

## **“DITCH THE DRAMA” DESENSITIZATION MADE EASY!! PART 1**

### **CLINIC OUTLINE**

- In this clinic we will tackle some pretty routine obstacles, teaching proper approach, execution, and progression.
  - How you approach and prepare for a situation, scenario, obstacle is more important than the obstacle itself.
  - It is imperative to have a soft, yielding horse that has bonded with and trusts and respects you to be able to desensitize to new and potentially intimidating situations and objects. You cannot force a horse that does not respect or trust you to do ANYTHING it feels unsafe.
  
- Approaching the situation, scenario, obstacle
  - Approach the situation with confidence and relaxation.
  - Keep the horses head pointed at the situation/obstacle, do not let them turn away and then try and re-approach. This teaches them they are “getting to leave for a moment” and they will continue this process.
  - When your horse is tense/stressed, find the point of relaxation and proceed from there, releasing pressure and giving reward with progress and increasing pressure and discouraging regression.
  
- Execution
  - When your horse accomplishes your request, light praise on the first and second go is acceptable. No need to over praise and trigger a “this is a big deal” response from your horse. You need to have the mind set of your horse should do what is asked if prepared and asked correctly.... don’t be surprised when they do. This mindset will rub off on your horse. Expectation of success, not problems.
  - Do not repeat the same obstacle/process over and over until the horse gets bored and/or frustrated and starts acting out accordingly. Move on to something different and come back to it later for reinforcement and/or improvements.

### **Bullet Points for Desensitization Clinic**

- The stronger your bond with your horse the easier it will be to conquer uncomfortable situations/obstacles. Spend time with your horse and do challenging things!!
- Approach situations and obstacles with a positive attitude. Not anticipating problems or riding nervous or defensive. Expect your horse to be ok with it, not the other way around!!
- Do not avoid situations with your horse but tackle them with confidence and intelligence. Do avoid apprehensiveness and recklessness, there is a difference between confident and crazy.
- If genuinely and legitimately unsure about a situation or obstacle, approach in hand and work towards riding through it.
  
- Keep the horse's head pointed at the problem, do not let them turn their back to it.
  
- If your horse is stressed, find a point of relaxation and proceed from there, progressing each time the horse relaxes and accepts the current level. Reward forward progress, discourage regression. Discipline over reaction or dangerous behavior.
  
- You do not need to desensitize to every possible scenario/object. Just teach yourself and your horse how to handle new and potentially intimidating things and it WILL become easy!!