

The Natural Order of Things

By Linda Parelli

'Warm up' is what you do to prepare your horse to learn. It's about getting your horse in the right mental, emotional and physical state.

How do you know your horse is ready to learn? When he is calm, connected and responsive. Only then should you start teaching him to be supple in whatever maneuvers you want him to be able to do, and make sure he knows when he does the right thing. And, as you train, you want to make sure your horse stays calm, connected and responsive. When he's not, you need to fix it because if you ignore it and push through, not only is the quality of your training at stake, your relationship with your horse is too.

Think of it this way... if every time you went dancing you felt stressed, anxious, and picked on, it wouldn't be long before you wished you were somewhere else. And pretty soon you'd not answer the phone or the door, become unresponsive and hard to catch!

As you saw in the introduction for Touchstone 4 this month, there is specific order for the CCRSS formula that shows you the best way to analyze your horse, know what to fix and how to progress. This keeps it simple and also is more effective than just picking one and starting there. For example, let's say you want your horse to be more supple (flexible), it's going to be hard to achieve and sustain if he is not calm, connected, and responsive first.

Calm-Connected-Responsive – Achieving the Right Frame of Mind

by Linda Parelli

Keeping these three words in mind is a great way to remind yourself what you need to do when warming your horse up or playing with him. It's so easy to play the Seven Games or do Parelli Patterns but get in a bit of a rut by doing what you usually do, and not really getting your horse in the right frame of mind.

Ask yourself this: *"What is my goal when I'm warming up?"*

Most of us don't really know what it is we're shooting for, so in this article we're going to show you how to be focused on a particular outcome that is more mental and emotional than physical.

What's the goal?

There are three goals that Pat and I look for when warming up our horses: We need them to be calm, connected, and responsive throughout the session.

CALM: A horse cannot learn when he is not calm. Tension is not only the enemy of successful training, but it can be dangerous as well. The difference between tension and a horse blowing up is just a matter of seconds, so learning how to first get your horse calm is essential to your safety and success.

CONNECTED: Having your horse more focused on you than anything else is an important goal. People can get so frustrated when their horses are sticky by the gate, don't want to leave the other horses, or are pulling back towards the barn or spooking at everything. All these issues indicate a horse not being connected to you.

RESPONSIVE: A horse that doesn't want to go, is dull to the aids, or is slow to respond – or, on the other extreme, is over-reactive and impulsive – is frustrating and difficult to make progress with.

When you have your horse calm, connected, and responsive, training is a breeze. Not only do you make great progress, your bond becomes closer and time spent together is more fun for both of you.

Strategies

Different Horsenalties™ have different needs, and when they are not met, it can lead to problems. It's just like communication and understanding breakdowns between people – when you don't know what the other person's needs are, you make unintentional mistakes that are offensive, upsetting, or frustrating in some way.

Right-Brain Extroverts become fearful and impulsive.

Right-Brain Introverts become tense and withdrawn.

Left-Brain Introverts become annoyed and non-responsive.

Left-Brain Extrovert horses become resistant and argumentative.

What's really important to realize is that we are causing these behaviors because we aren't conscious of what the horse really needs. Once we give them what they need, things change quickly and only then can we ask for what we want and expect a willing response.

Knowing your horse's Horsenality will give you major clues as to what approach you need to take – do you need to start with strategies to get them calm, connected, or more responsive first?

The way to connect with extroverts is to get them responsive and calm. Only then will they like us. On the other hand, introverts need connection to become responsive – they have to like us first. Here are some examples.

Left-Brain Extroverts need to be more: RESPONSIVE

“You’re not the boss of me!”

Left-Brain Extroverts are born to argue. If you can use their curiosity to develop responsiveness, rather than demand it, they’ll get calmer and more connected.

The Touch It Pattern is ideal. Keep them guessing, and don’t be too repetitive – you usually get to do it the same way about three times and then you’d better think of something new! Remember this horse is a super-learner. Be provocative and progressive – it keeps sessions mentally stimulating.

Right-Brain Extroverts need to be more: CALM

“I don’t feel safe.”

When you can help the RBE get calm, they get more connected to you. Only then you can work on responsiveness as they will be less reactive.

You need to be a strong, calm, focused leader; rapid disengagements will help you get control as they interrupt the horse’s flight response. In some circumstances, asking the horse to speed up for a lap and ‘cruise for three’ until he volunteers to slow down or stand next to you is very effective.

Left-Brain Introverts need to be more: CONNECTED

“What’s in it for me?”

When you give the Left-Brain Introvert what he likes (cookies, rest, scratches), he’ll get more connected to you and then more responsive to your ideas. LBIs are already calm, so that’s not usually the issue!

Give him a treat and rub him – don’t ask him to do anything. Once he’s looking to you with a more positive expression, ask him to do something really little and give him more treats and scratches. Build from there by occasionally asking for more effort or two or three tasks before treating. One day, you’ll be more interesting than the treat! LBI horses are physically slow (at first) but mentally fast. Learn to be mentally intense but move more slowly at first, and use reverse psychology by doing things like asking him to go slower rather than speed up. This helps keep the connection.

Right-Brain Introverts need to be more: CONNECTED

“I don’t trust you.”

When you can prove to the Right-Brain Introvert that you are not going to rush them and you understand their need for things to be slow, they start to trust you, becoming calmer and then more responsive.

Doing nothing is the best thing when it comes to Right-Brain Introvert horses. Just standing next to them, or sitting, or leaning in a friendly way until they take a deep breath is worth waiting for. As they start to let down their defenses and relax, you can begin to communicate, gently asking for what you want and waiting for them to respond rather than ‘upping your phases.’ Gentle repetition works better than increasing pressure.

The more you understand the behavioral and psychological science of Horsenality, the more successful you will be with horses – any horse – no matter what your goal. It's all about finding personal success in the relationship with your horse by putting the relationship first, which means putting the needs of your horse first. Great horsemen see and know the differences between horses and know that each horse is unique and has specific needs. One of the secrets to success is to give your horse what he or she needs before asking for what you want.

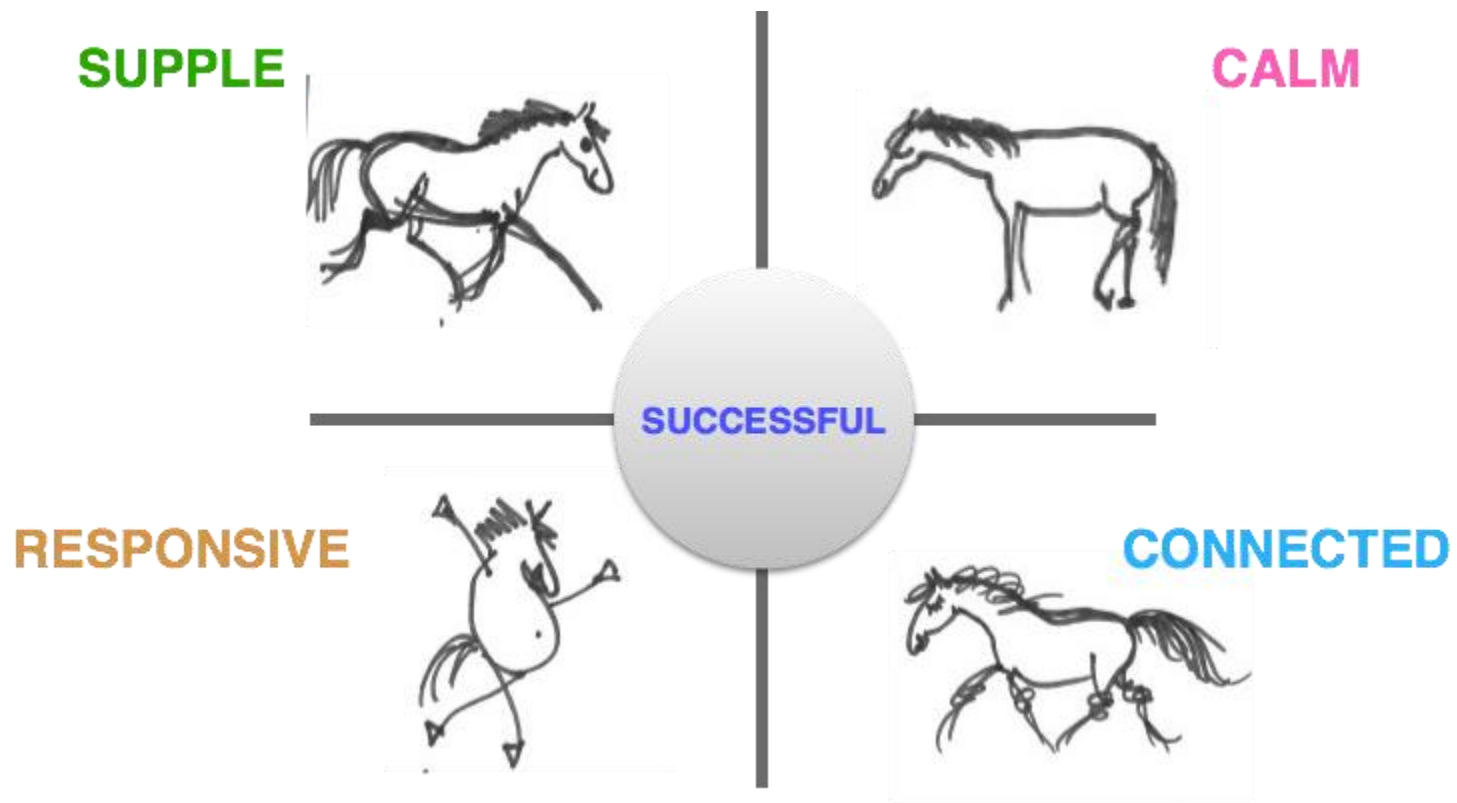
Your warm up is everything. Success is all about preparation.

-
-
- 1-855-

Where Do You Find A Horse Like That?

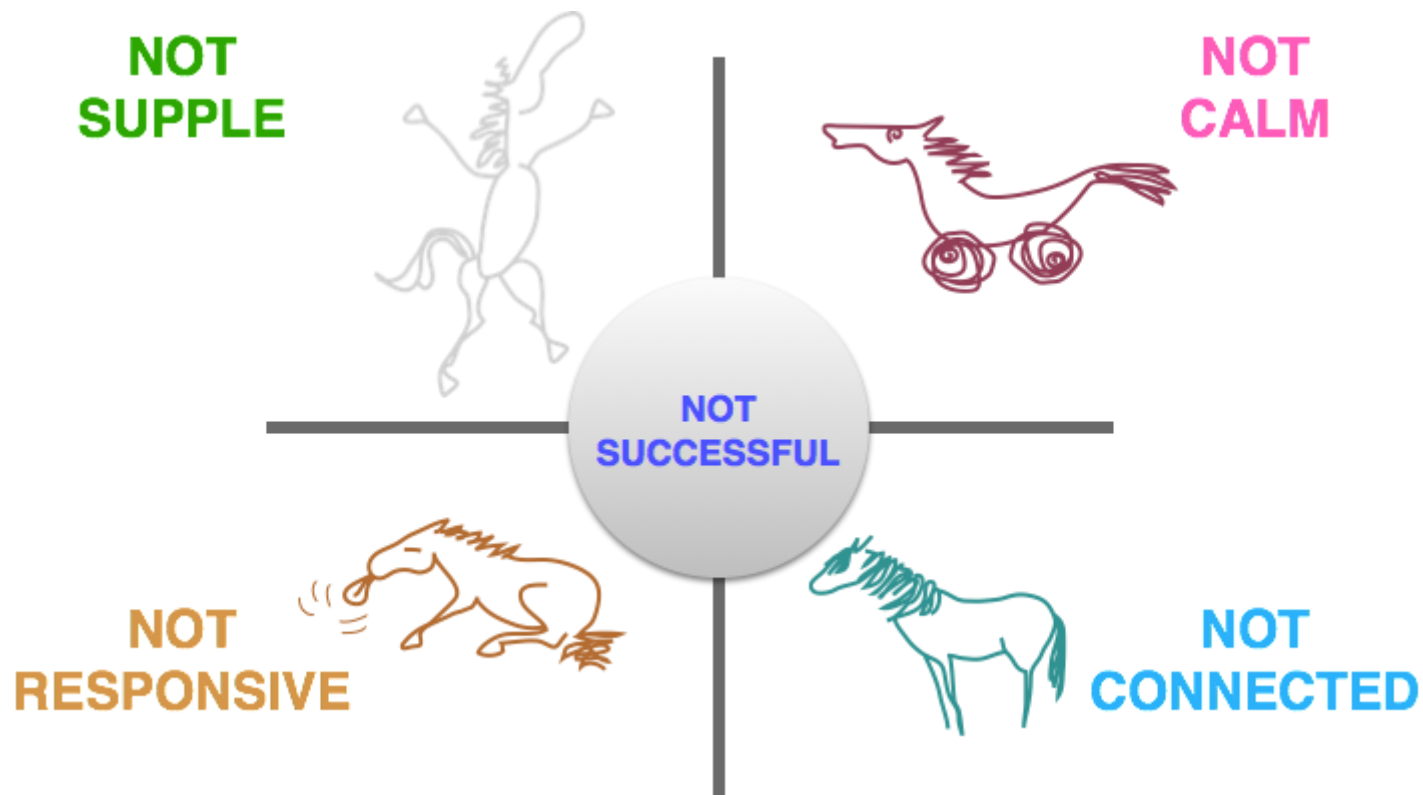
By Linda Parelli

Calm, connected, responsive, supple... sounds like the perfect horse, doesn't it?



Remember: The horse was fine until we showed up! This means if the horse is *not* calm, *not* connected, *not* responsive and *not* supple, either we have caused it or we have not been able to change it. Most people (natural or not) are dealing with

horses that are emotional, disconnected, unresponsive and stiff and bracy to some degree. It's not fun and it makes progress difficult, sometimes its dangerous... but even worse is when we get frustrated by it or numb to it, and the horse gets blamed for the behavior.



Let's examine what each one means.

Calm

A calm horse is also a more confident horse, and we define five areas in which a horse needs to be confident:

1. In itself
2. In you
3. As a learner
4. In the environment
5. In the company of other horses (and riders).

When the horse is not calm it is fearful, tense, anxious and stressed in some way. In order to help a horse be truly calm we have to influence its mind and emotions. You may be able to physically control a horse, but that does not necessarily mean it is calm or in the right frame of mind to learn, train or perform.

A horse that is not calm is easy to spot. It's the more subtle signs of tension and frustration that we need to learn to see because if we don't fix it, problems escalate. And just like people, a tense and frustrated horse is also more likely to have health issues.

What is the difference between tension and explosion? Less than a second!

Connected

When a horse is connected to you, it is paying attention to you and is not interested in being anywhere else. For example, most of us think a herd-bound horse wants to be with the other horses, when the truth is they'd rather not be with you. Ouch! That seems a bit harsh, but it is true. Here's the good news, now that you know it's a relationship thing, you can change that.

Foals are bonded, strongly connected to their mothers. Horses have an instinctive need to bond, even within a herd there are pair-bonds between two horses. The key is to get your horse to connect to you, to develop a bond that is stronger than any lead rope.

Responsive

Most of us can tell when a horse is unresponsive, but can be totally unaware that we might be part of the problem.

Here are some common examples: Your horse drags behind or pulls against the halter when leading. When riding you have to hold your horse back, or constantly nudge and press with your heels (or spurs) to keep your horse going.

The first step is to become aware of it. Test yourself:

- Can you lead your horse with slack in the rope – at walk and trot?
- Can you ride safely on a loose rein – or does your horse get faster and go off course?
- Does your horse maintain gait and speed if you take your heels off him?

A horse can feel a fly land on him.

So, if a fly gets more response than you do... something has to change!

Something else to be aware of is that, consciously or unconsciously, you are always influencing your horse's behavior. That means instead of training your horse to be lazy, dull, disinterested, negative and unresponsive, you can actually teach him or her to be responsive, interested, positive and enthusiastic about it.

Can you imagine a horse that responds to the use of your seat, a simple shift of your weight, turns when your shoulders turn and goes and slows according to how much energy you use? You can do that.

Supple

When we think of a horse being 'supple', we tend to see it as a physical thing, but a brace in the body is also a brace in the mind. A horse that is bracy is defensive or resistant to our ideas, which is why using more force does not work. We have to

convince a horse to trust us and earn his respect, and as a result he can turn loose to us and be more flexible in his attitude and his body.

Using behavior-based training is a very exciting concept because it is much more than just physically shaping a horse. It's about getting to the mind and very soul of your equine partner.

Successful

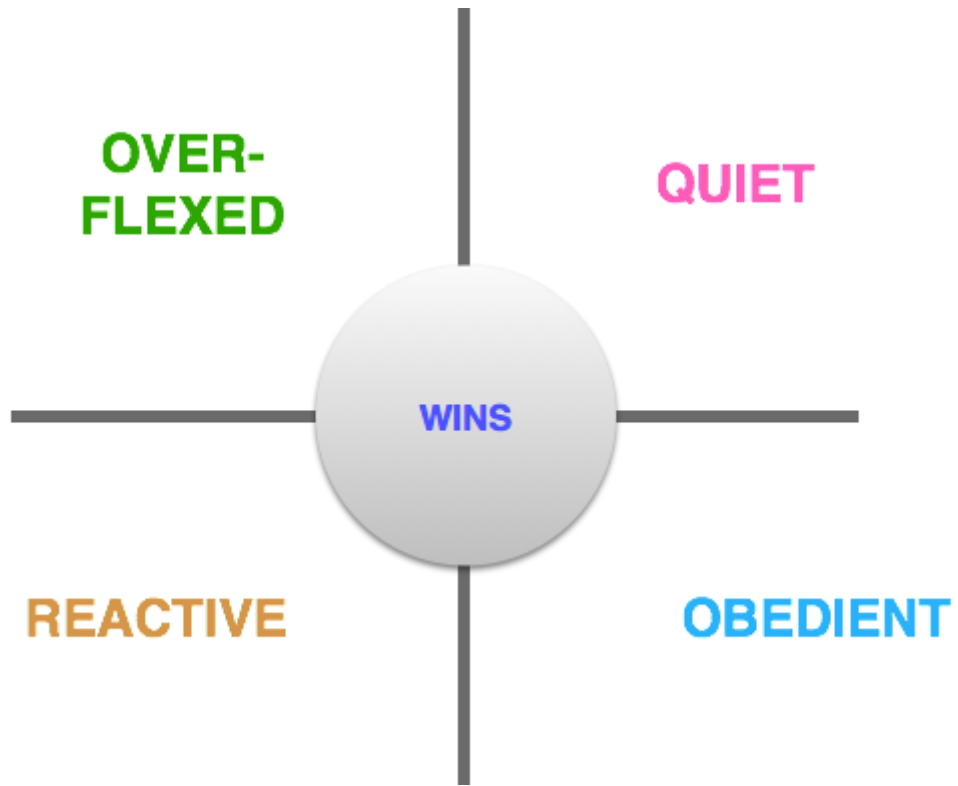
There are two ways to think of "successful" when it comes to horses.

1. You have a successful relationship: safe, fun, productive.
2. Your horse *feels* successful and offers a higher level of effort and enthusiasm.

Body Language: Read it and Reap! *Do You Know What You're Seeing?*

By Linda Parelli

Body language is the universal language. You got it, the horse has got it, even ET has it! In a course I did many years ago with Robert Kiyosaki I learned that words only accounted for about 7% of your communication and body language accounted for over 55%, and for horses it's even more! For most of us body language remains one of our most undeveloped skills because we have the ability to speak. When it comes to success with horses, problems start when we are oblivious to what our horse is trying to communicate, or we misread the signs.... Especially when we mistake this...



...for this!



Read it and reap!

A clearer understanding of body language will be the end of unwelcome surprises and the start of a safer, more mutually rewarding partnership because it will tell you what a horse is thinking.

Let's go through each one in detail:

1. **Quiet is not necessarily Calm**

When a horse is quiet – but not calm – it just doesn't feel right. Develop your perception and learn to read the horse from nose to tail looking for signs of tension and nervousness, or if the horse is hiding, shut down or running away on the inside.

Let's compare the differences between calm and quiet:

	Calm	“Quiet”
Head & Neck	Poll level close to withers, stretched forward and long, slightly arched	Head too high, or too low (close to or below knees), chin up or behind the vertical, neck straight and flat, or short and drawn back towards withers.

Eyes	Soft, blinking, attentive.	Vacant, blank, detached, wide-eyed, staring or closed / half closed, looking 'inward'.
Ears	Soft, attentive, forwards or slightly back – relaxed or pointing one or both ears towards you.	Held to the side or drooping like airplane wings; very tight... or too loose and flopping.
Nostrils	Soft, open, blowing out.	Tight, distended, wrinkled, puffing or snorting.
Mouth	Soft, closed lips – unless licking lips or gently adjusting jaw.	Tight jaw, twitching, chomping, frothing, grinding teeth, tongue displacement, puckered chin, or hanging lower lip (when horse is not dozing).
Body	Supple, elastic, relaxed back.	Tight back muscles, hollow and braced, tense. Too much sweat for level of activity, sweating in unusual or isolated areas such as muzzle, eyes, ears, flanks, top of rump.
Breathing	Rhythmic, appropriate for level of activity, blowing out (release of tension)	Irregular, rapid or very shallow, almost imperceptible, snorting.
Tail	Relaxed, swinging	Tight, J-shape, raised, clamped, crooked to one side.

Movement	Fluid and regular steps/stride, no problem standing still.	Robotic or quick, short, tight steps, reluctant to go forwards. Can't stand still or is 'frozen' in place.
-----------------	--	--

Extroverted signs include: head high, eyes wide, nostrils flared, irregular or rapid breathing, quick and tense movements, fast and short steps, tight tail, raised tail, can't stand still, spooking, bolting, rearing.

Introverted signs include: head up or extremely low (hiding), eyes staring or closed, tight lips, shallow breathing or holding breath, can't go forward, freezes up, bucks / hops.

What to do

You need to have a lot of strategies to help a horse get calm as some will be more effective or appropriate in a specific situation.

- *Retreat and Re-approach, as often as needed.*
- *Disengage the hindquarters (vs pull on or control the front end)*
- *Lateral flexion*
- *"You Better Run"*
- *Match the energy – but don't add to it*
- *Focus – stand on something*
- *Stand still (stay in the box!)*
- *Partial disengagement*
- *Downward transitions with your inside leg*
- *Stop / quit when the horse is calm, not just when he obeys*

A calm horse is mentally, emotionally, and physically balanced whereas a “quiet” one could actually be shut down or running away on the inside or has escaped and ‘gone to his happy place’. The danger is when you push a horse that is in this state because they panic when they wake up. A horse that is frozen with fear is the one that’s likely to rear up and flip over, or explode in every direction.

The safest thing to do is nothing. Wait for the horse to come out of that highly distressed state himself, it will even improve his trust in you. And when you are more experienced you’ll catch it before the horse goes there and do something like wiggle the rein or rope, or tap his cheeks to interrupt the pattern and get him to stay present.

Your ultimate goal is to not cause the horse to get there in the first place. Be more sensitive and appropriate in the way you train and make building the horse’s confidence a priority. The Friendly Game is the key. Use it in every sense of the word and in everything you do with the horse. Lots of retreat and re-approach: Retreat before it’s too late, re-approach when the horse is ready, as often as needed. If you don’t re-approach, you won’t help the horse find that calm, confident place.

2. Obedient is not necessarily Connected

It’s easy to confuse obedience with connection until you get a deeper understanding of what connection really is. Connection is a mental, emotional, and physical bond to the human. Horses need to also connect to the task at hand, versus trying to do something else.

A horse that is not connected is:

- Distracted
- Buddy 'sweet' / Barn 'sweet' (they are really not buddy or barn sour!)
- Looks away from you, head turned away (especially in Yo-Yo and Circling Games)
- Out of harmony
- Leaves or tries to leave
- Chomps on the bit, grinds teeth, tongue lolling, etc.
- Hard to catch

What to do

Some strategies to improve Connection:

- *Touch It Game (ground and riding)*
- *Target Game (when riding)*
- *Drive away more*
- *Bring back more*
- *Make sure you stay mentally connected to your horse and not just the task*
- *Be hard to ignore!*
- *Be clear on what you want and help your horse find the answer (nicely of course!)*
- *Stop when you know the horse understands what you wanted*

When your horse is connected to you and puts effort into the task, it is an amazing feeling. It's as though nothing else exists and the fact that they're drawn to you, want to stay with you, and prefer to be with you than with another horse is a wonderful reward for your efforts in the relationship.

3. Reactive is not truly Responsive

How often have you heard someone say *“My horse is really light and responsive, I barely need to touch him!”* but in reality the horse is actually afraid of the energy, the rider’s leg or hand, the bit, and is reacting in fear of pressure rather than responding appropriately to it. Some horses have been made this way, but it is more likely for Right Brain horses to be skittish, especially extroverts.

A horse that is reacting rather than responding is:

- Tense
- Distrustful
- Escapes from pressure, is afraid of it.
- Is too “light”

Responsiveness is about the horse being in tune and understanding what you want, and has an appropriate response to pressure: not too light, not too heavy, just right.

What to do

- *Have a clear picture of what you want the horse to do and be deliberate about it. The reactive, uncertain horse needs a firmer feel and more certainty from you.*
- *Keep the pressure the same, don’t increase it or decrease it.*
- *Don’t lose contact – keep the contact and keep it the same, whether it’s with your leg, hand or the bit.*
- *Release when the horse stops reacting rather than when it executes the move. Keep your leg or hand on until you get the quality of the response you want... not reacting or fearing... understanding and responding. If you release when the horse is worried, you might get the maneuver but you’ll train in tension rather than calmness.*

The key is to teach your horse that the pressure you’re applying is communication, not force or a threat.

4. Over-Flexed is not Supple!

You don't want a horse that is rubber-necked, nor wiggles all over the place because it's hard to control direction and it becomes powerless. When a horse is too bendy it is physically disconnected from its feet, and mentally disconnected as a partner... more like a mindless puppet or robot.

Some horses are naturally very bendy and need to be straightened; and some people make horses so flexible in the neck, or so 'deep' in the flexion that it can be disturbing to watch. This is not how a horse's body is designed to work, it's unnaturally demanding and it can be damaging because they have to mentally and physically surrender rather than agree.

Here are some examples of over-flexing:

- Too much bend in the neck compared to the body – laterally or vertically.
- The nose or head is “behind the vertical” – over bent, behind the bit.

What to do

- *Use less hands, more seat and leg*
- *Focus on straightness or bend through the whole horse, from nose to tail, not just the neck:*
 - *On a straight line*
 - *On a circle*
- *Don't allow the horse to overdo the lateral bend of their neck. This may take two reins to balance the degree of bend until the horse can follow the feel.*
- *“Supple Rein” exercise.*
- *Soft Touch with the bit (maintain consistent contact no matter where the horse puts its head, don't try to frame it or block it).*
- *Game of Contact (especially if you are specializing in English sports and need your horse to go to the bit and hold a positive contact with you).*

5. Winning does not mean Success for a horse

Just like people, horses need to be successful. In the wild, surviving predation, breeding, eating, drinking and playing spells success. But as our recreational partners, and because we want them to be “happy” and exuberant, the only real way we can achieve this is to want the horse to feel successful.

Signs that a horse doesn't feel successful:

- Poor expression – negative expression or no expression at all.
- Dull, robotic, mindless.
- Lost, confused.
- Stressed, anxious, tense.
- Frustrated, angry.
- No affection for, or dislikes the human.

What to do

Rather than technique, this is more about your horsemanship philosophy and approach as a leader. It needs you to have very clear goals, and the more detail these goals have, the better.

- *Have clear goals – long term, short term, and for each session*
- *Have a clear picture of what it should look like, feel like, move like.*
- *Make sure the horse knows the goal. For example, where to go, what speed, what quality, what shape, what attitude, etc.*
- *Clear direction so your horse doesn't get confused.*
- *Reward often, let the horse know when he's right.*
- *Set it up so the horse can find comfort – either because you release to him or he releases to you (such as in Finesse or riding with contact). Remember that, for a prey animal, comfort is very important.*

- *Treat the horse like a hero, even if he's not!*
- *Lots of Good Boy! Good Girl! Even when they're not.*
- *Be a good leader. Have a plan*
- *Control your emotions. The worst feeling for a horse is when you are frustrated, upset, angry or fearful. In these moments it is best to stop and regroup, maybe try again another day. If you are not focused, clear and joyful about where you are going, and what you are aiming for with your horse, there is no way for them to feel successful. We call this Emotional Fitness.*

A horse cannot feel successful unless it knows the goal and can find comfort when he reaches it. This means YOU have to be clear on what you want the horse to do.

People who are good with horses have very clear goals. They don't approach a horse without having thought about what the outcomes are and how they're going to achieve them, no matter how simple or complex. And hopefully the principles of *how* they go about it don't need to be mentioned here because the Parelli philosophy is all about doing things *for* the horse and not *to* him.

A successful partnership means *both* parties feel successful.