

# EQUUS INTEGRATUS

science-informed, experiential equitation, groundwork, & husbandry



#brainsnotreins



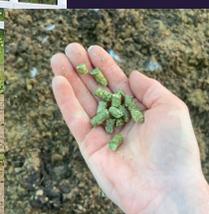
# WHAT IF YOU COULDN'T FAIL?

From basic skills, to intermediate training tools and concepts, to practical application for riding and husbandry training, the emphasis is on building foundations so strong they withstand anything the world puts on them.

## Feel is a learnable skillset

“Feel” is not a mystical gift only given to a select few, but a learnable ability composed of the individual skills of movement quality, timing, and how you use what you know working together. Simply put, it’s knowing what you’re looking at, what to do about it, and when to do it.

Once you have the pattern down, the words wash away and what’s left is the action and felt-sense of seeing the horse, and being seen by the horse.



## What is positive reinforcement training?

When a behavior happens, what happens immediately after will change the likelihood of that behavior happening again. Positive reinforcement is adding something the horse likes (in most cases, low-value food such as hay pellets) after a behavior to increase the likelihood of that behavior happening again. A marker signal (usually a sound) tells the horse exactly what they did right when they do it. Because food is reinforcing (appealing) to a horse, they will try that behavior again in order to get the food, which can then be faded out.



## Riding: dressage in the wild

To me, this means approaching a dressage mentality with a tendency to emphasize fluidity and adaptability over prescription. Also working outside using terrain and obstacles as natural variables for better movement capability and capacity.

For the nervous or anxious rider, we work together to:

- Coordinate breathing and movement patterns to make physiological changes on cellular and neurochemical levels
- Create an environment where the desired effect takes place as a side effect of that environment
- Make an external goal that inherently allows the body to organize itself

## Groundwork: communication

The first groundwork skill to teach the horse is to stand still, face forward and wait for food. This skill also establishes a common language between horse and handler which is the foundation for all other training.

The second skill is to touch and/or follow a target. This is the basic “unit” of groundwork. Once a horse knows what a target is, you have another layer of communication and possibility for work at liberty as well as with tack.

By making the skills fluent, you can train everything on the ground that will also prepare your horse for riding work. Tack plays a more passive role but can convey information when needed.



## Husbandry: a different kind of event

Consider husbandry training as preparing for an event, like a show, but with healthcare instead of riding or in-hand work. Cooperative behaviors are taught for:

- Handling various parts of the horse
- Medicating
- Hoofcare
- Injections
- Worming
- And more



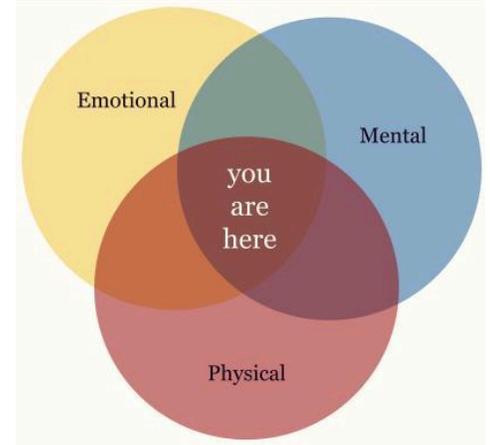
Sessions can be scheduled with your healthcare professional to introduce the protocol if desired and scheduling is possible.

This is a list of behaviors I consider useful, if not essential, for domestic horse welfare. It's not exhaustive by any means, and some things may not apply in some cases. It's ranked on a scale of 1-5, and meant to help you assess how your horse feels about their daily handling, decide which areas could use attention, as well as think of creative ways to help your horse feel better about what happens in your lives, which makes everyone safer and even better to be around.

As with all horse training, this is just one perspective, not a value judgement. It's unlikely any one horse is going to score a 5 on everything. I intentionally didn't make a scoring system. I'm not sure that's useful for practical application.

**Behavior is evidence, not knowledge or certainty.** Most "bad" behavior is because of unmet physical, mental, and emotional needs. The horse is not just being a jerk. If you're having some trouble with your horse in some of these areas, here are some things to think about:

- How important is a particular behavior? For example, not every horse is a riding horse and behaviors related to that might be helpful, but not essential for good welfare.
- What are the things that support an important behavior? Are there changes that might make things easier (bring a buddy in, face a certain way, use a different area, try a different time, etc.)?
- Is your horse sound and healthy enough to do the task?
- What is the balance between the horse, the client, and, for example, a healthcare professional's needs?
- Just because we can train something, should we?
- Is there another way to do it (shorter hoof stand, medication in food instead of syringe, do injection somewhere else, etc.)?
- How much discomfort are you willing to put the horse in to get the job done?



### When it's not working... what does the horse look like?

#### Expression

- Eyes - worried or soft?
- Ears - tense or relaxed, in what position?
- Lips - tensed or relaxed?
- Head/neck carriage - high, low, somewhere around level?
- Tail - still or swishing?

#### Movement

- How fast?
- How far?
- How much of the horse is moving?
- In what direction?

### Where is change possible?

When thinking about what you can change to make things easier or go more smoothly, consider things such as:

- The environment (sights, sounds, smells, tactile sensations, people, other horses, etc - everything the light touches)
- Housing and feeding management
- The horse's reaction to those things

Take a look at how or whether the environment supports not just the behaviors themselves, but also how easy it is to do the tasks in that space. Does it work for you *and* your horse? Is it too big or small? Too crowded or cluttered? Can you easily move horses from one area to another? Can you easily separate and contain horses without stress? Is there a good caretaking area, with light/power/water/shelter?

Once you have an idea of the things you'd like to work on, you can start thinking about the things that need to be in place for that to happen.

**Scale of level of ease for touching anywhere on body, basic handling and healthcare**

0: Not possible - can't be done even with heavy restraint

1: Possible, heavy restraint needed - needs halter, nose/lip chain, twitch, sedation, ropes, or other restraint

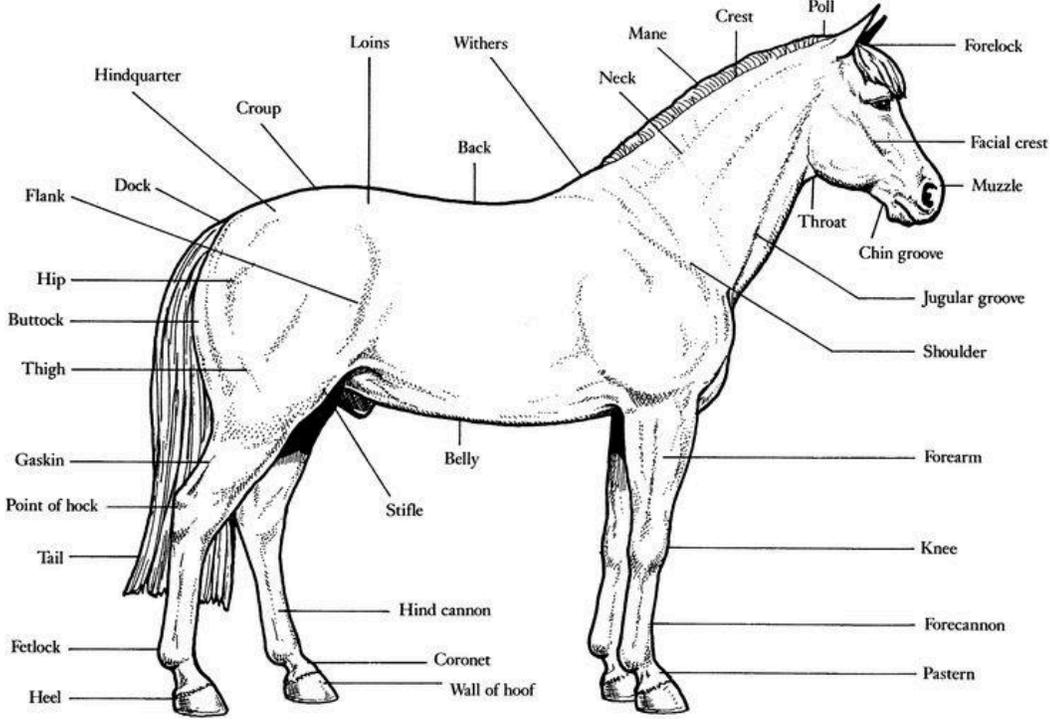
2: Possible, but not easy - needs firm restraint, such as being put up against a wall

3: Somewhat easy - needs extra time or some lighter restraint such as firm pressure on the halter/bridle

4: Easy - horse tolerates action with no resistance, may or may not have tack but tack is passive

5. Horse actively cooperates - proactive positioning for object/action and responds with little or no prompting

**Touching anywhere on body (on both sides)**

Behavior	Level of ease		
Mouth			
Face			
Eyes			
Ears			
Poll			
Neck			
Shoulder			
Forearm			
Knee			
Girth area			
Belly			
Back			
Flank			<b>Notes</b>
Croup			
Genitals			
Buttock			
Gaskin			
Hock			
Lower leg			
Hoof (not lifting)			

**Basic handling and healthcare**

Behavior	Level of ease	Notes
Haltering		
Leading		
Backing		
Tying		
Temperature taking		
Shots/vaccinations		
Oral meds/wormer		
Eye meds		
Oral/teeth exams		
Flayspray		
Foot lifting/handling/picking out		
Foot soaking		
Foot trimming/shoeing		
Vet exam (vet can approach, touch)		
Ear/face medication		
Leg wrapping		
Hosing with water		

**Scale of level of ease for groundwork, preparation for riding, and basic riding**

0: Not possible

1: Somewhat possible, lots of bracing/resistance

2: Possible, inconsistent/resistance

3: Somewhat easy - needs extra time or more pressure

4: Easy - horse tolerates action with no resistance, may or may not have tack but tack is passive

5. Horse actively cooperates - proactive positioning for object/action and responds with little prompting

**Groundwork and preparation for riding**

Behavior	Level of ease	Notes
Lunging at walk, trot, canter		
In-hand lateral work		
Rein cues for turn, stop		
Bridleless work (or neck reining)		
Saddling		
Grass training (cues to eat, stop eating)		
Leg cues (pressure on sides)		
Trailer loading		
Novel object desensitization		

**Basic riding**

Behavior	Level of ease	Notes
Mounting		
Rein cues for turn, stop		
Leg cues for forward, sideways		
Seat/weight cues		
Bridleless work (or neck reining)		
Lateral movement (combining cues)		
Walk		
Trot		
Canter		
Backing		
Obstacles		
Off-property rides		

A training plan helps you see your training situation overall. Having a specific goal helps you know when you're successful, and also gives you a way to measure progress and make changes that keep you aligned with what you want to do, as well as help you decide where to go with your training in the moment.

Goals consist of behaviors, and those behaviors have steps. Go through the scenario in your mind and note every single action that happens. If you have a very complex goal, like riding off-property, break it down into component behaviors such as leaving friends behind, trailer loading, standing quietly in the new location, etc. Those can be broken down into even smaller steps such as catching, haltering, leading, etc. The smaller the step, the more opportunity to notice where things may not be going right and make adjustments before it gets out of hand. You may need a new sheet for each specific goal leading to your overall goal.

### Goals

What is the overall goal for this horse?

What is the specific goal right now? Literally define what your target behavior looks and feels like. The more specific, the better.	
What is going to be the cue for the behavior?	
What is not going to be the cue?	
How do you know you are successful?	

Prerequisites: what needs to be in place for a smoother start?

What does your horse need to know or learn before you can teach the desired behavior?	
What do you need to know or learn before you can teach the desired behavior?	
How are you going to learn those things?	

Variables & constraints: what things will change, and what will not change?

Variables: what things will deliberately be changed, and what things will be allowed to change or where there is some flexibility in what's acceptable? Why?	
Constraints: what things are not changeable, or are things that need to be limited, omitted, or controlled in some way? Why?	

### Setbacks

What will it look like if it's not working?	
What happens when the horse doesn't do what you want?	
What kinds of adjustments can you make?	
When will you stop the session and try a different time?	





## I'm Heather K McManamy

I help horses and people learn to be comfortable with healthcare procedures using positive reinforcement training. I also help horses and riders with getting started under saddle, as well as ways to help develop confidence with riding.

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Are you looking to solve a particular problem? Or do you want to learn more about training theory and practice? You can't really do one without the other, but knowing what you want to focus on brings clarity to the approach to training.

Sessions are generally client-led. As often as possible, you are making decisions based on your goal and what you and your horse can handle. It's going to feel different because it's a departure from the more common "top-down" approach. It's meant to! I'm just the ideas person. I set the stage for exploration for both horse and person by creating a space with an intention, letting things unfold, and only making small adjustments here and there where I see how a change can make a positive difference. I am the guide, you are the explorer (and I promise it's not terrifying)!

## Positive reinforcement mini-workshop

This workshop is designed to teach horses and people how to get started with R+ (positive reinforcement) from the very beginning, as well as the possible next steps for using those skills in the real world. It's for both horses and people who are completely new to R+ and open to learning a different way to look at training, or for people who have tried it, but weren't successful and their horses tried to eat them instead.

Additional workshops available for intermediate skills and foot handling.



## Rates

In-person session: \$65 for about an hour, \$500 for 8-pack (travel fees may apply)

## Virtual sessions

One-time consult session: \$120 (2 hrs), discussion of your horse's history, the problem you're having, a 10-minute video review, and a basic training and/or management plan.

Video review session: \$55 (1 hr), includes review and discussion on a video up to 10 min

Short session: \$35 (1/2 hr), includes review and discussion on a video up to 5 min

**Other packages, as well as rates for veterinarians, farriers/trimmers, vet or farrier students, and other professionals also available. Contact me or visit my website for details.**