

*Alice Trindle Presents:*

## **Developing a Willing Partnership**

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Alice Trindle was born on a ranch in eastern Oregon, the only daughter in a family of five brothers. She learned to ride behind the back of the saddle holding on to her brother's belt loops. In the past 15 years Alice has continued her relationship with horses, and had the opportunity to study with several true horsemen such as Tom Dorrance, Ray Hunt, Dennis Reis, and Bettina Drummond. She conducts clinics in Oregon, Washington, California, and Idaho, and offers multi-day horsemanship retreats at her ranch in eastern Oregon.

## **Ground Skill Maneuvers** *Clinic #2 in a series of ten*

*Author's Note: I was so excited to receive several questions from aspiring horsemen after they read the first clinic regarding "Ground Skill Maneuvers". Thank You! Communication with horses is easy compared to communicating with humans and your questions only serve to help us ALL go deeper in our understandings.*

*I was asked to clarify what I meant by "Leg Yields in a Shoulder-in or Haunches-in posture" and how that might relate to the French terms for the maneuvers of "Travers" or Renvers". Here is my simple understanding: Leg Yields are lateral movements where the horse moves or yields from the pressure of the lower leg. Shoulder-in is a type of yield where the horse moves away from the inside bend, with shoulders positioned slightly towards the inside of the arena. Haunches-in or Half-pass postures are also a request to yield from the leg & seat aids, but the horse moves INTO the bend. (This is a more difficult movement for the horse.) In a Travers, the horse's haunches move to the inside of the track, with a very slight bend in the horse in the direction of travel. (i.e. Haunches-in) A Renvers moves the horse off the track, with the haunches moving to the outside wall, and again the nose and eye looking in the direction of travel. (i.e. Haunches-out)*

*Thanks so much for your questions and comments. Please give me a call or email so we might continue our conversation, and maybe even communicate! I'd enjoy hearing from you. You can contact Alice at: [www.tnthorsemanship.com](http://www.tnthorsemanship.com)*

### **Attitude & Movement Lead to Willing Communication**

As I have traveled along life's journey one aspect of my personal good fortune has become abundantly clear... Horses are here with me to be MY teacher. The principles to which the horse adheres are based on honesty, grace, forgiveness, patience, respect, understanding, and integrity. Their movements are ones of poise, balance, rhythm, and flow. If only I could apply those attitudes and movements to my personal relationships, then perhaps I could find the type of consistency that leads to true harmony.

I have noticed over the many years of watching and listening to horses, along with watching and listening to other aspiring horsemen, that there seems to be two filters through which we communicate. These two filters are ATTITUDE and MOVEMENT. In preparing or analyzing any situation, if I will refine what is going on through these two filters, I can usually come up with good directions for how to proceed positively.

Have you ever tried to talk with someone while they are looking away from you and wearing ear plugs? Envision how it would be to dance with this same person without benefit of their attention and perhaps willingness to be with you. The relationship might be quite difficult and communication with understanding would be strained to say the least! Here is a formula for communication that the horses have shared:



### Developing the Movement Filter

Sure, horses can move more ways than just forward, back, sideways, and crossing their hind feet, and with various postures and shapes. But here's what the horses have taught me: If they can accomplish those four basic movements with positive attitude, then everything else I might ask of them is mostly a matter of refinement, their particular talents as a breed or body-type, and the job that needs to be done. Horses also have taught me that if I am having a situation with a particular upper-level maneuver or posture, then I probably have a hole in one of the basic four movements, or perhaps a problem with attitude. It is amazing to me that when you get attitude combined with movement, you have a dance that is brilliant!

### Developing an Attitude Filter

Almost every relationship starts with attitudes. It doesn't really matter what type of a horse he might be, what country you might be located in, male or female, the horse will tell you quite a bit about himself and how he has been treated, within the first few moments...just by his attitude. I start by asking this basic question: Is the horse willing to yield in a respectful manner? Encompassed in that question are three words that contain a depth of meaning.

#### Is he WILLING?

- Does the horse act afraid and is he looking for ways to escape rather than be with me?
- Are his eyes and ears seeking ways out rather than looking in for leadership?

#### Is he willing to YIELD?

- Will the horse give to pressure, or push-up against it?
- Is he aware of his surroundings and present, yet cautious (Flashing Yellow lights = Yield)?
- Is he offering to seek release & rewards through softness?

#### Is he willing to yield with RESPECT?

- Does the horse run you over, or just run away?
- Does he follow your suggestions, with the slightest of effort, but great enthusiasm?
- Does he want to be "with" you, but not "on" you?
- Does your horse act as if he likes you?

Our job as aspiring horsemen is to look for these clues in helping us to understand the horse, and then to select skills and tools that will build a brilliant relationship. Often times if there are holes in your horse's attitude filter, you can look to the movement filter for the tools to help the situation turn around.

#### Clues to good FORWARD movement

- Does your horse give you his attention (attitude), then move forward off your slightest suggestion or follow your intention?
- Does he carry himself in a balanced, straight carriage?
- Does he pick his feet up with energy, a bounce, with some enthusiasm?
- Does his desire to "GO" equal his desire to "WHOA"?
- When you prepare and bring the life into your body, does he follow your forward intention?



### Clues to good BACK-UP movement

- Same as forward movement, just with backwards intentions!
- When you become internally light, focus backwards, can he follow that suggestion?
- Does he drag his feet back, or sneak them back thoughtfully?

### Clues to good SIDEWAYS movement

- Same as forward movement, just with the hind feet crossing under the belly, & front feet reaching and crossing.
- Are his shoulders up and level, not leaning, falling or collapsing?
- Does he carry a slight lateral bend and soft topline?
- Can you see the white corner of his eyes straining in the direction of travel to the outside of the bend, or are they soft and just seeking the direction of travel?

### Clues for CROSSING OF THE HIND FEET movement

Some folks call this “disengagement” but I feel it depends on what my intentions are when I ask for this movement. If I am asking the horse to simply cross his inside hind leg under his belly and then balance up on the outside hind foot - to a stop, then I am dis-engaging the movement. But let’s say we did the above sequence and asked for a canter departure. Well clearly, we had not “dis-engaged” the movement; rather we had “engaged” the power of that outside hind. So, to help with the confusion, I simply call this maneuver the “crossing of the hind feet.” This crossing movement can come from either the inside hind passing under the belly towards the outside fore foot (i.e. Shoulder-in type postures, with the horse moving away from inside leg pressure), OR the crossing of the outside hind foot towards the inside fore (i.e. Haunches-in or half-pass type postures, with the horse moving off the outside hind, towards the inside shoulder, and the nose bent slightly in the direction of travel).

- Does the horse seek the balance, without dropping his shoulders?
- As you apply the ground skill maneuvers we practiced in the first clinic, now add a mindfulness to observing the two communication filters: Attitude and Movement. In particular, pay attention both on the ground and in the saddle to where your horse’s eyes and ears are tracking. Those are great barometers to his attitude. If you don’t have his eyes and ears, then work his feet (movement). If you are not getting soft movement, check on his eyes and ears (attitude).

*Remember, attitude and movement are two-way filters to communication. If things aren’t quite working out, check your attitude and movement towards willing communication!*



**Flint Stone’s “attitude” is working nicely (note his eyes & ears with a soft poll) and combining with forward movement, beginning to pick up his belly & back.**