart – they can **BE** somebody – and with that comes a whole lot of importance and confidence. Horses can be both anchor and lifeline – I know it and have seen it first-hand.

Being involved in the horse culture can give a child an early sense of independence and freedom. As a rider, a child can be in the driver's seat for the first time and learn to take up the controls. What a marvellous freedom of movement to be able to go where you want to go, more or less, but from the back of a horse. There is also the sense of adventure as being at the stables lets you experience exploring new surroundings, activities and meeting new, like-minded people probably around your own age. Isn't it curious how some parents will happily drop off their daughter at the barn for hours, but not let them hang out elsewhere with their friends? Being in the company of a one thousand pound horse must seem much safer than being in the company of a teenage boy!

Speaking of boys, some consider the "the horse phase" is a stage that young girls go through before they move on to "the boy stage". Maybe the horses are a kind of practice or stepping stone to move on to that, I don't know, but I do know that many will

maintain or return to their first obsession, horses, some time down the road. Then again, there are others who will just move on and close that door of their youth behind them.

As for "down the road", plenty of grown women are also horse-obsessed. Perhaps they had ridden as children and, after raising their families, now have time to reunite with that passion. Yet I have had many adult students who had zero previous horse exposure, proving that going horse-crazy is not solely reserved for the young. Interestingly, there is an emerging trend of re-publishing classic horse and pony books aimed at women readers, and featuring female heroines. As adult coloring books have become popular, it is no surprise that there are even whole books with horse images to embellish, showing that there is also a commercial market targeting the grown-ups.

There are those who state that a connection to horses is ancestral; I live in a country (Spain) where the horse culture goes back centuries, and many will claim that "it is in their blood"; and for those peoples where their cultures depend upon and intertwine with equines, that must very much be the case. Author Linda Kohanov considers that there is a mystical and spiritual human-equine connection and explores this in her work and book *The Tao of Equus*. One must also consider the pure aesthetic appeal that horses have: their grace, their speed, their strength – horses are simply beautiful creatures, and we gals know how to admire the beauty in things. Different girls and women will undoubtedly have their own stories and reasons for being crazy about horses, and all I can say to that is how lucky we are!



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

**Didi Arias** is a Level 3 ARIA Certified Instructor and national dressage judge and teacher, who resides in Almeria, Spain.



Most of us are lucky to have the beauty of horses in our lives – such a stress reliever!

# Helping Your Students During This Phase of the Pandemic

by *Laura King, CHt, NLP & Life Coach*

When people ask me if I want the good news first or the less-good news, I always opt for the less-good news first, as I like to end with what I can do to influence the effects of the less-good news. I'm going to do that here, by first providing the current lay of the land regarding the pandemic. If you find it discouraging, just know that the good news—

what you can do to help yourself and your students—follows it!

As we inch closer to herd immunity and enter what has been called Intermediate Pandemic by Yale's Nicholas Christakis — doctor, medical sociologist, and author of *Apollo's Arrow: The Profound and Enduring*

*Impact of Coronavirus on the Way We Live*, I'd like to address the real-life impact of some words and phrases that have become part of our vocabulary since about a year ago.

## **Social Distancing**

As we all learned, this is more like physical distancing. And as we also learned, it can

lead to loneliness and isolation. Anxiety can build, resulting in chronic aches, pains, sleep disturbances, relationship disruption, and all manner of unfortunate and inconvenient outcomes.

## **Pandemic Brain**

Let's talk about all of the sudden changes that occurred in our lives last year, shall we? There's the way we work. There's our ability to travel or simply do what we want to do, where we want to do it, and when. There are the changes in many of our healthy habits (think going to the gym). For many, there's a sudden and large amount of free time for the first time in adult life. Combine all of this with the uncertainty that has been highlighted, and the result has been brain fog, among other cognitive impairments.

## **Pandemic Fatigue**

As the name suggests, this condition is a result of the prolonged stress and anxiety that many are experiencing. Pandemics, we have found, are exhausting!

## **Anticipatory Grief**

I frequently write and talk about this. It's a type of grief that comes with wondering and worrying about who will get Covid, when, and how bad it will be.

## **Distance Learning**

The effects of distance learning on parents and students of all ages has been highlighted here in the US since most schools started shutting down. One year of disrupted routines, learning and socializing for students; and of routines related to household and work for parents, with a much-talked-about disproportionate negative impact on women, in both the workplace and the home.

## **What You Can Do (aka, the Much-Needed Good News!)**

There's a pattern in all of that less-good news, and fortunately it's in your favor because there's a lot you can do to help your

students. The pattern is... impact on the brain. What we now know about the brain tells us that our habits, our words, and our mindset shape what we see, what we experience, and how we learn. Essentially, they shape our brains. And our brains have taken a hit over the past year.

I talk about brain health a lot, and I see what happens when trainers don't consider the brain health of their students. I see it every day in my practice. Trainers and riders come to me with all kinds of issues and complaints, and there's nothing more satisfying than to be able to help them become happier, healthier people. I believe everyone can benefit from hypnosis, I also know that if we all cultivated habits of mind and behavior that science has demonstrated are effective, we'd all experience a lot less maladaptive stress reactivity and a lot less anxiety and illness.

## **Maladaptive Stress Reactivity?**

All that means is that we humans have patterns. When a stressor enters our environment, if we don't have tools and behaviors to enlist to meet them, we'll end up doing... what we always do. And we've all got some patterns of reacting to what we consider stressful situations that really don't work for us. We might even know that they don't work for us. These aren't just patterns in relationships, but they're patterns in the way we train, the way we learn, and the way we compete.

## **Some of Your Options for Working with Pandemic-Related Stressors**

When we're "stressed," we have difficulty thinking things through, behaving rationally, and seeing long-term consequences. Basically, our survival brain is in the driver's seat, working hard to keep us alive, and our thinking brain is perceived by our nervous system as, well, less useful at the moment. This affects your students' ability to optimally hear and integrate your training, and it affects their ability to relate to you, whether or not they are in lock-down. It also

affects their ability to relate, in general, as most people are currently living in a constant state of being gravely disappointed with their current situation. Finally, disruption and uncertainty are most skillfully met with a brain that's ready for them and doesn't see them as a threat to survival. But pandemic brain falls far short of that, I'm afraid. Essentially, fear of the unknown and the stress of the known are at the heart of all of our pandemic-related ills.

Here's my favorite, science-based way to combat pandemic-itis in all of its forms:

## **Mindfulness / Cultivating Present-Moment Awareness**

This is at the top of the list because if you're worried about the future or grieving the past (or the future), you are not in the present moment. The present moment is associated with greater well-being and happiness. Luckily, you don't need a lot of time and you don't need to buy anything to get started helping your students in this way. All you need is the willingness to encourage them to observe their life with the curious friendliness of a beginner who is looking at something for the first time. Feel free to use this script...

*Set yourself up for success by doing the following when you are in a state of alert wakefulness, and in a place where you won't be interrupted. Get a timer of some sort (there's one on your phone, I bet!), and set it for 5 minutes.*

*Close your eyes if that feels comfortable, and if not, softly gaze at a stationary spot. Note that there's no special breath necessary for this.*

*If you feel comfortable focusing on your breath and using it to anchor your attention, do so. If not, you can focus on your feet or even sound. Anything in your experience can be your anchor point as long as it's neutral. When you're first starting out, it's not that helpful to focus on something like pain, a difficult emotion or*

a part of the body. Remember, set yourself up for success!

Once you have settled on an anchor point, bring your attention to your anchor point with an attitude of curiosity. Get to know everything about it! Don't think about it, but instead, notice what there is to be known. If it's your feet, what are they touching? What's the temperature like? Is there any moisture? Is there a sense of gravity or circulation? There's so much to observe, from moment-to-moment in our experience, and for the vast majority of the time, our lives just pass by without us actually noticing much about them!

Research shows that people are happier when they are paying attention to the present moment, making this skill pretty important during a time when many people are so unhappy. In addition, if you make a habit of practicing this every day,

you are actually remaking your brain to be more present-moment focused. Our brains change with our habits!

### The Bonus Use of this Practice

Make sure you tell your students that when they find themselves beginning to "stress out" over anything during the day, they should go to their anchor point, find their stillness, and just breathe in the moment. There are very few situations that require an instant response, but our perceptions can tell us that everything is urgent.

*Bring some mindful awareness to your day, not just in a formal way for those five minutes, but whenever you feel like you are about to react to something in a way that might not serve you. Slow down and listen to your inner wisdom. It's in there, I promise. You just need to learn how to tune your attention so you can hear it.*

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About the author:  
**Laura King** is the Director and Founder of Summit Hypnosis and Wellness and is a Certified Hypnotist, NLP Practitioner, Life Coach, and Sports Performance Coach. Laura has written and published several books and workbooks, including "Power To Win" for equestrians and "Perfect Enough," a guide to help you evaluate your perceptions and experiences around vital areas of your life.

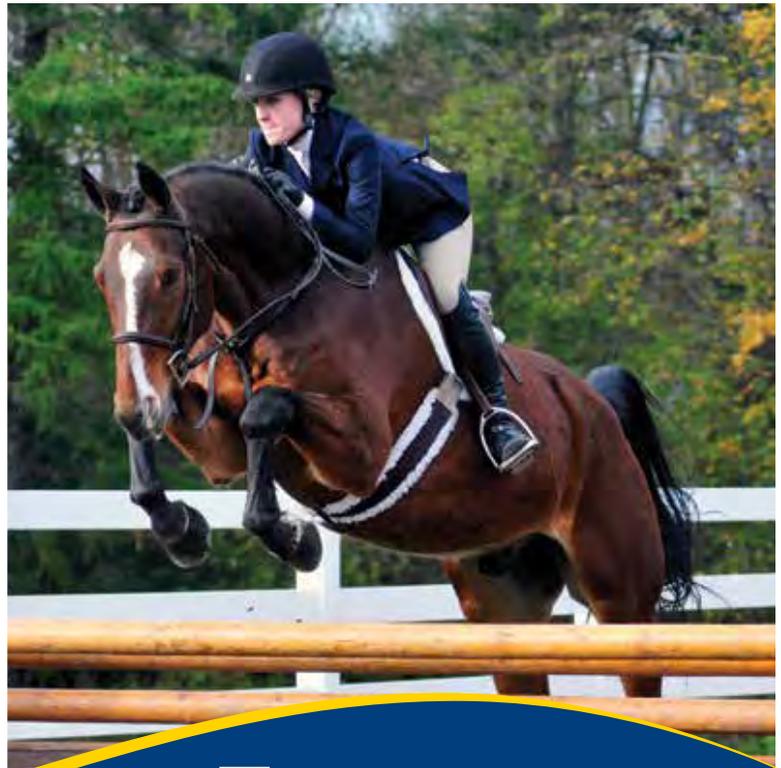
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# Hunger or Habit?

By Lydia Fairchok

Today I:

- Accomplished all of my goals
- Was engaged in my work
- Made healthy food choices
- Avoided excessive screen time
- Got enough sleep
- Exercised
- Didn't overspend
- Cared for myself
- Spent time with my loved ones

If this doesn't sound like your daily check-off, don't worry – it doesn't sound like mine, either. I do better or worse in each category on any given day, with an average balance that doesn't drive me crazy but doesn't always leave me feeling like a rock star, either. You and I each try to check these daily boxes amid the bustle of running a business, caring for animals, loving a family, and (maybe) having a little time for ourselves. Some days it works out; some days it doesn't.

As long as the balance tends towards more good days than bad, you probably have

things under control. No one has good days all the time. Sometimes, though, the scales get tipped too far the other direction and you notice that you haven't had anything but take-out in weeks; your down time between appointments is sucked up by mindless scrolling on your smartphone; you've been putting off work or exercise you would normally enjoy or that you wish you could get done; the "add to cart" button on Amazon is awfully easy to click, and you haven't had a meaningful conversation with your spouse or kids in days. With all of these things piling up, it's no wonder you also haven't made much progress with that project horse, gotten around to replacing those old helmets, pricing out new footing for the arena, painting those jumps, updating the business Facebook page, or seriously digging into lesson and show planning for the approaching season. An avalanche of small setbacks like these depletes our inner resources and places us on a fast track to personal and professional burnout.

We all know that we feel best when we regulate our eating, sleeping, spending, and work/life ratios. We know that we get a boost when we accomplish tasks, make progress, and don't squander our time. So why do we keep choosing behaviors that rob us of our vitality instead? We draw out the best in horses and riders on a daily basis, coaching them through their inner struggles and developing their strengths piece by piece. Shouldn't we engage the same structure and discipline for ourselves? Beating burnout and organizing life is a topic that has filled hundreds, if not thousands, of books. I've learned from quite a few of them, but I also gained valuable lessons from an unusual venue: fasting.

I don't have the scientific skinny on whether or not fasting has positive or negative effects on the human body. There are passionate opinions in both camps. My personal experience suggests that fasting is neither an unheralded panacea nor an automatic eating disorder in disguise (though the potential for misuse is certainly high). Several years ago, some friends and I decided to go all-in with an intermittent fasting challenge that was popular at the time. We fasted an average of twenty-four hours between meals, but sometimes went up to three or more days without eating. I wouldn't repeat the experiment and I certainly cannot claim that such deprivation was good for my body; however, I do know it was an excellent exercise for my mind.

You see, my struggle with food revolved around the belief that I was "always hungry". If I was a little tired at work, I munched a granola bar. If I finished mowing the lawn, I felt that I earned some chips and sour cream for all that effort. When lunchtime came, I ate again just because it was lunchtime. If I had a sweet tooth after lunch (and after dinner), I had a bowl of ice cream—maybe two. Why not also have a cup of cocoa while winding down before bed? I felt "hungry" all of these times.

Extended fasting was the first time in my life that I truly had to exert self-will over stomach-will. I found a whole new definition for hunger that had never before touched my middle-class American existence. Fortunately, the novelty of the fad soon wore off and my comrades and I moved on to healthier ways to push our limits. As I returned to normal eating practices, though, a surprising truth emerged: Most of the times that I reached for food, the sensation I was feeling wasn't hunger. But if I wasn't hungry, then what was I?

- Tired
- Lonely
- Stressed
- Irritated
- Bored
- Following a routine
- Happy
- Relaxed
- Thoughtful
- Feeling accomplished

A variety of motivations—some stemming from positive emotions and some from negative ones—were actually linked to my automatic urge to eat. Isolating what hungry felt like allowed me to identify the real solutions and outlets for these experiences, because now I could understand that they were not stemming from a nutritional need to eat. I learned that my brain and body ask dozens of different questions, and I no longer had to answer them all with food. I became more fulfilled, rested, and engaged with work and family when I met my actual needs instead of using food as a Band-Aid and then beating myself up later for lack of self-control.

Eating isn't the only impulse that becomes an unhelpful response to displaced issues. High-profile vices like gambling and excessive drinking quickly come to mind when we think of damaging coping mechanisms, but how often do you mindlessly scroll on your smartphone when you are overwhelmed by a problem? Is it easier to turn on the tele-

“  
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vices isn't enough.  
Tiny compromises  
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burnout.

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vision or flip through emails/text messages than to engage with your family members? Do you find yourself justifying an unwise purchase by telling yourself you “earned it” for big efforts applied elsewhere? In your professional life, perhaps you find yourself putting off the “boring” tasks (paperwork, anyone?) in favor of the things you enjoy doing. Perhaps you have been planning to ride “tomorrow” for a week, but not getting anywhere with those other projects, either. Perhaps it's easier to strap a quick-fix gadget on a horse or tell a struggling student “good enough” than to put in the time to retrain an issue or have a difficult conversation with a client.

Avoiding the “big” vices isn't enough. Tiny compromises chip away at our energy, efficiency, and emotional availability. At best, we operate in a state of frustrated half-emptiness until we catch a break; at worst, we slide all the way into burnout.

It doesn't have to be this way. You certainly don't need to go to the extreme of

skipping meals for days on end (nor would I recommend it), but the concept of fasting extends to a variety of situations. The basic premise of fasting is self-control and delayed gratification. Silence your phone notifications and make an agreement with yourself that you will not check it outside of designated times. Log out of any apps, social media or other sites that steal your time. Selectively refrain from a tempting food group, such as processed sweets. Cut out snacking and place pick-up orders for your groceries so you don't end up buying junk food that wasn't on your list. Impinge your ability to make unplanned purchases online by removing your payment information from accounts you frequent, and decide in advance that you will wait at least twenty-four hours or consult an accountability partner before buying anything that is not an immediate need. Train yourself like a horse—make the right thing easy and the wrong thing hard!

Every time you abstain from habitual urges, you have the opportunity to examine yourself for an underlying cause. Identification of problems for what they really are develops your power to apply more appropriate solutions. If you are overtired, you need more sleep—not more food. If you are wrestling with an interpersonal conflict, you need to seek a resolution—not scroll social media. If you are overwhelmed by farm projects piling up, you need to create and follow a plan of action—not buy another pair of great breeches just because they were on sale. When you are legitimately hungry, tired, due for appropriate down time, in need of using your phone for communication, have a properly budgeted purchase to make, etc., act without guilt. Otherwise, persisting with the wrong solution to the problem will only leave you more frustrated than before, with your original quandary still intact plus the fallout from your coping mechanism. Getting to the root of an issue is almost always tougher than choosing a placating behavior, but it's worth it.

As trainers of horses and riders, we have a responsibility to manage our own resources in such a way that we not only bring our best selves to the arena, but we also lead by example. No one expects us to be perfect, and we will certainly have days where unforeseen circumstances get between us and success. Fortunately, the point isn't to be a superhuman who never fails; the point is that the self-discipline gained from addressing issues at their core—not just caving to superficial compulsion—results in a life that is hallmarked by energy, accomplishment, and availability to those around us. We teach better, train better, love better, and live better as we stay productive, help others, make an impact, and remain free from the mire of burnout. It starts with asking yourself the question—is this hunger, or is it a habit?

.....  
About the author:

**Lydia Fairchok** is certified in Recreational Riding Level 1, and lives and teaches with her three horses in Central Indiana. Lydia segued from a full time instruction career to the field of public safety in 2014 and continues to teach a small number of students while working as a police officer and 9-1-1 dispatcher.



Lydia and Orion. Photo by Hope Anne Photography



Photo credit: Michael Foote

Left to right, Sheridan Police Department Chief Robert Shock, Lydia Fairchok, and Hamilton County Prosecuting Attorney Lee Buckingham

Each year, the Hamilton County, Indiana Prosecuting Attorney's Office recognizes a road officer (general patrol) and a detective for distinguished service. Lydia Fairchok was recently honored to receive the **Road Officer of the Year** for 2020.

This is the first time Road Officer of the Year has gone to a female officer, and the first time it has been given to an officer from a small municipality. Lydia says: "There are eight police agencies in our county, so there are several hundred officers from which to choose. I am truly humbled by the recognition and blessed to partake of the experiences of a law enforcement officer."

Below is a section from the press release:

## Prosecutor Recognizes Hamilton County's Officers of the Year for 2020

Each year, Prosecuting Attorney D. Lee Buckingham II recognizes two officers in honor of each Hamilton County officer's distinguished service to the community and the pursuit of justice. One investigator (usually holding an assignment as a detective) and one road officer are selected from the nominations garnered from within the Prosecuting Attorney's Office.

At a ceremony held on February 3rd, 2021, in the Commissioner's Courtroom at the Hamilton County Judicial Center in Noblesville, Indiana, Prosecuting Attorney Buckingham said: "In 2020 the job of being a law enforcement officer became more difficult, not just because of the pandemic, but more significantly because of the bad acts of a very small percentage of members of the law enforcement community within our country.

These bad acts or bad actors, and their questionable if not outright deplorable examples of misconduct, make the jobs of all honest, hardworking law enforcement officers with integrity, more difficult." He further bemused, "More and more I ponder the drive and fortitude it takes to enter such a difficult and highly scrutinized profession."

Prosecutor Buckingham then stated, "Fortunately, we continue to be blessed here in Hamilton County; we continue to have a large contingency of very fine law enforcement officers. Each year I talk about how it is never easy to select the recipients of this award, not because of dearth of candidates, but rather because of the difficulty in selecting just one recipient in each category from the many viable candidates within the county."

Prosecutor Buckingham first honored Officer Lydia R. Fairchok of the Sheridan Police Department as Road Officer of the Year for 2020. Starting as a reserve officer with the Sheridan Police Department in 2017, Officer Fairchok later became the first full-time female officer to serve on the department. Officer Fairchok is no stranger to accolades, having finished at the very top of her class at the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy in 2018. Prosecutor Buckingham said that the future is bright for "someone with her passion for her job and the initiative she takes on her cases."



# *The Pot Roast Principle and Your Business – Questioning The Way You’ve Always Done It*

*By Doug Emerson*

**Rules and procedures are the framework for all businesses.** They streamline work flow and help avoid confusion and disruption. Over time, the way things should be done change because of technology advances, turnover of staff and refocus of business goals.

Sometimes it makes good business sense to question the habits and day to day procedures in your business. Here is an old story you may have heard previously. It’s an excellent example of how people don’t question the “why” of how they do things.

One day a young girl noticed that her mom was cutting off the ends of a pot roast before putting it in the oven to cook for dinner. She had seen her mother do this many times before. When asked why, her mom answered “I don’t know, it’s what my mother always did. Why don’t you ask your Grandma?”

The young girl questioned her grandmother who replied, “I don’t know. That’s just the way my mom always cooked it. Why don’t you ask her?”

Seeking the answer to the mystery, she called her great-grandmother, who was living in a nursing home. Great-Grandma explained, “When I was first married we had a very small roasting pan and the pot roast didn’t fit in it unless I cut the ends off.”

Generations of this family had done the same thing without questioning the **why**.

Complacency overcomes questioning because “**that’s the way I have always done it.**”

The most efficient businesses use systems to make the day run productively. These systems are dynamic and challenge the **why** of all the steps taken at work. The steps become a choreographed work dance.

You are wondering what a work dance has to do with running a profitable horse business?

“

If you are mired in the inefficiency of “doing everything”, your revenue is as limited as a restaurant owner who serves as host, waiter, bartender, chef and dishwasher.

”

Everything of course. If you are operating as an instructor, trainer or horse salesperson, your efficient use of time is supported by a trained support team.

**As an instructor**, your clients pay you for your time in the ring, instructing. Tacking up, warming up and cooling out are all parts of the lesson, but those parts may be best handled by a staff member of your trained support team.

**As a horse trainer**, the same parts apply to the process. The work you do with the horse on the ground or mounted is the expert work; haltering the horse, grooming, saddling or harnessing, cooling and blanketing is all work that is best done by your team members.

**As a seller of horses**, your best salesmanship skills are put in use as you get to know your customer, his or her likes, dislikes and goals. If a prospect is looking at several horses, your support team will groom, tack and even ride and demonstrate the horse for sale. The efficiency of your support team will create a pleasant and educational experience for the prospect who will appreciate your professionalism and your respect for others’ time.

If you are already using staff to keep your “work dance” flowing, congratulations. If you need to create a better system for work flow, start the process. Don’t ignore the input of your staff as you improve your systems; encourage their participation in the process. The more they feel they “own” the system, the better your results will be.

Your systems may include these physical tasks:

- Stall cleaning and manure management
- Watering
- Feeding
- Turnouts
- Cleaning tack
- Equipment and building maintenance

Your systems may include these non-physical tasks:

- Customer relations
- Prospect relations
- Payment handling
- Lesson scheduling
- Monitoring health and safety of humans and horses

If you’re growing your solo business, consider getting part time help for your busy times. As an example, peak lesson periods during weekdays or weekends that run “on schedule” will generate the extra revenue to pay the help. If you are mired in the inefficiency of “doing everything”, your revenue is as limited as a restaurant owner who serves as host, waiter, bartender, chef and dishwasher.

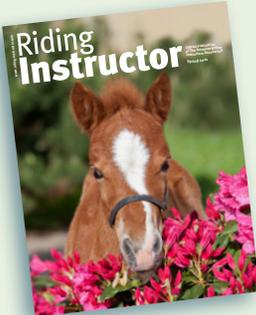
If you discover systems where your roasting pan is too small, fix it! Make your own systems to improve your work dance; you’ll add to your business’s bottom line and have more fun doing it.

.....  
About the author:

**Doug Emerson**, writes, speaks and consults about running a profitable horse business. His favorite method of helping professional horsemen is through one day workshops focusing on the business half of the horse business. You can find out more at [www.ProfitableHorseman.com](http://www.ProfitableHorseman.com)



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# The Qualified Joint Venture Option

By Carol Gordon, CPA

It's not unusual at many lesson and boarding barns that the revenue from the farm represents the primary source of income for both members of a married couple. In order to receive credit for their income for purposes of calculating future Social Security benefits, many couples have resorted to changing their form of taxable entity from sole proprietorship to a partnership or S corporation. Making this change usually results in significant legal expenses upon inception, as well as additional fees for preparation of more complicated partnership or S corporation returns each year. However, there is another less expensive and less complicated option: **the qualified joint venture**.

An unincorporated business that is jointly owned by a married couple may elect to be treated as a qualified joint venture. In order to make this election:

1. The couple must file a joint tax return.
2. Each spouse must "materially" participate in the business.
3. The business may not be owned in the name of a "state law entity" - an LLC or LLP.

Spouses electing qualified joint venture status are treated as sole proprietors for Federal tax purposes. On their tax return, each spouse must report their share of all of the business income and deductions, and **each will receive credit for purposes of Social Security benefits calculation**. The division of income and deductions between the couple should be based on each spouse's interest in the business – generally calculated based on time and/or funds invested in the business. Each spouse would include in their jointly filed Form 1040 a separate Schedule C or Schedule F, with their share of income and expense as well as a separate Schedule SE to report self-employment tax.

In most cases, this division of income does not increase the amount of tax due.

Generally, spouses do not need to obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) in order to file as a Qualified Joint Venture – though I always recommend obtaining a separate EIN, rather than using your Social Security number, if you need to provide this information to vendors or customers.

Why is this important to know? If you and your spouse are planning to spend a considerable percentage of your working life on the farm, you need to ensure that each spouse is accumulating wages that are included in calculating future Social Security benefits. You may be decades away from re-

tirement, but you need to plan now for the possibility that there may be only a surviving spouse running the business later – and you want to maximize the Social Security benefits that would be received at that time.

Before making this election, you should discuss this option with your tax advisor.



About the author:

**Carol Gordon** is a CPA with an MBA from Boston College and the owner of Carol Gordon, CPA, which provides consulting services to equine-based businesses. You can contact her at [cgordoncpa@gmail.com](mailto:cgordoncpa@gmail.com). If you

have any questions that you'd like covered here, please email her with your suggestions.



... in which Cameo Miller stirs her thoughts and ideas to see what rises to the top.



# KEEP ON KEEPING ON

By Cameo Miller

Illustration by Bethany Caskey

This past year has been horrendous for most of us, and it's not over yet. There is light at the end of the tunnel. We can see it even if it seems quite a way off yet. But we need to get to the end and out into the light before we can really relax. It's hard to keep on keeping on, to keep struggling, but it's what we do all the time—just usually with things we like better and have chosen to struggle with. So this time I will send along some thoughts to help us get to that

light. First of all, this is NOT the time to quit trying just when we are so close. I hear people saying that they just want things to go back to the way they were before, that they are going to start doing what they did before because they're tired of all of this. If we revert to things that will likely *increase* problems, then we have just *added* to our burden. You would never do this with your students or with horses in training—"we're making progress so I'm going back to doing what caused the problem or made it worse in the first place".

So what can you do instead? Perhaps look back on the last year and find things you are grateful for. For one thing—you survived it or you wouldn't be reading this. Did you reconnect with some people you had lost contact with, due to a hectic schedule before covid? Were you able to do more things you enjoy because of isolation needs? Things you didn't have time to do before while you were taking care of all the things in your normal routine. What did you learn over these many months that you can take with you into the future to make life better for you? What did you find that kept you going so far? Don't forget to keep these things in your life—now and as you come out of the tunnel in the future. Change is hard, especially change that is forced upon us, that we didn't initiate, so give yourself credit for whatever positives you have found you developed over the past year.

This article comes out around April—just after the equinox (Spring in north and Fall in south). The equinox is a time of balance, a time of change from one extreme to the other. I think we need the balance in our lives right now. So think about what is out of balance, what is off kilter in your life, and then think of ways you could rebalance it. What things bring you peace in your heart and soul? What things bring you joy? This is the in-between time—going away from all the difficulties of the past year,

but not yet in whatever frenzy might ensue as everyone tries to reestablish their lives after the shut-down ends. This is a good time to confirm or begin practices in your own life which bring you that peace and joy before you have to deal with whatever comes next. These in-between seasons usually create strong urges in us to prepare for what is coming. In the spring we feel the need to become more mobile, get outside more (for fun, not just to do barn chores); to start new endeavors. In the fall

“

*Look back on the last year and find things you are grateful for.*

*For one thing  
— you survived it  
or you wouldn't be  
reading this*

”

we want to gather things in so that there is enough for hard times to come, to make sure everything is in good repair, to wrap up old projects and tuck away things we will not need for awhile. I think all of these drives are important as we transition from the past difficulties into whatever may be coming. We can use natural seasonal urges to help bring the balance to our lives that is needed as we transition from very difficult times to what awaits us as “the new normal” unfolds. When our lives have been

tossed around and disrupted so badly, we need to reestablish balance before we can move on, and we can use already-occurring energy to help with that.

Amanda Gorman said in her inauguration ceremony poem: "Victory won't be in the blade, but in the bridges we've made." Now is the time to build and strengthen whatever bridges we choose for our own lives. The bridges that will take us to whatever future we create now as we head towards that light shining up ahead. Bridges to our personal and professional futures. Now is not the time to leave the bridges partly built, to go back the way we came, or to

jump off them. She ended her poem with "For there is always light if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it". Now is not the time to focus on the darkness of the tunnel we are in, to be discouraged by all the struggles yet occurring, but to focus on what will help us get to the light at the end. Now is not the time to get bogged down in despair, but to look for and find the positive that is already there—that you have already created. My prayer for all of us is that we use the balancing energy that the seasons provide us, that we build the bridges to where we want to go, and that we are brave enough to keep going so that we may cross

them into the coming light.

**Tip:** Thyme, oregano, and sage are all anti-viral herbs. If you have the type of mask that has a pocket or opening at the bottom, slip a few sprigs of the herb of your choice into it to both help protect against the virus, and to create a lovely scent to breathe in.

About the author:

**Cameo Miller** is a Masters-level clinical psychologist and a Level IV ARIA Certified Instructor based in Michigan. She is a member of the ARIA Evaluation Panel and an ARIA National Test Center Administrator.

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- Reining
- Riding to Hounds
- Saddle Seat
- Show Jumping
- Side-Saddle
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### Select Test Center date

Date

Location

Please see list opposite for all available dates and locations.

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- 1 Individual testing at your convenience may be arranged at our Bonita Springs, Florida office, located 25 minutes south of Ft. Myers airport (RSW).
- 2 Testing at your location may be arranged for six or more instructors.

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