

Title: Building a Solid Foundation for Change Part 3 - Making an Impact
In the third of three articles in this series, **learn how a solid foundation for positive change plays a role in all areas of your relationship with your horse.**

By Anke Johnson

If you've ever played the game Jenga, you can readily understand the importance of having a solid foundation. Without it, anything you try to build on is more likely to crumble and fall. **In this final article in this series, I'll explain how foundation impacts all areas of your relationship with your horse, including confidence, self-esteem, time management, stress management, your physical self and your horse's performance.**

Using the example from the previous article, your challenge might be to build trust between you and your horse. **Building a solid foundation for this change requires you to work with your mental and emotional state, even for the less-obvious mental and emotional aspects, such as time management, stress management, your physical self and your horse's performance. We don't often think about those aspects of the process of making lasting change.**

Here's an example from my professional life. In the past, when I got more work than I knew what to do with, I'd panic and shut down. Nothing would get done because of my reaction to this challenge. I had to shift my mental state to be able to walk away from the desk for a few minutes and take a break doing something that energizes me. I might take a short walk or visit my horse to mentally prepare myself for getting back to work. I use this time to create a roadmap—just like the one I discussed in the first article—to feel less overwhelmed. The foundation I've built has given me tools to help me reach my goals without retreating to panic.

In building a solid foundation, you learn more about who you are, why you react in certain ways and whether your life is on a fulfilling path. You learn to focus and simplify so you can fully enjoy life and build a roadmap for the future while having learned from the past. We often know what we can do to make ourselves happy in our horse lives, but because of the imbalances we tend to face between family, work, horses, health and personal time, we get “stuck” and don't know how to proceed. **Staying in a place of comfort—even if that means neglecting the time with your horse that you really want—is easier than reaching out of your comfort zone and making positive changes.**

A Shift in Focus

Even with the best intentions to make time for horses, it's easy to fall back into the trap of putting everything else in life first. When I find myself starting to spin out of control again, I look at what's on my plate and determine what I can simplify. Most of us over-commit ourselves because of society pressures and technological “conveniences.”

All of those distractions cause us harm because we can never turn ourselves “off.” **We’ve never had more opportunities in our lives than today, and without focusing on our goals, these opportunities can easily become distractions that paralyze us from moving forward.**

Ask yourself what the consequence is if you don’t get the horse time that you need to build your trust. Where will you be in a year if you don’t start to make changes? **If you were to get this under control, focus and build the trust you want, how would that affect you?**

Overcoming Fear

Fear and confidence are universal issues for riders of all ages, levels and disciplines. Building trust is a large challenge for us all. **Once a foundation for change is completed, you might realize similar confidence or fear issues out of the saddle as in the saddle! A realistic roadmap that fits into your lifestyle will examine what causes fear, how to build confidence and gives permission just to say, “No,” or maybe, “Not right now.”** The emotional and mental aspects of your relationship are vital here, but also is keeping yourself physically safe.

So often, fear stems from the unknown, and that’s when the general anxiety fear—created in our own minds—kicks in (for example, “What if my horse shies?” or “What if my horse runs away with me?”). As equestrians, our partner in this hobby of choice is an animal with prey instincts that outweighs us by about 900-plus pounds; we have to listen to that fear and use it wisely in order to preserve our own selves! But we can become paralyzed with fear that stems from imagination. The “gremlin”—that negative voice inside your head—also comes into play. **Controlling your imaginary fears and exposing and silencing your gremlin results in growth and empowerment in every aspect of your life.**

With your foundation in place and your roadmap to your goals, you have the tools you need to respond correctly when faced with fear. **Our mind, body and emotions work together, so our ability to control our mind will give us the ability to control body and emotions, too.** Your foundation will, in an indirect way, impact your body language, your breathing, your focus and the visualizations you’re making in your head.

The process of building a foundation to improve your confidence, self-esteem, time management, stress management, your physical self and your horse’s performance is as easy as awareness, clarify, simplify and focus! Starting with a solid foundation, developing your roadmap for change, and accepting the support and accountability you need will benefit the relationship between you and your horse forever.

Bio: Anke Johnson began coaching others more than 20 years ago. She’s a certified Professional Health Coach, certified fitness trainer, certified Nutritional Consultant and Reiki Master Practitioner. As a lifelong rider, Anke understands how the challenges of

horsemanship and the challenges of life interweave. With Anke's help, equestrians and busy career people gain the self-knowledge, confidence and body awareness they need to get them closer to that perfect ride, in and out of the saddle. Learn more about her business, Natural Solutions by Anke, at www.naturalsolutionsbyanke.com or 608-467-0008.