**Strategies Used in all Techniques and Exercises**

Every horse training method or technique is designed using principles that are either military/obedience based, or confidence/R+ based. As someone that has the opportunity to practice on many different challenging horses, I found many of our traditional techniques would trigger fear or ‘aggression’, Survival /Sympathetic Nervous System.

I decided to create a system that was all based in triggering the Parasympathetic Nervous System, our rest, digest, play, learn, heal, trust, connect side of our Autonomic Nervous System.

With every exercise and cue, we are using the horse’s main learning strategy, Mirroring, to inspire the horse to go into PSNS more deeply. The chemicals released in PSNS, mainly Oxytocin, Endorphins and Dopamine, feel so much better than the SNS chemicals, Adrenaline and Cortisol, that the horse is inspired to seek these positive chemicals. We are a huge part of inspiring these positive chemicals, and the horse starts to connect and super bond to us.

**My Techniques have 5 things in common:**

1. **Mirroring** - horse is hardwired to mirror its herd for safety and fun. We mirror what we want them to do in our mind and body.
2. **Boundaries** – leaders have boundaries. Boundaries give value and inspire bonding.
3. **Puzzles** – exercises are all puzzles for the horse to solve. Solving puzzles builds confidence. Wins are win/win. No horse loses for human to win.
4. **Free Choice** – horse has free choice in his efforts to solve puzzles. His guesses give us feedback on how well we have prepared him for the puzzle. If he has free choice and chooses the right answer, the win and learning are so much bigger. Confidence and Dopamine soar!
5. **Don’t tell horse it is wrong** – instead of correcting them, mold what they offer. Many horses will become fixated on their opinion/response/answer even if it doesn’t serve them, if we say they are wrong. Instead change the question or mold what they are offering into something positive.

By using these strategies, we can develop even the most defensive or difficult horses. Sometimes we need to step back and choose an easier question to get the ball rolling. It’s our job, as the leader, to read our student correctly, and set him up to be a winner. Every win the two of you get puts a deposit in your relationship account. Stack the wins and positive chemicals from those wins, to inspire the horse to want to be on your team!