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Six Life Lessons We Can Learn from Horses

Although it might sound odd, horses offer us an impressive model of work-life balance. Especially when you consider that the “work” of a wild horse is to live, their balancing act is truly exemplary. If you’re overworked, overwhelmed or underappreciated, grab your favorite beverage and get peaceful for just a moment and see if you might be able to pick up a few tips from our four-footed friends.

Horses take good care of themselves. When they’re hungry, they eat. When they’re thirsty, they drink. When they’re sleepy, they sleep. They don’t neglect their basic physical needs. Taking good care of your physical self is not selfish. In fact, it’s a gift. The better you take care of you, the more you can give to others.

Horses get plenty of exercise. Horses need to move. Not only is it physically good for them, it keeps them in better shape mentally. In fact, horses that are kept in stalls most of the time and only allowed out for “training” often end up with ulcers or other medical or behavioral problems. Our bodies and minds also benefit from exercise. Follow the horse’s example and go for a walk!

Horses don’t do things that don’t contribute to their well being. They understand what’s important in the life of the herd and they keep it simple. They don’t join committees or plan extravaganzas for visiting herds. They only do what’s important to them. They know the best way for them to contribute to the safety of the herd is to fulfill their role to the best of their ability. They don’t take on additional duties because they think they “should.”

Horses pay attention to their inner voice. When they start feeling that something’s ‘just not right’ they don’t worry about hurting someone’s feelings or being wrong. They’ll communicate their feelings to the rest of the herd. *“The way we’re heading doesn’t seem safe to me. Can we try something different?”* If something in your inner or outer environment is bothering you, don’t ignore it --explore it.

Horses are honest about their feelings. If they look afraid, they’re afraid. If they look mad, they are mad. If they don’t follow you willingly, either they think they have a better idea or they don’t trust you. The honesty of the horse is one of his most valuable qualities. People, on the other hand, often feel one way but act another. We want to appear more powerful than we really are. We pretend to like someone more than we really do. We’re afraid to show our true self for fear of being rejected. The more honestly we interact with others, the more integrity we exhibit and the more others trust us and want to be around us.

So, the next time you feel like skipping your morning workout or someone else wants you to add just one more item to your ‘to do’ list, think about what the horses would do. Be honest about your feelings when you gently but honestly give feedback about a project at work. Listen to your inner voice when you’re unsure about a situation. Then go hug a horse for helping you take better care of yourself.

About the author. *Kathy Taylor is the owner of HerdWise, LLC. She finds it endlessly fascinating how horses show her clients exactly what they need to see in order to lead more effective lives. She and her herd provide individual sessions for personal growth and professional development as well as half-day and full day experiences for team building and leadership. Please visit her website at www.HerdWise.net.*