

Improve performance with Structural Integration

Throughout life, all animals accumulate a history of inefficient movement habits. In horses, inefficient movement can be the result of normal wear or tear or having been bruised in falls or kicks and bites; it may occur due to improperly fitted tack, rider imbalance, injuries, surgeries and even some diseases.

Over time these bruises will result in disturbances traveling through the horse's body which compromise comfort as well as movement. To a rider, it may appear that their horse lacks flexibility, suppleness, or even impulsion. There may be a change in the horse's attitude which may be perceived as the horse becoming irritable on the ground or balking at performing certain movements. Riders may never imagine these changes are due to the many occurrences that happen throughout their horse's life.

To understand how disturbances detract from fluid movement in the horse, let's take the example of having a pulled muscle in the left foreleg. Having a pulled muscle causes the horse to favor that leg. Over days or weeks he will try to shift his weight away from the left leg to protect it. He will 'compensate' for the problem with the left foreleg by putting more weight on the right leg and shoulder. This weight shift will create greater strain on these other limbs.

This compensation pattern may further cause the horse to begin straining his neck on the right side and upper back. The horse might now feel unbalanced and is more limited in his movement choices; no longer is the horse functioning at his best. Over time this horse's body's connective tissue or fascia will become rigid and, more or less, fixed to support the imbalances as other parts of his body compensate further.

Structural Integration

Structural Integration is a hands-on manipulation of the

body's connective tissue. This work has been scientifically proven to be a powerful tool useful for unwrapping structural as well as neuromuscular holding patterns of the body's connective tissues. Structural Integration is an individualized therapy regimen which can return the horse's body's structure back into its most optimal form. Structural Integration therapy improves body awareness, movement patterns, postural alignment and overall athletic performance.

When you return the horse's body back to its ideal balanced state, the body can then achieve a greater range of motion. This results in a horse being able to perform to its full capabilities. The key to the success practitioners have with Structural Integration Therapy is that as we return connective tissue back to a more original elastic, gel-like state, we allow for a restructuring and aligning of the body. In a sense they 'reprogram' — not simply relax — the body's connective tissue.

Using Structural Integration therapy works because it reduces and can even eliminate adhesions of the body's connective tissue. Because adhesions are a contributing factor in causing additional (repeated) injuries, Structural Integration therapy is a very

useful tool in any rehabilitation program. The effects of Structural Integration Therapy are long-lasting and considered semi-permanent. This is the reason having a Structural Integration series can help horses organize themselves to overcome road blocks which compromise their performance as well as assist as part of a rehabilitation program.

The Equine Natural Series

The Equine Natural Movement Series is the method of Structural Integration used by Bobbi Jackson, BSc, BFA, Certified Practitioner of Equine Structural Integration; owner of Equine Enhanced Movement, LLC.

The Equine Natural Movement Series generally takes five sessions to complete when used to improve a horse's performance. It is carried out over a few months allowing the individual to integrate the changes in their body. In rehabilitation cases, the primary goal of Structural Integration therapy is to help balance and stabilize the animal's body. The intention in these situations is to allow the horse to have the ability to continue working (without re-injuring itself), thereby working towards regaining its former level of performance. The number of sessions is determined by individual need due to the type of



In the 'zone,' this horse's facial expression reveals how relaxed he has become while getting treated by Bobbi Jackson, BSc, BFA, Certified Practitioner of Equine Structural Integration; owner of Equine Enhanced Movement, LLC.

injury or disease incurred by each individual; the therapy duration may or may not be long term.

Jackson finds that because Structural Integration is carried out in a very gentle and respectful manner, horses really seem to enjoy it. As horses are able to ab-

sorb and incorporate the changes, the work proceeds deeper to unwind core holding patterns. Changes that take place occur pretty rapidly and are often noticeable immediately following a session. One of the nice things about Structural Integration therapy is that it works well alongside other forms of therapy. It can even help other therapies be more effective. Owners are encouraged to continue training throughout the series which allows their horses to integrate and fully absorb these new improvements in balance and flexibility occurring within their bodies.

Jackson has worked in research in the Animal Science Departments of PSU and at McGill University. She has experience as an aid to Physical therapists and as an Operating Room Assistant with small and large animals. She is a dressage rider and is a Certified Practitioner of Equine Structural Integration.

Her practice is located in S. Eastern Pa., Central N.J. and Montreal, Quebec, Canada. She is also available to travel to your location.

If you would like more information about Equine Structural Integration or to schedule an appointment, visit equineenhancedmovement.com, call 908-230-0716, or e-mail EquineEnhancedMovement@gmail.com.



Equine Sports Medicine

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Nominate a helpful farrier

American Farriers Journal is accepting nominations for the "Summit Achievement Award" for volunteer service by farriers.

The 2013 award winner will receive \$2,000 as well as free registration and paid travel expenses to next winter's International Hoof-Care Summit. During a ceremony at the Summit, a plaque will be presented to the winner and to the group for which the volunteered services were provided.

Anyone can submit a nomination by Aug. 31. Visit americanfarriers.com for details and the entry form.