

Build Trust in Your Horse Through Knowledge

Written by Megan Sorentino

For 15 years of my riding career, I was never conscious of how horses moved. In that time frame I never sat on a horse and thought, “Wow! I have 4 legs and a long neck.” Looking back on that time I can’t believe I was so unaware for so long.

No one explained to me how horses move or why it is important to my riding, until I started studying Classical Horsemanship.

There are so many reasons that riders should know how their horses move, but I think one of the most important is that it builds trust in your horse. The way this works is that when you know how your horse moves then you can help them move well instead of accidentally interfering with their movement.



For example, the smallest possible turn a human can make is about 18 inches. The smallest possible turn a horse can make is the length from the horse’s nose to their tail, this length on average is 6 to 8 feet. That is a lot larger than 18 inches.

As riders and handlers this means we need to show our horses by how we move around them that we understand that they can’t turn in as tight of a space as we can. It is not that a horse can’t make a tight turn, say in a barn aisle, but turning that tight will make them awkward as they turn. To horses, awkwardness can translate as the potential to be knocked off balance and even fall over. When that happens, if danger comes, they are going to turn into lunch. Because horses are prey animals, they need to think like this. That is why you may see a horse be very spooky with one person and totally calm in the same situation with another handler.

A good handler needs to be aware of the principles of how horses move so that horses feel safe around them. When horses feel like they have their freedom and can move well, without interference, that translates to safety for them. Many horses can become less spooky simply by not interfering with their movement.

Another reason why it is important to know how your horse moves is that when we ride we are not just sitting on our horses, but we are borrowing their four legs. To be a good operator of these legs we better have an understanding of how they work.

When you see someone ride very well it almost looks telepathic, like the horse and human are one of the same mind. We call this the “centaur effect.” To get the centaur effect, you need to link your mind with the horse’s mind. If a rider doesn’t know how the four feet underneath them works, they will

never be able to join their mind with the horses. A horse will never join with someone that is always asking them to do things they can't do. Such as, turn into the fence.

By learning how your horse moves you are showing your horse that you have intelligence for their equine being. This allows you and the horse to become one; isn't that what every rider wants?



A final important reason that we will mention here on why it is important to know how your horse moves is that you can study your horse's movement and start to answer your own training problems. Without understanding basic principles of horse movement training issues are a mystery.

Don't be discouraged if you have never considered how your horse moves before, remember I rode that way for 15 years. After teaching riders how horses move for over a decade, I find that it takes everyone at least a couple years to really wrap your mind around equine movement. This may seem like a long time but think about how long it took you to learn how to use your humane body. By about two years of age most humane babies have a good sense of how to move their little bodies through space.

So do your horse a favor, show them your intelligence for their being, and learn the principles of equine movement.