

How Do I Bond With My Horse?

Simple Ways to Bond with Your Horse (part I)

By Katherine Blocksdorf

When you get a new horse it is natural that you want to bond with it. Hopefully, your new horse means the start of a new and exciting relationship. Here are 4 ways to help create a bond between you and your new horse.

1. Firm, Fair and Consistent



I first heard 'firm, fair and consistent' from a pediatrician a long time ago. I think it applies to horses as well as children. At all times, you should be firm in your leadership. Communicate clearly and firmly your expectations regarding your horse's manners and behavior. If you ask your horse to step over five steps, and he knows how to do that, don't let him away with five steps over and three steps back. But be fair. Don't expect a horse to do anything it is not trained or physically able to do. And be consistent. When you ask your horse to back up, do it in the exact same way every time. Feed at the same times. Use the same aids and cues each time your work with your horse. Horses are creatures of habit and like predictability.

2. Don't Just Show Up for 'Work Times'



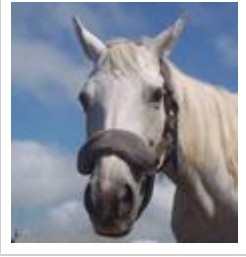
Showing up just for riding or driving time can be a temptation given the busy schedule most of us have. But try to take time just to visit. Simple things like hand grazing in a bit of lush grass they normally can't get too, scratching bellies or necks and just hanging out together is a relaxing way to bond.

3. Bring Treats



There are horse people out there who are against feeding treats. But horses exist solely for our pleasure, and most of us, including myself like to see our horses enjoy a treat. The key to feeding treats is to be sure you are consistent in feeding your treats safely.

4. Understand Body Language



Understanding your horse's body language and shaping your own body language will help you communicate with your horse and create a closer bond. This has to be done with consistency however. Something like 'join up' or other behaviors you have taught won't be permanent if your horse never knows what to expect next from you. Learn to understand what your horse is thinking by observing its facial expressions (yes, horses do have them), ears, tail and posture.