

# Equine Structural Integration

## Accomplishing your goals with Equine Structural Integration

Equine Structural Integration can help you to attain the performance goals you have for your horse by....

- Improving Suppleness
- Increasing Impulsion, Energy & Vibrancy
- Accentuating Grace & Fluidity
- Heightening Precision & Responsiveness
- Reducing Risk of Injuries
- Helping with Recuperation from Injuries or Diseases
- Aiding Effectiveness of Other Therapies
- Encouraging Better Attitude

Use Equine Structural Integration to bring your horse's system of connective tissue, muscles and bones into balance and alignment.

## Why Do Horses Need Structural Integration?

All horses, even healthy ones, develop inefficient movement habits and accumulate a history of kicks, falls, and bruises. Over time these travel through the horse's body compromising his comfort and movement. To the rider, it may appear that your horse lacks flexibility or suppleness. Your horse may even become irritable on the ground or when you ask it to perform certain movements.

Equine Structural Integration is a natural, holistic approach useful for improving your horse's performance. It is scientifically proven that Structural Integration is a powerful method for unwrapping structural and neuromuscular holding patterns of connective tissues. The benefit of this individualized approach is to return your horse's body back to its ideal balanced state. While restructuring and realigning the body, we actually 'return' connective tissues back to their elastic, gel-like state. Structural Integration works well in combination with other forms of therapy and is beneficial for rehabilitation from injuries, after surgery and for some diseases. The effects of structural integration are long-lasting because '*we are reprogramming*' – not simply relaxing - the connective tissue. These sessions can help horses organize their movement patterns to overcome road blocks which compromise performance.

*"Your horse now moves, looks and feels like the horse you first envisioned he could become".*

When chronic adhesions release their hold, you will feel and see the changes in your horse as he now moves more efficiently - freely, powerfully and in balance. This new feeling of '*freedom of movement*' emerges because the different layers of fascia are now able to glide effortlessly over one another. This translates into your horse having more potential energy and power. Results include an increased rhythmic grace and a willingness to perform along with the rider.

## What is connective tissue and how does reduced flexibility occur?

Connective tissue (or fascia) surrounds all the bones and organs in the body and envelops and permeates each muscle. Its purpose is to connect the entire system into one working whole. Ideally connective tissue is elastic and gel-like, allowing each muscle and bone to glide by its neighbor, supporting and working in harmony with each other. Injuries, chronic stress or strain, aging, even normal wear and tear can cause the body's connective tissue (fascia) to thicken into adhesions as the tissue repairs itself, often becoming fibrous and glue-like in the process. This reduces flexibility of the joints and prevents muscles from lengthening to their full extent and thus compromises fluid movement.

An example of how reduced flexibility might occur: If a muscle were pulled in the left foreleg this may cause your horse to favor that leg. Over days or weeks this might cause him to put greater strain on the right leg and shoulder. These compensations may further cause the horse to begin straining his neck on the right side and upper back. The horse now feels unbalanced and is more limited in his movement choices and cannot function at his best. Over time his body will begin to rigidify the fascia into a more fixed position to support the imbalance as other parts of his body compensate further.

## What's in a session?

- Movement Analysis.
- Hands-on Body scan: What moves freely, holds tensions or is tender? Where is the horse cautious about being touched?
- Creating a Body map: Devising a sequential plan to unravel compromised muscular and imbalanced myofascial relationships.
- Hands-on Bodywork: Releasing adhesions, rebalancing skeletal structure.

Your practitioner begins work at the superficial layers of tissues. As outer layers become more flexible and less restricted, the practitioner is able to work deeper into the horse's structure to organize intrinsic muscle and joint relationships more efficiently.

To achieve maximum performance improvement from this program, 5 sessions are required. In cases of rehabilitation, number of sessions is determined by individual need. Further, we find most horses benefit from a 'tune-up' session(s) after 6-12 months.

## **The Five Sessions of the Equine Structural Integration:**

### First Session

Purpose -- Build trust. Identify the horse's tension patterns.

Method -- Release holding in surface musculature. Identify deep holding patterns that are the road map for a continuing series.

### Second Session

Purpose -- Create a better sense of stability, giving the horse more security moving on and off the ground. Bring out the power available in the horse's hind end.

Method -- Emphasize vertical line integrity in standing. Free up tendons and musculature of all four legs. Free up superficial and midlevel fascial restrictions in shoulders, pelvis, lumbar and hip joints.

### Third Session

Purpose -- Integrate muscle groups that share movement functions.

Method -- Begin to shift vertical line integration into horizontal plane. Work focuses on functional quadrants rather than individual muscles.

### Fourth Session

Purpose -- Bring out fluidity of whole body in motion.

Method -- Connect front and hind ends through the barrel. Emphasize horizontal line cohesiveness.

### Fifth Session

Purpose -- Reinforce changes after horse has practiced his discipline.

Method -- Maintain fascia flexibility of horse allowing strengthening needed for integrated movement patterns.

## **After a session**

Following the directions below will help your horse to feel and learn on its own how much better it can move its body!

Your horse will likely be feeling active and frisky immediately after the session. You may lunge at the walk, trot and canter ten times in each direction. This will help to integrate the structural changes in the horse's body and allows the work to penetrate more deeply. Keeping safety in mind, if your horse wants to kick up his heels, let him. If he wants to roll, encourage him to do that, too; he's exploring how his body moves in different ways. It's even a good idea after a session to turn horses out and let them run, turn, twist and roll giving them the opportunity to explore their new flexibility. This is an *important part* of the session because it 'helps horses know what they are now capable of doing'.

Be aware that although horses are not sore from the bodywork after a session, once in awhile a horse might overdo the exploration of his new flexibility. If he's still racing, running and rolling after half an hour, you might want to bring him in for the night. Most horses have common sense about what they can do, but every once in awhile a horse feels so good he wants to jump over the moon. If soreness is a concern to you, monitor his field play that day.

+Do not ride for the rest of the day following a session to allow your horse to move without your weight and directions.  
++Do half of a normal workout the following day which allows the horse to move around while still processing and integrating the neuromuscular changes that have taken place.

## **For Questions, Scheduling or Complimentary Assessment**

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