

Fear when riding is completely natural, and overcoming it takes patience, self-awareness, and intentional steps. Julie will help you with the following either on your horse or one of our wonderful school horses:

1. Acknowledge & Understand Your Fear

- Identify the root cause—was there a past fall, a loss of confidence, or an unpredictable horse?
- Accept that fear is a normal emotion and doesn't mean you're weak or incapable.
- Keep a journal of when and why fear arises to track patterns and progress.

2. Start with Groundwork

- Build confidence by working with your horse on the ground before mounting.
- Practice leading, lunging, or liberty work to establish trust and communication.
- If you can connect and trust your horse from the ground, it makes riding feel safer.

3. Choose the Right Horse & Environment

- Ride a calm, steady horse that makes you feel safe.
- Start in a controlled environment (arena, round pen) before heading into open spaces.
- Ride with supportive people who understand your fears, not those who pressure you.

4. Take Small, Manageable Steps

- Set tiny, achievable goals each ride (e.g., mounting, walking for five minutes, trotting for one lap).
- Celebrate small wins rather than focusing on what you haven't done.
- If you feel overwhelmed, pause and breathe—there's no rush.

5. Focus on Relaxation & Breathing

- Breathe deeply, especially in moments of tension—your horse feels your breath.
- Practice body awareness—relax your shoulders, soften your grip, and release tension in your legs.
- Use mindfulness techniques like visualization (imagine a calm, successful ride).

6. Ride with a Trusted Instructor or Coach

- Work with someone patient who understands fear and won't push you too hard.
- Have a coach walk beside you or lunge your horse if needed for reassurance.
- Get constructive feedback on your posture, balance, and aids to feel more in control.

7. Have an Emergency Plan

- Learn how to do a one-rein stop or disengage your horse's hindquarters for control.
- If your horse spooks, focus on staying calm and redirecting their attention.
- Practice safe dismounting so you feel you can get off if needed.

8. Shift Your Mindset

- Instead of thinking "What if I fall?" reframe it as "What if I ride successfully?"
- Focus on what is going well rather than the worst-case scenario.
- Remind yourself that confidence is built over time—don't compare your journey to others.

9. Ride Consistently

- Fear worsens when you ride inconsistently—short, frequent rides are better than occasional big rides.
- Even if you just sit on your horse and breathe for a few minutes, that's progress.
- The more exposure you have, the more normal and safe it starts to feel.

10. Be Kind to Yourself

- Progress isn't always linear—some days will feel easier than others.
- Surround yourself with encouraging people, not those who make you feel bad for being afraid.
- Remember that courage isn't the absence of fear—it's taking action despite it.