

# HORSEINMIND 10-DAY PROGRAM

## EXERCISES PART 1

### 1. Turn on the forehand.

- a. If your horse is already good at these, we need to do them in an alternating fashion on the quarter line. One step at a time. A correct turn on the forehand should have your horse pivoting with their front legs in one place. You should only have to move your leg back and we should have the hind limbs moving away from that leg underneath the horse as a pivot. This develops control of your horse's hind end off of the leg. If this is a concept you haven't yet introduced – start by doing it on the wall. If your horse does not understand that they are meant to move **over** off of your leg aid while stagnant, we cannot expect them to understand that they are meant to move **over** off of your leg aid while in motion or through a corner. It never hurts to reiterate to a well-trained horse that they are to move **away** from your leg pressure and not *run forward* off of it.

### 2. Turn on the haunches.

- a. This is the same for the turn on the forehand, if your horse is great at these let's do them off of the wall on the quarter line and alternate

directions. If not, please do them against the wall. This is the same concept however we are now pivoting on the back legs. The front legs should cross over in front of each other the horse's haunches should stay in place. This develops control of your horse's shoulders off the hand. By opening the rein in the direction you're encouraging the shoulder and closing the rein you are trying to move the horse off of – you should be able to direct the horse's shoulder one step at a time.

This also teaches your horse how to properly respond to rein pressure.

These are so important for any horse that falls in, falls down, doesn't properly move off the leg, is difficult to turn, is difficult to stay straight – anything you can think of! Why? Because a lot of the time these basic modes of communication between you and your horse aren't reiterated over time. Maybe they knew once that if you put your right leg on and back, they should step underneath themselves with it instead of running through it or away – but we don't reinforce these concepts nearly enough. If you take the time to develop these small skills at the beginning of each of your rides, you will be blown away with what happens when you try to do a true yield or encourage your horse out properly into a corner on a course.

### 3. Halt, trot, walk, trot transitions.

- a. I am not trying to be boring, however, with horses that run away when they canter or jump – there is a clear lack of responsiveness. This can be due to a whole variety of things. Weakness, greenness, habit, confusion, excitement etc. The list goes on, but that’s not what is important here. You need to be extremely mindful of what happens *when* you do these transitions with your horse. I encourage you to do these transition sets **off of the rail** on any line that isn’t against a wall. I use letters to mark my transitions so that my horse can catch on over time and be rewarded faster. This is an easy way to build confidence when you’re working on something like this opposed to the approach of “switching it up”. It is so important for your horse to actually know that they are doing what you ask and feel good about it. For instance, A and C will be where I do my halt transitions. B and E will be where I do my one step of walk and back to trot transitions. Simple pattern. Now to make it more technical, you need to ensure that your horse does not drop their shoulder when moving up to trot or down to walk or halt. Use your aids to correct them, if you’re really struggling – throw in a turn on the haunches or forehand depending on what they’re challenging you with. Then, use your seat and your voice to aid in responsiveness. Do not change your hand positioning

constantly. Make what you're asking crystal clear. When you are doing your walk transitions, I mean ONE step of walk. Can you feel their hip drop? Can you feel their hind end push when you close your leg? This exercise develops hind end strength, communication, physical awareness and your horse's responsiveness.

With these transitions, of course, you can integrate more challenges when you feel like your horse is good at responding. When you feel like they are straight underneath themselves through their transitions, it is time then to change up the pattern or add different gaits like the canter. This isn't going to be over the course of one ride.

We have a group of several horses that don't know how to truly travel in proper contact. We may get it at times, it may be possible in a draw rein, it may be inconsistent or non-existent. The reason it is so important for a horse in general, but especially a horse that rushes the canter or coursework to learn how to properly travel in what we would characterize as a "frame" is as follows – horses usually rush at the canter, through corners and over fences due to a combination of excitement and weakness. The overarching problem here is that the horse does not properly travel with the majority of its weight in the hind end. As long as they do not understand the relationship with the bridle, they will continue to lean and rush

into the bit bearing down weight on the forehead. Mechanically, horses cannot come off of their forehead without learning how to come up through their back and shoulder. If their head is braced against the bridle, or above or below the vertical – we lose this type of engagement and lose our control.

Step one: teach the horse how to be in proper contact with your hand i.e. connection through the inside leg to the outside rein in a supple frame.

Step two: train and reinforce engagement through the back and hind end once we have learned proper contact in the front end.

#### 4. Bending.

- a. Start with something simple at the trot. We will do a 20-metre circle at each end of the arena before going to the other end, repeating the circle, and continuing back to the end you started at and so on. Hold your hands at least a **foot** apart for this exercise. Keep your hands in line with the track that you want your horse to follow and otherwise try not to fuss with them. We are going to start using your inside leg to send your horse to the outside hand whilst on the circles. Start on the left rein. Maintain your trot using your seat (and hand pressure if your horse jumps forward off of the leg). On your left circle, send your horse's right shoulder to make some contact with your right rein

by using your inside (left) leg. Keeping your hands wide enough is key because you can use your reins like bumpers at a bowling alley and your leg aid to push the ball (their shoulder) where you want it to go. When travelling with a correct inside bend you want to feel more pressure in your outside rein without compromising the inside bend. This takes practice but remember that it has to be clear for your horse. Taking the element of changing hands away and giving them clear direction with your leg aid on where to go is helpful for them to understand where to place their balance. If you're horse feels like soft butter at the trot you should do this exercise extensively at the canter. This develops your ability to engage your horse's hind end and steer both latitudinally and longitudinally by using diagonal aids.

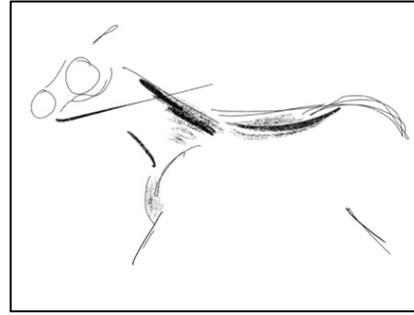
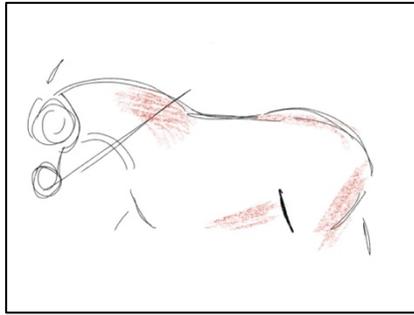
- b. **Issues:** if your horse is leaning heavily on your hand correct this by strong and succinct half halts. Use your seat and your hand pressure to pull the energy back and correspondingly releasing it so that they have to carry themselves for a few steps before they set in to lean on you again. Use leg in your half halt as you are taking energy away from them with your seat and hand, I want you to add energy under their hind end. You may only have a few steps where they don't lean on you, continue to correct this consistently and every ride they should lean a little less.

- c. **Additions:** when you feel like it is physically easy for you to send your horse to your outside rein on a circle and control their shoulder, add technicality to this exercise by changing the bends opposed to the directions. For the sake of explaining this exercise, I will explain again as if you're travelling left. You would change the positioning of your hands slightly to the inside (still a wide track) and use your outside leg to create and maintain an outside (right) bend on your (left rein) circle. Your left rein (new "outside") will be the point of contact for you and your horse and your right rein (new "inside") should just be open enough to encourage the outside bend. Simply put, change the bend and not the direction. It has to be consistent and maintainable. Your horse should not be dropping their shoulder to the inside, rather, balancing their inside shoulder on your inside hand.

## 5. "Framing".

- a. You should be able to carry your hand above your horse's wither with an upward feel on the bridle without them inverting their head and neck. I have drawn you some terrible drawings for reference to proper

contact where the shoulder and back is engaged, opposed to “lifted” contact where the neck is inverted. An example is when you lift your hand, you should be able to lift your horses’ *shoulder and wither higher, not their nose.*



There is a cyclical exercise I like to employ with horses that don't really know how to either maintain consistent contact, or don't know how to find that place of release at all. Truly, as a rider, we have to understand that “framing” is a method of pressure and release for the horse. You push (leg) your horse into your contact (hand) and in an effort to find a release from this tension (leg pushing, hand holding) your horse lowers its head, lifts its back and finds that the tension immediately softens. We have to learn proper form in the gym. Horses have to learn proper form when working. It is your job as the rider to be clear in your mind about the position you want them in – *because every, single, time they find that position you are going to be the lightest, softest, least annoying rider they've ever felt.* This is how you

teach them where to go. This is how you show them where the soft place is. You can't tell them with words, they have to feel the significant difference between the place of pressure and the place of release. If you know what this feels like, and your horse knows how to get there – you're already ahead. This will be a good exercise to get there faster. If you don't, this is a good exercise to try to break the tension with your horse and invite them to try to seek that place of release.

The exercise simply has four parts:

- 1) Inside rein
- 2) Inside leg
- 3) Outside hand
- 4) Half halt

It is best suited at the trot because it is much easier to teach a horse proper contact when you already have momentum. Easiest to do on a large circle because it encourages your horse to carry their shoulder fore. I use each of these aids independently in a pattern, every couple of steps at the trot. First inside rein to turn the head slightly to the inside. Second inside leg to press the horse's ribcage out. Following that I have let go of the tension on the inside rein and have switched to outside contact. Think of it as your leg sending their body out, and

your outside rein being there to catch it. For a moment, your horse balances on that outside contact. I'll hold that pressure until they lose the bend, release, and go back to repeating the same pattern. Throw in a half halt with a soft release any time your horse feels like they are falling or rushing to set them back. Keep momentum and repeat this both directions on a circle. If ever your horse drops their nose or raises their wither soften all of the aids and let them do their thing. This is the first step in teaching them how to travel properly over their back by balancing on their outside hind and your outside rein.

## 6. Conditioning Corners.

- a. I love this exercise for horses that tend to dive or drive right through the leg and hand through a turn. It may be on the flat, at only the canter, only in courses – but the point is that you can condition your horse to change their habitual behaviour when it comes to corners. Of course, that means strengthening, but you can also create a positive expectation or beneficial anticipation by using this exercise frequently. I would personally do it at the walk, then trot, then canter – depending on the horse. Start at the walk on a quarter line, when you are  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way down the long side of your arena start with a leg yield towards the rail. The key is to slow your rhythm slightly when

you are doing your yield. It should be an even line, and by the time you reach the rail you should be just before the corner. At the trot, same thing. Ensure your inside leg is slightly back and your outside leg is inviting and soft. You can open your outside rein so long as your horse is moving their *hind end* towards the wall **ahead** of their *shoulder*. I would integrate this at the canter while sitting. A full seat at the canter will help you organize your horse as a leg yield for a rusher is more difficult. Do not let them run through your hand. Sit up tall and carry your inside rein if needed. This will take time and practice to do it correctly. Use an aid like a whip or gentle spur to enforce your leg aid if they are not responsive enough. Integrate this into all of your rides. This does two things; it teaches your horse to anticipate that before a turn you are always going to slow your rhythm. They pick up on this quickly, and there is nothing more helpful than having this as a tool when you go to turn a corner in a course – even as a jumper. Secondly, it conditions your horse to expect to have to move off of your inside leg **before** a corner. When your horse is already falling through, there is nothing you can do to physically hold them up with your inside leg. If you use this enough, they learn to move their own body into the turn instead of cutting across it.