

Equine Facilitated Human Development: From the Conditioned Self Towards Congruency

Written by visionpure® Eva Reifler & Charlotte Perry



In the last issue I had the opportunity to give you an overview of our work. This time I would like to share an experience of one of my clients with Shaman (A paint horse gelding, seven years old).

Charlene (her name has been changed) sighs--she sits on the terrace and faces the golden horse, who's trying to reach some blades of grass on the other side of the fence. It is a lovely morning and a soft breeze plays with Shaman's mane, almost the same color as my client's hair.

"I need to ask them to forgive me, before I can start your apprenticeship," Charlene says. "I have done terrible things to them, brought them into difficult situations and I need to make my amends." Now she is crying.

I am intrigued--what could Charlene possibly have done which was so terrible, and I empathize with her pain. I sigh, then Charlene sighs, then the horse looks at us briefly, sighs as well and promptly returns to his search for food.

The flood of tears seems to lessen and Charlene continues: "I have to ask them to forgive me, because I was a warrior in my former life and it was painful for

the horses.” She starts sobbing again, but Shaman stays unfazed by her story. I assume that we have not yet accessed the real problem and I am none the wiser.

All of a sudden we talk about difficulties in her current life, how others are better off and that it is always nicer on the other side of the fence. I look at the horse, still trying to get some grass from under the fence—interesting, she seems to be getting closer to the actual issue.

I suggest we get closer to Shaman and ask Charlene what her intention is for her interaction with the horse today, fully expecting her to say: “that he forgives me.” Instead she says: “I want him to move – I want to move him, but not necessarily physically.”

Now I am confused since I was expecting her to say “that he forgives me” and I remind myself: once more this is a lesson in remaining humble, no personal agendas!

“Ok, I suggest you let that intention sink into your body,” I say before I open the gate and let her in with the horse. I am very curious about how the process will unfold. Since it is the first session with Charlene, I explain to her how to maintain security boundaries.

Shaman moves to the other side of the pen. He isn't even looking up, and remains absolutely indifferent towards the woman entering the pen – so much for authenticity. Shaman's indifference is an indication, that what Charlene shows on the outside is probably not congruent with what is going on inside her and I silently recall all the different topics we touched upon during the opening discussion. Former life, pardon, other side of the fence...

I see Charlene trying, half-heartedly, to get the horse moving. All he does is face her and stare at her – stubbornly and charmingly dominant.

“What is happening,” I ask after a couple of minutes.

“I would like to move him, but I don't dare – it is your horse and I don't want to hurt him,” she replies.

“If you'd like to lunge him, please be so kind and take the lunge whip to show him what you want: this will be more respectful than using your hands and

transferring all your energy and emotions directly onto his body. It is also much safer for you, since you can stay away from his butt,” I instruct her.

Charlene takes the lunge whip and after some moments of negotiation, Shaman finally starts moving to his left. After half a circle he turns around, faces the other direction and remains put. Charlene tries to have him turn around again, weaving the whip in front of his head. My observation: They are engaged in a very nice dance...perhaps of dominance? It seems to be leading nowhere.

“What is happening?” I ask.

“I can't manage to turn him around,” she says.

“Why do you insist on him turning to his left hand when he is offering you the other hand? After all, you don't know each other that well – why don't you allow yourself to take the easy path?”

“Oh my! ... that's old school,” she replies. (I assume she means: Old school is if I tell him to go left, he must go left).

The instant Charlene stops insisting and gives in to accept comfort, Shaman starts to walk.

I suppose we haven't even started scratching the surface of what Charlene is really looking for. The opening discussion was really profound and I stay very attentive to the scene that is unfolding in front of my eyes.

After half a circle, the energy changes again.

Charlene is disconnected for a fraction of a second and Shaman takes advantage of this, quickly closing the space between them; he stops and faces her – Charlene is stuck again.

“Where were you just then? Before he came in?” I want to know.

Charlene looks at me, puzzled and stops. Shaman is still at her side.

“I ask too much, I thought: this is asking too much,” she says.

I do not understand, as she has barely asked him to move in a very slow walk for not even a half circle, so



I delve further: “What is too much to ask for?”

Finally tears well up: “What I really would like to...” Her words trail off and I encourage her to let the tears flow freely. She puts the lunge whip down. Shaman takes advantage of the situation again and returns to the grass blades. Charlene still seems to be showing a certain amount of resistance.

“What is it that you need?” I ask her.

“I would like him to initiate making amends, but I don’t know how,” Charlene states.

“Ask him for help,” I suggest.

“Help me,” she whispers. I don’t hear the rest, but I don’t need to - Charlene has finally taken off her mask. The horse turns towards her at the very instant in which her resistance falls away and her authentic needs are being expressed.

She squats and Shaman gently puts his muzzle on her shoulder, they both remain in that position for what seems like an eternity- touched by grace that belongs to them. I am crying now too, deeply moved by the beauty of the moment.

One of the horses in the nearby paddock moves and Shaman lifts his head, only to put his muzzle back on Charlene’s forehead. So they remain in that position for another eternity.

All of a sudden, Shaman lifts his head and Charlene says at the same time: “It’s over, I can’t explain it, but it’s over.” The horse returns to grazing and Charlene leaves the round-pen – deeply moved by this brief moment of healing with the horse.

We did not speak much after the session, in order to allow the experience to set in fully. Charlene chose writing as means of integration. When we met the next time, some months later, the topic was not brought up again and we worked on a different challenge.

What Happened During this Session?

During the opening and introduction, Charlene’s conditioned and conscious self brought up all sorts of stories. This is usually the case, because the mind no longer has access to the deeper motivations of our true self. This incongruence raises blood pressure and heart rate. The “intensity” of the physical reaction



depends on the discrepancy between the perception of the true and the conditioned self.

The horse's physical feedback to Charlene's energy, similar to a lie detector, helps Charlene to navigate towards her true emotional needs. This is independent to whatever story the mind makes up. Once these true needs are acknowledged, Charlene inevitably becomes congruent and the authentic connection may happen.

This is the state where emotional corrective experiences unfold and healing becomes possible. Whether our mind understands it or not, neuropathways are rewired and a seed is planted which entails inevitably into change.

Do you like our articles? We would love to hear from you! Please forward your comments, questions, encouragements, etc., to Eva at info@visionpure.fr.

visionpure®

ABOUT visionpure®:

visionpure®, founded by Eva Reifler in 2008, is a pioneering center for horse assisted personal and professional development, only 45 minutes from Paris in France.

visionpure® offers private sessions, group workshops, train-the-trainer programs and customized workshops for leadership and team building programs.

At visionpure, we are dedicated to providing the highest level of safety, quality, respect and experience. We speak English, German and French fluently and work with horses and people throughout the world.

Visionpure
20 rue des vieilles vignes
F-95830, Frémécourt
France
+33 (0) 6 99 19 02 95
info@visionpure.fr
www.visionpure.fr

Facebook: le cheval, guerisseur de l'homme
Twitter: @visionpure_95