



Lessons About Life

Courage helps you find your place in the world.

Even when your life changes in big ways – with courage you can always find your special place in this world. We all have a special place.

Being Different means you're Special.

Just because others say being different means you're Unlovable, that doesn't mean anything. Being different is the best way to be - because each and every one of us is unique. Being different means we're being ourselves.

Being little doesn't mean you're less.

Size doesn't reflect our importance or our power. We are only as big, or as small, as we believe we are. Mav's Momma never taught him he was little - so he plays with the big horses as if he were their equal - and loves every minute.

Walk at your own pace, you still get where you're going.

Everyone has their own way of doing things – and we all need to honor and allow our differences. Some walk fast, some walk slowly, some want to do things one way, some another - but we all end up in the same place. So who cares how we get there? Viva la difference!

Love, Love, Love is the most powerful gift in the world.

Love is a gift we can give to others to help make their lives happier. Love is also a gift we can receive when we learn to trust. You can even take a nap in the sun when you know you're safe because you are loved!

Facing fear makes it Go Away.

Whether you're a kid, an adult or a critter - we all have scary times in our lives. That's when we can learn to face our fears. After all, fear is only in your mind. Once we step up and look at our fear with courage and trust in ourselves, it disappears. We have that power. All of us.

You are Unstoppable!

Lessons About Horses

Wild Horses in America

The Spanish Conquistadores brought wild Horses to America. The horses played a key role in helping the Spanish conquer the native Indian civilizations in both North and South America. Natives on foot with primitive weapons were no match for the Spanish and their war horses.

These wild horses were purebreds – so today's wild horses are the descendants of Andalusians, Spanish Barbs, the Spanish Jenet (extinct) and more.

As the Spanish moved on – the horses were left behind, or escaped – and become the forefathers of today's wild horses.

The word Mustang comes from the Spanish word *mustenga* – meaning ownerless horse.

100 years ago there were over 1 million wild horses. Today – there are less than 25,000.

Herd Families

Horses have families just as we humans do. They're called herds. Each herd is like a family, and every family member plays a role in the family so that everyone has a good life.

- The Stallion is the daddy of the herd. He watches over everyone to make sure they are okay,. He fights off predators and other wild horses who might hurt his herd.
- The Bell Mare is the mommy of the herd. She watches over all of the herd activities, assigns roles to different family members and makes sure the family is running smoothly and happily.
- The Band of Boys are the boy horses who are not the stallion daddy. They hang out with the other boys and move with the herd – but stay away from the mares. The stallion doesn't like them near his family.
- The Mommy horses are the ones who have babies, take care of them and raise them in the ways of the herd.

Herd families remember each other - even when they are separated for a long time. When Maverick met some of his herd members (at the Mustang Challenge) after he came to live with me - he whinnied and snorted and had a fit until I took him go see them. All the other horses did the same. The whole barn was filled with horses calling to each other, catching up on what had happened since they last saw each other. They talked for days while we were at the show. And yes, I felt so sad that I couldn't bring all of Maverick's family home for him to love.

Prey vs Predators

Horses are prey animals - which means they are naturally afraid of humans. Why? because we smell like McDonald's to them - and so do coyotes, wild dogs, mountain lions and other scary critters that hurt horses. Because horses are prey animals - we have to communicate with them differently. Mav shares lessons on prey vs. predator behavior - and how to best communicate with horses in the most Natural way.

Instincts

Instincts are the things that tell us what's best for us. For example, instincts in horses tell them when we should run from a predator, when we should pay attention to something around us, when we should eat, sleep, drink, where food and water can be found, the path to home and more. In our modern world, instincts come into play around food in a different way - based on sunlight. Domestic horses get hungry when the sun comes up -just like wild horses. That's when they really expect their breakfast - at sunlight. Same thing happens at night - as the sun drops, they want their dinner before it gets dark. Because at dark - they go to sleep.

Instincts in humans aren't as strong as they used to be because we have become "domesticated" and don't need instincts to survive anymore. Wild horses are like other wild animals - their instincts help them survive.

Domestic vs. Wild Horses

Horse in the wild are very different from horses born in captivity. Why?

Because their instincts are finely tuned. They know how a predator smells, what's dangerous and what isn't. That means that they aren't afraid of things that make a domestic horse want to run away. That means they can find water and food with their noses – they've done it in the wild.

There are many examples of the difference between being born wild and being born with humans. Shadow (my Morgan horse) and Maverick will demonstrate more differences in the experiential part of the program.

Playfulness and Intelligence

A lot of people say that horses aren't that smart. Well, we folks who love horses would tell you that's just not the case.

Horses learn quickly - especially when it's about a game or something that's fun for them. Maverick learned to pick up a tarp and run around the arena with it in less than FIVE minutes. That's because it was fun and enjoyable for him!

Horses love to play. Whether it's with each other in natural games or in variations of humans games. Maverick loves to play with toys - his pen is full of them. He also loves to kick and shove

the soccer ball - and is looking for a horsie soccer team to play with. If you know of one - please let Mav know. He may be little but he's mighty!

Communication

Horses communicate with different parts of their bodies than we do.

- Horses smell to learn about their environment, seek food and water, recognize predators and more.
- Horses' lips are as sensitive as their noses. Think of their lips as their fingers. They touch things to learn about them, nibble and test for food, something fun to play with or a pleasant touch. They also communicate with each other through their lips - from nuzzling and grooming to playing to outright aggressive games.
- Horses' ears can tell you all about their current state of mind - where they are focused, whether they are happy, afraid or upset. Watch where a horse points their ears and you'll know where their attention is focused. If their ears are pinned back toward you - that doesn't mean they are mad. It means they are paying attention to you.
- Horses' tails communicate too. The way they swish them, and where they swish them, tells you whether they are relaxed, upset, angry, nervous or confuse. Horses also communicate with each other with their tails - doing everything from saying "Hello!" to swishing away flies to saying "Come this way." Horse mama's use their tails with their babies to guide and love them.
- Horses' voices change as they "speak". Different tones in their voices signal different meanings to their herd family. One whinny can mean "RUN," another may mean "All is well," and another may say "Let's play!" Horses snort, whinny, squeal in so many different ways. Just as we have words, they have their voices to communicate.

Interacting with a Horse

Above all – Always remember you are a PREDATOR

- When you approach – reach out your hand and let the horse sniff you. THEN you can touch him.
- Horses can only see to their sides – not directly in front. So approach from the side
- No running at the horse – he'll think you're going to eat him for lunch
- No quick moves – he'll think you're going to attack him
- Quiet voices – loud voices mean DANGER to the herd