



TOTAL HORSEMANSHIP™ TRAINING

- THE INNOVATIVE AND REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO TRAINING THAT MAKES TOTAL SENSE -

Why Christa Developed Total Horsemanship™

Christa Petrillo Total Horsemanship™ exists as an avenue, or pathway, to bring horses and people together in a meaningful, healthy, and positive way; the Total Horsemanship™ Way. Christa implemented Total Horsemanship to make a difference; to be a help to both horses and people.

Christa is a teacher extraordinaire with a sincere love for horses and people alike. That, coupled with insight, wisdom, knowledge, skill and a passion for everything equine, makes her quantified in her field of expertise and is why she is a sought after trainer, clinician and instructor.



Total Horsemanship™ was created and developed by Christa as a result of all her years of horse experiences. She grew up on a horse ranch with horses as a part of her daily duties, participating in youth horse clubs and showing horses. Then in her teen years through her twenties joining her mother in breeding Arabians and Quarter Horses, she became proficient in everything pertaining to horses. Her mother tells of coming to tuck her in at night as early as 10 years of age to find her asleep with the UC Davis Veterinary Encyclopedia of Equine Health laying open. She shares, "If Christa couldn't be located she could for sure be found in the barn with the horses. The family joke is the horses raised Christa." Her work as a veterinarian assistant in both small and large animal clinics, served to further her understanding of animals in general, and with horses in particular. After college Christa realized she couldn't exist without horses as a part of her daily life. She knew she was created to train horses and to help them and people in their relationship together... In all her searching for a way to accomplish that, she came upon John Lyons' web site, read about his certification program, prayed over it and

made the decision to move to Colorado for seven months to participate in the Lyons' Certification Program, for what ended up being something akin to boot camp on horseback. The program was taught by John Lyon's son, Josh, whose teaching and interaction with horses had a huge impact on Christa. In her early years she had been influenced by successful, knowledgeable trainers, now Josh was pulling it all together for her in a way that made sense. Over time Christa has obtained a Professional Reining Accreditation from the Lyons to add to her credentials.

Christa began to study equine behavior more in depth. Growing up interacting with the horses daily she understood how they communicate, herd dynamics, etc... She realized the significance of, "thinking like a horse" in her training. The Lyons' quote, "Know what your horse is going to do before he does it" rang in her mind and has served to shape the Total Horsemanship™ way.

Having trained literally hundreds of horses and people, it became evident that she could accomplish more with the horses and attain a higher performance level with them when she incorporated other components into her program, than simply applying training techniques. Those components are so common sense that we practically take them for granted, but when incorporated in a purposeful and thoughtful way they elevate the level of the entire experience between horses and people. So significant of a difference, it is literally ground breaking!

She first noticed the impact of what she now calls, "Total Horsemanship™" with a stallion she and her mother owned. The stallion had two very serious accidents as a youngster leaving him with leg malformations and a defensive disposition. Deemed, "a handful," his owners had given up on him and placed him in a retirement home. Christa and her mother owned one of his offspring and realized the excellence in his line and desired to add that into their breeding program. They were able to acquire him but over the first initial month it became evident that he was more of a liability than a benefit. Christa struggled to find a path to reach out to him and affect positive change in his behavior. "I prayed one night about "Fyre" before turning in," she begins. "I was seriously contemplating giving him back to his previous owner as per our agreement if I found I couldn't train him out of his dangerous behavior. In a phone conversation that one night, she had told me she felt he was so dangerous that perhaps he should be put down. I decided I would sleep on it. The next morning I went out to him and had a talk with him. I began to work him and miraculously things just began to click. I could see things about him, the why behind his behaviors- insights. I modified and made adjustments to the training techniques suited to his physical limitations and his personality. He was trying to tell me about his horrific past and the things that had been done to him... I began to listen to him and together we figured out an individual plan suited just for him. I wondered if a part of his attitude was a response to pain. With my background in veterinary medicine I was able to apply tests I knew to do that help determine pain, such as testing various pressure points. He lit up with discomfort on every point. Keeping him sound was important so I consulted my vet and farrier and together we all came up with corrective shoeing for him that supported him where his leg malformations didn't. I gave him herbs to help with circulation and inflammation in his legs and beefed up his immune system with vitamins and supplemented with glucosamine and chondroitin for his bone and joints. For a while he required acupuncture. I had him adjusted by a chiropractor. He had a high metabolism and would burn through the calories, so I added a quality supplement to his hay. One day I was driving along and saw some workers cutting trees along the road and grinding them into wood chips. I asked if I could have them and filled his 40' x 60' paddock with them which gave him a soft, spongy footing. It was evident he had never been properly socialized. He would roar, grab the pipe panels with his teeth and pull back and then turn and kick them, almost as a temper tantrum. I had a gelding that was extremely stoic, situated him about 20 feet away and over time moved him closer and closer until finally the two were over the fence together happily grooming each other. I've

identified five distinct personality types that I teach about and incorporate into my training. Fyre was what I call an interactive personality type who loved attention. He had to be the center of the universe, so I strategically placed him where he could see all the goings on around the ranch. This kept him quiet and content and with his mischievous personality occupied and out of trouble. By addressing the, “total horse,” I was able to not only keep him sound and in breeding condition, but he went from almost being put down due to being so dangerous, to a horse that I could lead quietly in a halter and lead rope. He was happy. I was happy with him.”

More than simply a natural horsemanship approach to training, which are basically techniques specifically geared toward equine behavior and manipulation by applying those techniques, Total Horsemanship™ includes the natural horsemanship method of training, but in addition addresses every aspect of the individual horse: equine behavior, personality type, stable management, health and nutrition, pain management, saddle fitting, conformation, past history, and training. Being knowledgeable in all these areas pertaining to horses and making adjustments according to the individual horse, the end result is bottom line: happier horses and happier horse owners- the TOTAL Horsemanship™ way.



Always studying, always learning from others and especially the horses, Christa continues to be innovative and fresh in her approach. Her students are realizing relationships with their horses they never even knew could occur. They enjoy learning from her as a passionate instructor who is fun with a good dose of a sense of humor. So jam packed with useful information, the common comments of people who attend her clinics and symposiums are always something along the lines of, “I never anticipated coming away with so much knowledge and information about so many facets of horses.” Gaining knowledge, and understanding how to apply it, is where positive change begins, takes root and blossoms into something beautiful.

Trustworthy, experienced, knowledgeable, Christa guides both people and horses on the Total Horsemanship™ path to successful horsemanship!