

Suggested pullouts:

“We use only our hands. This is not a massage technique, nor is it training. Through rhythmic manipulation of the key senses, ESCT causes the equine brain to release a flood of beneficial brain chemicals, changing the fearful memory into an acceptable one. Our study with our test horses and all ensuing work with client horses show a 95% effective healing rate in 3 to 5 one-hour sessions with integration times of 2 to 3 days between sessions.”-Harmony Horseworks brochure

“Show me your horse and I will tell you who you are”- Anonymous

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For some lucky horses, it's The Wright place at the right time

By Nancie McCormish

At not-quite-the-end of Elsie Road, tucked discreetly into the hillside, a few world-weary horses have found the end of the rainbow. Here Barbara Wright has founded Harmony Horseworks, and developed her own Equine Stress Control Therapy (ESCT) protocol. She is the world's first equine stress control therapist, integrating human-based psychotherapy treatments with natural horsemanship techniques to rehabilitate spooked, traumatized and stressed-out horses.

Horse-loving readers will appreciate Barbara's original ideas. Among the sea of “trainers” whose primary goal seems to be selling old ideas with new “training” equipment, her techniques offer an entirely new protocol to manage some difficult and often dangerous horses. Her methods require nothing more than a willed intention of healing through use of eye movement, symmetrical tapping, or craniosacral therapies to essentially reprogram a horse's response to a stressful stimulus.

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A slight, Elfin woman originally from Salzburg, Austria, Barbara grew up watching classic American “horse operas” like *My Friend Flicka*, and endless Roy Rogers reruns. She remembers noticing how happy those Hollywood horses seemed, a sharp contrast to the classically trained horses she saw closer to home who were clearly not enjoying their performances.

Although horses always interested her, Barbara remained horseless until nearly four years ago. Following a divorce, she found relief from her own overwhelming stress in a form of psychotherapy called Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, or EMDR. This therapy helps the human brain create new neural pathways when confronted with particular stressors.

When Victoor PF came into her life, Barbara adapted these techniques to suit the equine mind. Here's how it happened.

Finding Victoor

As a Rocky Mountain Foal Rescue volunteer, Barbara attended an auction in Calhan with the intention of purchasing a few PMU foals. These foals are the byproducts of pregnant mare urine factories, weaned early and typically sold at slaughter auctions for the few dollars they bring. Wandering through sale pens on that cold September day, she couldn't help but notice a very tall chestnut Arabian among the crowd of anxious horses awaiting their fates. She thought, "he stands like a prince". As he was later led into the sale ring, the announcer barked his name "Victoor PF", and divulged he had once been a champion Arabian halter stallion in Arizona. Barbara says her arm "went up and down like it was pulled by a string" and only after she heard the words "SOLD TO..." echoing over the loudspeaker did she realize she didn't even have a bidding number and had somehow purchased the royal red horse.

Once she got him home, she discovered he was afraid of everything. Not always the same things, not always predictably. His responses were hair-triggered. He pulled, he got loose, he jumped fences, he was even afraid of the sound of his own hooves on the ground. Some days he was calmer than others, so she started thinking of him as Victoor 1 and Victoor 2. She tried most of the standard methods to work with spooky horses but ended up with what she calls "a beautiful garden ornament."

Mulling this, one day she realized his responses were similar to those exhibited by people with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. Since humans and horses are both mammals, she decided to try adapting human treatments to help Victoor. Within one hour she had positive results.

New Pathways

Her success with Victoor PF led Barbara to incorporate other human treatment methodologies into known horse behavioral patterns. From this, she developed a protocol and tested it on 16 volunteer horses last summer. Fourteen responded favorably. The remaining two turned out to have behavioral problems which were not fear based.

Barbara's ESCT protocol is now gaining international attention. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) asked her to demo her therapy at a mustang adoption seminar in Utah last summer, and discussions are currently underway with a researcher in England to produce measurable results using the scientific method on ESCT and on Frank Bell's 7 Steps to a Safe Horse. Frank Bell, a well-known Colorado natural horseman, endorses her protocol and is on Harmony HorseWorks' board of directors. Barbara has written her self-published book, *Horse Healing Secrets*.

She's also developed ESCT certification programs and offers clinics in Conifer each month from now through October for people interested in an intensive immersion into ESCT.

ESCT to the Rescue

An equine holocaust of sorts is occurring today in our country. Vagaries of the economy, drought and a decrease in the use of Pregnant Mare Urine (PMU) in human hormone replacement therapy have resulted in an endless stream of abused, neglected, and unwanted horses heading for kill auctions. In an effort to mitigate this tragedy, Barbara has founded Harmony Horseworks, a

501(c)3 corporation dedicated to rescuing and rehabilitating wild and domestic horses for adoption. Her personal goal is to rescue and heal as many horses as she can and place them into good homes. As of this writing four horses are awaiting adoption; two mustangs, one saddlebred, and one PMU quarter horse mare. See their website for details.

In cooperation with the Shadow Ridge Foundation, they are planning to hold a fundraiser this summer, and by this fall move the rescue and therapy programs (both horse and human) to a new home on the former Meaghre Ranch just north of Flying J Ranch Open Space Park on Hwy. 73. Long-term plans include indoor and outdoor arenas, viewing stands, a concession area, and an abundance of events, horse shows, clinics and seminars.

An Artful Life

Barbara's cozy log home is filled with her artwork, many pieces depicting brightly painted horses. She majored in studio painting at Cal State and says she didn't choose to paint them, they chose her. Her style is cheerfully contemporary, bright, loose and active. Each month she donates a painting to be raffled as a fundraiser for Harmony Horseworks, so if you can't bring a real horse home you can help out and perhaps bring home the next best thing.

Her artwork has been featured in solo shows at Gallery K, The Bistro, Arts Alive and Elk Ridge art locally, and at Paradise Gallery in Durango, and The Montana Gallery of Fine Art in Deer Lodge, Montana. Take a peek at her style at elkridgeart.com.

"Show me your horse and I will tell you who you are", Barbara offers restating the anonymous Victorian saying. Horses can often reveal a lot about a person's sensitivity to life in general, if we pay attention. "They teach us to be in touch with ourselves" she concludes.

Although living a consciously chosen and purposeful life, Barbara isn't comfortable being identified as a hero. At Harmony Horseworks "we are conduits for healing, the best part is seeing the healing in the horses". "The horses are the real heroes".

For more information and clinic schedules, see www.equinestressbusters.com or call Harmony Horseworks, 303-816-0766.