

## GRADUATION DAY

What's working well for me at the moment? I will never Graduate from my Horsemanship Course!

Treating each horse as an individual, not every shoe fits every horse - pardon the pun. One method of teaching a horse something new may have worked on the last 10 horses you worked with, but number 11 is not like the other 10. I have to be willing to adapt, change it up, try something new.

Throughout my Horsemanship Journey, I am learning that there will be no end date, no congratulations you have graduated from your Horsemanship Course. I will, however, gain great satisfaction while taking the course. I am open to exploring new techniques, and if they adapt to my programme, I do not want to become so rigid I cannot think outside the box.

Just this morning, I had an opportunity to practice something different from what I would have practised years ago. I will set the scene for you 😊 Steve had been working on earthworks the previous afternoon, so there was a change to the natural landscape. I went to bring Miss Tia up for her owner to ride; as she approached the gate, she went into giraffe mode; what's that, why is that rock over there, why is there a log near my arena, how come the fresh dirt smells different? Thoughts were obviously running through her mind as she pranced like a lovely Arab at the end of the lead.

I quickly realized her energy was up, and I was not to match her, so I began to make sure my energy was much calmer than hers. I let her walk behind me, stopping when she felt the need to. We slowly approached the different objects in her time; when we got to the rock, log, or new path of fresh dirt, we went around the spooky place then turned to face the scary object and around the other direction so she could see it out of both eyes. The whole process took around 10 minutes, with her quite relaxed to stand by all the objects.

What would I have done many years ago? I would probably have made her hustle her feet using a similar technique as described but with way more energy; what this achieved may be the same end result, but my new method produced a calmer result for both of us.

I follow this mantra: is your horse calmer at the end of the lesson than when you began? Did you or your horse get hurt in the learning process? Is the horse calmer at the end of the experience than when you started if the answer is Yes, you are on the right path.

Happy riding

*Mandy*