

Mental Processes

As horses learn, they don't reason, they react. They are objective realists. Understanding how they learn is not only interesting but is also essential for communication and training.

Power of Association

Horses have a natural ability to link a stimulus with a response, the basis of classical conditioning. The horse is always learning.

For example, suppose you are teaching your horse to back up, and you face him and start walking toward him saying "Baack." At first, he doesn't know what you want him to do. If you bump the noseband of his halter by tapping on the lead rope, he might take one stop back. If you reward him by stopping, praising, and maybe rubbing him, you are training him using classical conditioning. The next time you repeat the lesson, he'll probably realize that when you walk toward him from the front and say "Baaack," you want him to move in reverse. This quick linking of action and reaction, stimulus and response, is one reason horses are so trainable.

Anticipation

Once a horse has learned something, especially when it has been repeated too often, he might second-guess you and anticipate what you are going to ask. Although we may joke that such a horse is a mind reader or is going on "auto pilot," it's not really funny because pretty soon you have lost your means of communicating.

You'll see this during longeing.² Often a horse will sense when you are going to ask for a canter, for example, and he'll start just as you ask, not in response to your asking. Although anticipation may seem harmless or even novel when first observed, it may develop into a habit that can make a horse virtually uncontrollable. (pp. 130–31)

Memory

Horses are said to have a memory second only to an elephant.³ If true, the horse is in distinguished company. Horses rarely forget lessons, good or bad. They remember past associations with alarming clarity and for long periods of time. Once a horse learns a simple tack, he'll likely remember it for months without use or review. If he learns a specific type of performance, he will remember it for years. (p. 131)

² "longe (lŭnj). **a** A long rope used to lead or guide a horse in training. **b** The use of such a rope. To guide or exercise (a horse) by means of a longe" (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 2d ed. [1953], s.v. "longe").

³ Not so fast. The elephant is ranked eighth among the animals. The horse is ranked 15th. See link: <https://list25.com/25-most-intelligent-animals-on-earth/>



Modeling

Modeling or mimicking the behavior of other horses takes place in herds, so you may as well take advantage of the principle in training situations, too. When a band or herd crosses a creek, the herd members derive security from seeing the horses in front of them cross the water safely.

Habituation

One of the first training principles you use when you work with a horse is habituation. This introduces a horse to a particular person, procedure, or object in order to gain his acceptance without fear. (p. 132)

Learning Principles

All horses learn at different rates. You should have a training plan, but you will need to tailor it to each individual horse. In addition, horses are always learning. Over a period of many lessons, you can reach the stage where the horse learns to respond or not respond to various kinds of pressure. For example, he can learn the difference between leg pressure to encourage him to go forward, backward, or sideways, and pressure that is meant to drive him forward.

Do Horses Know Right from Wrong?

Horses know instinctively that their behavior is “right” because it is what they were born with, their innate behavior patterns. To horses, everything they do is right—until we teach them otherwise. It is surprising how willing they can be to learn our right and wrong to get along with us.

Behavior Modification

Through behavior modification, you start with a base behavior and carefully mold the horse’s actions into a safer and more useful pattern of behavior. When a horse does what you want, and you wish him to repeat it in the future, you encourage that behavior. When he does something you don’t want him to do, you discourage the behavior and show him a different way to act. Then you positively reinforce the new, desirable behavior. (p. 134)

Be Immediate

The timing of rewards (or punishment) is important. You only have a few seconds during or after the behavior to link it to the behavior. If you reward or punish before or after that time, you are reinforcing the wrong behavior!

Be Consistent

At first, if you stick with just one way of asking the horse to do something, it will be easier for him to learn. Once a horse masters the simple basics, you start adding variations, which are essential for advanced riding. (p. 135)



If you are following a proven program, be consistent and persistent with your aids. The first time takes the most time, the next time will be much quicker. If something is not working and you can't resolve the situation, stop and change what you are doing or get help.

Be Concise

Horses don't understand sentences, paragraphs, or long, drawn-out actions. The simpler your communication, the better. (p. 136)

Behavior Modification Techniques

Reinforcers, a.k.a. Stimuli

Animal behaviorists use the term reinforcer for the stimulus we apply to a horse to elicit a specific response and thereby train the horse. There is an action, and there is a reaction. If we choose our actions carefully, we will get the reactions we want from our horses.

A stimulus can be a physical contact cue, such as pressure. It can be body language, such as stepping toward a horse. It can be a voice command that the horse has learned means something specific. (p. 137)

Positive Reinforcement

When a horse does something that you like, if you immediately give him something good or make him feel good, it will encourage him to repeat that behavior in the future. Your horse will be eager to repeat the behavior in the future because he likes what follows it. Rest and a rub on the forehead are primary positive stimuli. (p. 138)

Negative Reinforcement

If as soon as a horse does what we want, we remove a negative or unpleasant stimulus, we have used negative reinforcement to strengthen the desired behavior. In the future, the horse will likely perform that behavior sooner so that the negative stimulus will be removed sooner. (pp. 139–40)

Punishment

Disciplining a horse immediately after an unwanted behavior can discourage him from repeating that behavior in the future. When a horse acts badly and you do something that he perceives as unpleasant, you have punished him for his behavior. Some people are reluctant to discuss using punishment when training horses, feeling it is unfair and unnatural. All you have to do is watch a group of horses on pasture for a few days and you will witness some very real and harsh examples of punishment taking place.⁴ (p. 141)

⁴ Cherry Hill, *How to Think Like a Horse* (North Adams, Mass.: Storey Publishing, 2006), 130–32, 134–41.

At this point in our study, we have done research on the blazing of the Santa Fé Trail and discovered some of the difficulties experienced from the several situations the trail riders confronted.

Their efforts that opened up the West were instrumental in our nation's expansion all the way to the Pacific Ocean. The dangers, the difficulties, and the ability to overcome them resulted in not only material prosperity for the people involved but it also made commerce of the prairies a viable option for investors.

The riders of the Santa Fé Trail give examples of acquiring working objects for success under trying circumstances. And three breeds of animals were instrumental in these endeavors: oxen and mules to pull the wagons and horses as mounts for the trail riders.

The horse is the perfect animal to herd cattle for reasons we have just demonstrated. Once the borders of the United States stretched westward there had to be organized groups to defend the advance—military for defense, herdsman for the cattle, and law enforcement for civil order.

These groups became known as cavalry, cowboys, and cops.

James 3:3 takes us first of all to the tack used to bridle and saddled a horse and then in James 3:4 to the tacking maneuvers used to guide a sailing ship on a body of water.

James 3:3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they obey us, we direct their entire body as well. (NASB)

Principle: The tongue is the member of the human body that is able to produce both blessing and cursing. The location of the tongue is inside the mouth. It is the source of blessing by speaking truth and of cursing by its communications of the cosmic lie.

We have illustrated the decision-making abilities of the horse, how members of the Equidae (ě'-kwid-ī) family—horse, donkey, mule—along with oxen helped blaze the western trails. The horse is the animal that man has learned to tame and those who are experts in their training have enabled the horse to perform multiple tasks.

The Bible, especially in the Old Testament, makes numerous mentions of the horse beginning with its plural noun סוס (*sus*) in Genesis 47:17. The Greek noun is ἵππος (*híppos*): “horse,” first used in the New Testament in the plural possessive in James 3:3 and then 15 times in The Revelation.



There is a passage about horses in Psalm 32 which provides an interesting application to present-day, client nation America including a clear warning to its citizens:

Psalm 32:8 I will continually instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go [דֶּרֶךְ] (*derech*): wheel-tracks of righteousness]; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.

v. 9 Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding [בִּינָה] (*biyn*): “no discernment”], whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check [tamed by discipline and training], otherwise they will not come near you.

v. 10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness [חֶסֶד] (*cheseth*): “unfailing love”] shall continuously surround him.

When a client nation is in decline its citizens are divided. An increasing number are like untrained horses who have not been educated how to function in a free society.

The horse is self-centered. He is frightened by anything he interprets as a danger to himself. The poorly educated person is propagandized by “people trainers” to think that anyone disagreeing with them are wrong, evil, and dangerous and must be suppressed by draconian laws and if that fails to eliminate them.

In the early days of the republic, defense of the client nation was the duty of both the armed military and an armed militia, the latter made up of citizens who were to first defend their homes and secondly against predator nations.

Over the past century, there has been an unrelenting strategy, concocted, indoctrinated, and promoted by emissaries of Satanic Academy of Cosmic Didactics. The current students and graduates of the academy are now applying what they’ve been trained to do upon any who disagrees with their beliefs.

Freedom is maintained in a client nation by the inventory of biblical truth retained and applied from the souls of positive believers. This describes the “instructed” ones in verse 8a who have been taught in “the way which you should go.”

These are the ones who have the duty to “hold the fort” with the artillery of truth and upon whom the Lord is keeping His eye.



The Dark Side is made up increasingly by wild horses who have no discernment. Their inventory of ideas has been developed by the faculty of the Cosmic Academy's curriculum with its "doctrines of demons" (2 Timothy 4:1).

The absence of establishment viewpoint in the souls of the benighted is only exceeded by the vacuous inventory of doctrinal viewpoint. The contest that is afoot is being engaged on the battlefield of thought and the Lord's army is rapidly losing its population of **πρόμαχοι** (*prómachoi*): "front rankers" in the Invisible War.

How the Lord will manage the eventual outcome of this struggle for power remains to be seen, but verse 10 above confirms this:

(1) "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but (2) "he who trusts in the Lord, unfailing love shall continuously surround him."

What is it that assures the unfailing love of God for those in His army and which would also equip those who are candidates for "many sorrows"? The "trappings of bits and bridles to hold them in check" (Psalm 32:9).

To pursue this idea, our study now turns back to James 3:2 and its illustration of how to overcome the influence of the tongue mentioned in:

James 3:2 For we all fall into sin in many ways. If anyone does not sin in what he says, he is a mature believer, able to restrain his tongue by bridling his entire body with his volition. (EXT)

James continues this discussion on horses in:

James 3:3 Now if we put bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. (NASB)

James's illustration of how people are able to maintain control of their sin nature starts with the ability to control their bodies. To do so, James goes to the horse to illustrate.

We have learned that the horse responds to human commands including touch, words, and tack. Now let's learn how all these things come together when one saddles him up, mounts, and rides.

1. James accurately points out that with a bit in a horse's mouth, man can control the animal's entire body. The bit is actually a part of the bridle. The bit is the noun, **χαλινός** (*chalinós*) which means "to loosen."

