

## Innovating with Nature: Experiential Learning with Horses

Courtesy Jackie Lowe Stevenson – SPIRIT of LEADERSHIP [www.spirit-of-leadership.com](http://www.spirit-of-leadership.com)

Complexity, rapid change and instability that characterize life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century combine to offer the perfect environment for innovating with Nature and Horses. With their guidance, we learn to balance the outer world's vast and unrelenting tidal waves of information (spawned by technology) with the inner world's reflection pool of self-awareness, instinct, intuition and authenticity.

Engaging in Nature with Horses in focused, reflective activity challenges us to learn **HOW** to think rather than **WHAT** to think. The work is not about horsemanship or riding, but about relationship and partnership to strengthen and expand capacity to identify and meet goals.

Horse-guided learning offers a wide variety of experiences, depending on client's desired outcomes. Learning activities are directly relevant to **actual, "real time" issues, circumstances, situations.** Horses enable us to

- ⇒ clarify vision
- ⇒ embody commitment
- ⇒ expand natural ability to design a desired future.

### Why Horses?

- ▲ Horses are credited for the spread of civilization. For hundreds of generations they have carried us on their backs, taking us farther and faster than we could travel alone. Today, in unique partnership with humans, Horses guide us to rediscover our **natural, innate gifts** to design innovative strategies for sustainable --indeed extraordinary-- existence.
- ▲ Like humans, Horses are social animals with a strong instinct to bond and herd together. As creatures in Nature who have thrived for 55 million years, they are exceptional teachers of **optimal communication, leadership, team work, group dynamics, adaptability**, in pursuit of survival, success, and well-being.
- ▲ Daily life for humans is often chaotic, frustrating and hostile. In the presence of our Horse Partners we learn to summon the qualities of **calm, strength, focus, respect and trust** to maintain a safe and mutually-beneficial working relationship.
- ▲ Activities with Horses provide inspiring metaphors for dealing with challenges, enabling us to explore and **move beyond limitations into expanded opportunities for choice.**
- ▲ As animals of prey, Horses have powerful sensing ability --a fine-tuned safety/survival response-- that allows them to register incongruence in the present moment. They meet **unpredictable challenges with moment-to-moment awareness and feedback** that allows them to **flexibly adapt** to the changing environment.
- ▲ Nature's gifts of magnificent beauty and awesome power enable Horses to support us in recognizing, with humility, **our place in the chaos and complexity of larger systems**, and in tapping, with confidence, our **capacity to effect positive change.**
- ▲ Often what challenges humans and organizations is beyond words and defies rational thought. Horses provide us access to **sensation and intuition independent of, and in addition to rational process.**