

JUST RELAX

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“Just relax” doesn’t usually work. And according to this book excerpt, experts are getting a handle on it (or at least better understanding). When I was a young working student, I was allowed to ride the Grand Prix horses of my benefactress. I was very anxious lest I would screw up and do bad things to her wonderful horses.

She stood at the side of the arena and shrieked “RELAX, JUST RELAX!!!!” Bless her for her good intentions, but somehow it did not achieve the hoped-for result – my brain went numb, and my body turned to mush (to the degree that men can turn to mush – women are better at it).

As can be read in the Glossary that I wrote for the USDF, relaxation can be a mental/emotional issue, and/or a physical one.

One of my lists goes like this:

- Technique
- Tactic
- Psychology

The ‘psychology’ part applies to our control of our emotional and physical states, as well as dealing with the horse. Eckhardt Meiners recommends humming while riding. At the least it makes us breathe. I talk to my horses, or whistle. Same outcome.

Constant clucking with the tongue is NOT THE SAME THING. It is interesting that I have never had a male student who does it, but women in droves ride around sounding like anxious hens. I do not know why that is – just interesting. The men are probably gnashing their teeth and clenching their jaws.....

Talking ‘to the horse’ is useful because WE can HEAR our tone and attitude. It does not matter what we say. Droning out “The Walrus and the Carpenter” can work fine. I tend to say things like “What’s that about, you great silly twit,” “Hey, – where ya going, Dumbo?” “No, I do not think so, sweetie,” “Thanks but no thanks,” “Yeah, yeah, yeah – get over it,” “Sorry, I’m going to sit there whether you like it or not, Dumpling,” etc. The horse benefits by the sound of our voice as reassurance (or scolding). WE benefit by hearing ourselves. Shrill? Brittle? Up-tight? Or soothing and casual.

Being told to JUST RELAX! can easily freeze our brains and eyes while we lose the tone in our core. Not a good situation!

There are some physical actions that help too. Turning the rider’s head slowly left and right, to break the pattern of staring fixedly at the neck, can help. Arm waves ditto. When your head is turned to the side (which changes your field of vision), ask yourself “What do I feel now?”

Figuring out how to be calm (mentally/emotionally relaxed) while keeping core tone and a reasonably good position (good forms of tension) is crucial.

BOOK EXCERPT:

<http://www.delanceyplace.com/view-archives.php?p=2147>