

**Letting Go** by Erin Dunigan March 5, 2020

I have to admit, I've got a love hate relationship with the idea of letting go.

Just last month I wrote an article for Baja News with the title of 'Taking the Reins' – about just that, taking the reins of your life, rather than just letting it lead where it will. I had realized that too often in life, in an attempt not to be 'mean,' I had held my reins loose – too loose. Reins are there for you to use – to steer, to stop, to decide in what direction to travel.

The thing is, I used to be more of a take the reins kind of person. And then I went to therapy. And learned about letting go. About balancing my over achiever self of doing with the self of being.

"I'm just letting go" I would say to myself. But I began to wonder, had I gotten it all wrong?

And then recently I had an aha moment.

On this particular day, leading a group of people horseback riding, this particular rider was trying to improve his skill. He had been riding a number of times, but he was still trying to get the feel of how to hold himself on the horse, how to balance his weight, how to feel centered and secure.

He was on a horse who is nice and smooth, dependable – the horse for first time riders, little kids, old people, or others who need a slow and gradual confidence building for their first time riding or for building their confidence. He wanted to try going faster. So, I explained to him how to hold himself, how to position himself in the saddle, how to signal that he wanted to go a bit faster, including giving a bit of a shout of a 'yeehawww!'

I watched as he built up his courage, implemented the signals, including the yeehaw, and the horse began to respond – for about ten feet, and then slowed down. I watched as he repeated this again. And again. And then as he was doing it, I rode up beside him and saw it – with one hand on the reins, the other hand was firmly planted on the horn of the saddle, holding on for dear life. "If you want the horse to run, you've got to let go of the horn," I yelled over.

And that was when, like a book end – the second realization hit me.

Letting go.

If you want the horse to run, you've got to let go.

That's what it is! I almost yelled out loud, like a moment of epiphany with the clouds parting and the light coming down upon my newfound realization.

That is what letting go is all about – it is not about letting go of the reins, it is about letting go of the horn.

The reins are what give you direction – you need to keep hold of them if you want to go anywhere. But the horn, the horn is all about fear, control, and clinging to perceived safety and security.

Letting go is not some passive abdication of life – letting go is actually what allows us to enter into life more fully.

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