

The Power of Pause

By Robyn Hood

It seems as though most of us are in a constant rush. We want things to happen now and are impatient if this fails to occur. By slowing down and acknowledging the importance of spaces in time, we may actually achieve what we desire more quickly. The pause allows us a moment to reflect, exhale, become neutral, integrate, be mindful and listen.

It was at least 10 years ago, at an Advanced Training held in New Mexico, that the importance of the pause was really brought to our attention. One of our practitioners, Sally Morgan, who is also an Upledger CranioSacral Instructor, was attending the training and we spent part of a day learning some craniosacral techniques. One of the benefits of craniosacral work is helping a being achieve 'Stillpoint'.

When a Stillpoint is achieved, the craniosacral rhythm comes to a pause, inducing a state of deep relaxation. This in turn causes the sympathetic nervous system to step down which reduces the fight-or-flight responses subsequently allowing access to the healing and restorative powers of the parasympathetic system. During this training we brought dogs in from a local shelter and Sally noted that when Practitioners were using TTouches like the Python Lift or coiled Python on the dogs that 'Stillpoint' was often achieved on the pause of the lift.

This prompted Linda to name one of the endings of the circle PAWS – Pause Allows Wondrous Stillness. A pause at the end of a circular touch keeps us mindful – can be short or long.

When to pause?

- ◆ When we first make contact with an animal
- ◆ When we give a signal – such as picking up the hoof of a horse; giving a forward signal when leading; when signalling for a stop.
- ◆ When we bring an animal towards an obstacle and you feel the slightest hesitation, pause before going over or onto it
- ◆ When we feel any resistance or reluctance to comply

Pausing when we put our hand(s) on a body before starting TTouches allows connection and gives the being a moment, as in a greeting.

A moment of stillness upon approach – when wanting to engage a horse, dog or person, instead of just marching up to them, walk a few steps, stop for a moment, exhale and diffuse your gaze – causes an animal to feel less invaded and it then allows them to meet us in the approach.

When doing groundwork and you give a signal – such as asking a horse to move forward – people often give a signal and immediately pull if the horse does not comply. Remember that when we want to give a signal – the signal goes from our brain (the

idea); to our body (to give the signal); to the animal's body (the physical); to their brain (registering the request) and finally back to their body (to respond). When we repeat the signal or become insistent it can 'unbalance' the animal; trigger less functional posture; and the movement becomes less precise.

What we do with our body has a huge influence on the way animals respond to us. If we are tentative the pause gives us a moment to exhale and become more grounded. If we are out of balance, mentally, emotionally or physically, animals can 'feel it' when we interact with them. Peggy Cummings has many exercises in Connected Riding that help people have more awareness and do 'self checks' to see if they are in balance.

If you ask a dog or horse to step onto a strange surface and they don't comply – just give them a moment; exhale and often the animal will then comply. If they are still unsure, change something. That might mean 'chunking down' the situation to make it easier; do something else or just take a break.

When asking a horse to pick up his hoof I suggest giving the signal on the horse's leg and count 'one thousand one; one thousand two' before giving another signal. You will generally notice the horse starting a weight shift at the end of your count. If you ask again too quickly the horse has to reorganize again. The pause allows the nervous system to integrate the information. This is true for people as well as animals.

When we are learning something new we need time to process the information.

Use the 'moments not minutes' approach when working with the Tellington TTouches. Doing a few ttouches and then pausing allows the animal to know you are mindful and will give them the chance to give feedback about what you are doing.

A few years ago at a training in England we were discussing the importance of the pause. One of the students, a musician from Denmark, made the comment, 'it is the space between the notes that makes the music'. For me that sums up the power of the pause.

When life is speeding out of control and the harder you try less you seem to accomplish remember to pause and allow yourself a moment to reflect, exhale, become neutral, integrate, be mindful and listen. You may be surprised at your ability to proceed with the issues at hand.