

## **How can we move from one behavior to another?**

Horses are a great example for learning about old and new behaviors. Common wisdom is that horses never forget something they have learned - whether it is a good behavior or a bad one - they just do not forget. This is like the elephant thing.

This trait makes training a horse with bad habits very difficult. Every time a horse encounters a cue that triggers the old behavior it will automatically attempt to execute it. They don't even think about, just do it. Well, you would think that it would be a lost cause to ever get a horse to change its behavior. Fortunately reality is a little different. If a horse has a good temperament it is possible to bring about new behaviors by overlaying new patterns. This takes time and patience and the use of new cues. It also takes care to minimize the old cues while this training is underway.

Here is an example from a thoroughbred mare I had. She was an enormous horse, big by any standards in terms of height and muscle (16.2 hands and around 1500 pounds with no fat). She had a nice registered name but I called her Thunder because it really represented her. I bought Thunder when she was five years old. When she was two she had been sent to a race track for training. In a manner far too typical in that industry she was abused. Her way of dealing with the abuse was to become a runaway. She was big and powerful enough that no rider could control her once she took off. She was a runaway freight train that did not stop.

I did not know this when I bought her and did not find out until riding with one of my trainers in an open field. We were "testing" new acquisitions. The ride was fairly comfortable until we thought it was safe to let the horses run. Well, the mare I was riding was controllable but it was some time before Thunder and her rider returned. After his adrenalin levels lowered, my trainer decided that he was not interested in working with Thunder again, claiming that she was ruined. I really liked that horse and thought that there was a way to solve the problem.

With some nervousness I began riding her in an arena at a walk only. You could feel the power and tension in her. My own adrenalin levels rise just thinking about her and the feel of that energy. After a week or so of daily short walks I felt that we were ready to try the open fields again. As soon as we were in the open she bunched up to bolt again. Rather than panic (yeah, right!) I turned her into a tight circle. This broke her attention and we started to walk again. Every few feet I would have to repeat the turn. Finally after about 20 minutes we both returned home with relief that nothing bad had happened. This reinforced my thoughts that she was really a good horse with some really bad conditioned responses. It felt like she was full of fear. This made me look for other symptoms of her stress and tension.

A couple of days later, when she was walking well enough for me to relax enough to look at her I noted that whenever she began to stress out a huge knot would form on the right side of her neck. It would get as big as a softball, then she would explode. This was pretty interesting, a physical symptom of an emotional trigger (refer to [Your Can Heal Your Life](#)). I experimented a little now. Whenever I saw the knot building I would massage it as we went along. This helped her a lot and I needed fewer times when I had to put her into the sharp turn.

We developed trust with each other. I did not hurt her and she worked at not running away. Over a period of three months we had reached the point where she could run then come back down at my command. It was not automatic and not easy but we could do this. What was really interesting was that she reached a point in which she would try to turn herself into a circle if she was starting to bolt.

In other words, she really never wanted to be a runaway. Until we had developed new cues, and trust, she did not have any way to overcome her old patterns of behavior and escape from fear or emotional pain.

How is this example relevant to us?

After all, aren't we supposed to be intelligent, introspective and self willing life forms? It is relevant in that we are programed to a certain extent, and the effect of that programing is directly related to the amount in which we are not aware of it and the level of it in emotional terms.

What does this mean?

We receive and build behavioral and moral thought patterns when we are young. How we develop into adults depends upon conditioning and experiences. If we are lucky these experiences build upon our core values and beliefs. If we are normal, they conflict or pervert them and we develop our own version of the runaway reaction.

As long as we do not encounter cues that trigger the runaway, we can ignore the problem (pain). However, as life tends to throw us into the fray; the more intense the pain, the more we encounter the cues (refer to [The Anatomy of the Spirit](#) for more on this topic). When the pain of what we know finally becomes too much, we look for ways to do something different; different cues or triggers. Unfortunately we seldom do much more than Thunder could. That is, develop some different responses but never deal with the cause.

Let us take a look at some of the things that most of us try to overlay new behaviors.

### Positive affirmations:

Positive affirmations have become pretty popular these days.

We chant mantras and slogans, meditate and recite affirmation slogans. While there is nothing wrong about these techniques, they have a pretty poor “stick rate” with most people. It seems that the harder one chants, the more elusive the desired change. Why is that? What might be causing so much resistance to allowing a positive alteration in behavior or circumstance?

One impediment is guilt.

We are a judgmental bunch of people, with "Christian" belief patterns putting a "you are damned and going to hell" spin on mistakes. When we decide to stop one behavior in favor of another we naturally put that negative value on the old one saying it was "bad" and that is why we have to stop doing it.

Perceived loss of investment:

The other negative judgement that we use to inhibit new behaviors is the perceived “loss” of the years of investment in the old behavior.

This damnation makes it harder to get past the old behavior or thought.

How would you know if you were affected by these issues?

The first clue should be words or phrases that you use when discussing the no longer desired behavior(s). Examples are:

“How could I have been so stupid?”

“I can’t believe I did that.”

“S/he wasn’t really a bad person. I must have done things to make him/her hurt me.”

“It’s my fault that those things happened.”

“I didn’t know what I was doing.”

“What does this say about all of those years I spent doing...?”

Another clue comes from the religion under which you were raised. If it was Christian based the odds are pretty good that you have these issues. The more extreme the religion in terms of control and thought patterns, the more deeply embedded the problems.

The third clue is whether or not reading this makes you uncomfortable. If it does, the odds are pretty good that you are responding to a trigger about some fear or sub conscious resistance to change.

How insidious is this programming?

A good friend of mine, raised Catholic now non denominational, continues to stay firmly routed in old, destructive behaviors with her son (now in his thirties) because of guilt she has concerning his upbringing. It is amazing to watch them. Neither are happy with the relationship yet both of them continue to perpetrate the dance of DIS ease and unhealthy patterns. Her anguish and his anger are exceeded only by the vortex of nervous energy they generate when together.

### Hypnosis:

Hypnosis is an interesting tool. It can be used to help us see beyond our logical selves if the spirit in us is willing. It can be used as a way to provide internal positive re-enforcement for desired behavioral changes. It can help to give us a window into our ourselves, an aid to find core values and beliefs.

The one draw back on hypnosis is that it can be a crutch much like the turning in a circle trick used for mare Thunder. Hypnosis does not alter or change the underlying issues or problems. It buries the issues, sets up alternative behaviors and provides a means for going along.

To be truly healthy, to become a more profound human being, it is important to step away from the crutch and stand alone. The only way that can happen is to find a way to find your core values and beliefs, and to release yourself from personal judgement. Not an easy task under any conditions.

That does not mean that tools like hypnosis are not useful. Sometimes the only way we can get enough peace to even examine ourselves is to adopt temporary methods such as hypnosis, change of religion, or use of certain drugs such as anti-depressants.

The point that is being made here is that once some stability has been achieved you must take advantage of that opportunity to deal with root causes. Simply sighing with relief because you have dealt with some symptoms only postpones the day of reckoning. My experience suggest that the longer the delay, the more impact the final reckoning has.

The fact that you are investing time in this essay suggests that whatever methods you have been using to address symptoms has not been successful addressing root causes. Although uncomfortable and difficult, going down the path of perceived risk is usually the most rewarding and ultimately, the most peaceful.

### Change of religion:

Sometimes we change religions. Motivations vary. Sometimes it is to escape the judgements of the old religion, sometimes it is to live by a different set of rules, sometimes it is to adapt to what a partner observes, and in more instances than not - to try and give control of ourselves to another person or entity.

This happens most often in the case of men and women who feel that what they are doing is not working, but do not have the emotional or other means to change by themselves. They give up control to another person or higher authority. From personal observation it seems that in these cases there is no change in the basic personality or issues. All that happens is a change of apparent behavior.

Sometimes it can give the person a chance to breathe, using the interval of surrender to find the inner person. However, unless core or root causes are addressed, it remains only a thin skin, subject to crumbling when the old, unresolved issues resurface.

### What works?

The previous sections discussed how many of the conventional tools only smooth things over, or handle symptoms, not causes of DISease or unhappiness. Given this problem, the question arises as to how we might be able to look at, and resolve, core or root causes of problems.

Take the time to read this section carefully, doing any of the suggested exercises. They will help you prepare for the final process of finding your core self, discovering the energy levels that emerge from your stress.

*Look at the words you use.*

A good process is to look at what kind of words you use when attempting new patterns. Many of the mantras and affirmations carry potent messages of blame and judgement about the old behaviors.

For example:

Instead of just replacing "I have to fight for my rights" with something else, first put the old one constructively away.

Instead try saying something like this:

"I have fought for my rights, now I have them."

A little different spin on things but a big difference in internal perception.



Watch out for the phrase “I am trying.”

This is a great word of avoidance. In the future whenever you hear that phrase (whether spoken by yourself or another) substitute the words “I am doing...” or “I am not doing ...”

Take a hard look at the reality of those phrases in each particular situation. Chances are it will be a different view point. Then begin using only those two phrases for yourself when discussing your behaviors and what you wish to achieve. The clarity of “do or not doing” will be a great aid in going forward.

*Look at the behaviors you want.*

What is it that you want to do in your actions? Instead of just saying “I need to be different” write down the behaviors and activities you wish to adopt. Think about what they are as opposed to the ones you wish to replace. Write those ones down as well. Examine the two lists side by side.

Now think about how you feel or felt when you were acting in the old manner.

Then think about how you would or do feel acting in the new manner.

What is different about those feelings?

Write those feelings down, both sets side by side.

The difference in emotional content is a pointer. It will lead you to what you are all about.

It is possible that you do not feel as “good” in your new behaviors as you might think or wish.

You might even be resentful or bitter about the “need” to act differently.

It is also possible that you feel better with the new behaviors. How is that better feeling? Is it more respectable, calmer, safer or is there a deeper feeling involved?

These feelings, and how you react to them, are extremely important for the next step of the process, moving towards a conscious, healthy Woman of Power.