

Horses as Our Mirror



Horses as Our Mirror! What is this all about and how does it work? If we look in the Merriam-Webster's Dictionary the definition of Mirror is: 1: a polished or smooth substance that forms images by reflection, 2: a true representation, 3: mirror used as a verb – to reflect in. So when the horse is referred to as "Our Mirror" the horse becomes a reflection of one's inner-self. In order to recognize how this is possible it is important to understand the horse as a prey animal, their extraordinary instinctual senses and their non-verbal communication system.

The horse as a prey animal means that the horse is an animal taken for food by another (predator). Therefore, the horse's survival depends on recognizing any incongruity in their environment. As part of the horse's survival mechanism horses live in herds with defined social structures, very similar to our family structures. The herd's social structure provides safety, comfort and freedom within their environment. Horses have specific roles and responsibilities within the herd much like humans in a family setting.

For horses to survive in the wild they must be true to nature, live in the present moment and rely on each other's instinctual senses. The horse's brain receives and processes enormous amounts of sensory information such as scent and sound. For instance, a horse would be able to smell a predator long before a human could physically see it moving. It has been documented that wild horses during drought seasons smell for water underground and then paw the ground digging until they have water to drink.

The horse's extraordinary instinctual senses are always used within the herd in times of danger or stress by non-verbal communication that enables horses to respond to situations within a split second. When the flight signal is given (a non-verbal signal) the herd does not waste time in comprehending the unusual situation or object within their environment they flee immediately. Trust within the herd and in their non-verbal communication system allows them to live in a safe, comfortable, congruent environment.

The horse with all its instincts for self-preservation intuitively detects congruency versus incongruity and relays this through non-verbal communication or body language. When humans are engaged in activities with horses they become "Our Mirror" by reflecting our inner-self. If we are true to ourselves and to nature the horse becomes a cooperative partner, but if we are not – the horse will show us the more difficult path as the horse mirrors our internal process. This is where one gains personal insight to their thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. For example, a client is very angry, but acting as if they are happy. The horse would mirror back their incongruence by becoming uncooperative or disconnected. When the client cannot engage the horse to cooperate this is where they step out of their comfort zone and start trying new things which leads to self discovery and change. The client becomes aware of how they connect and disconnect with the horse which in turn gives them insight as to how they connect and disconnect with themselves and others in their everyday life.