



*positivehorsemagic*  
*foundation module*

*knowledge*

*action*

*compassion*



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*In the mid-Nineties, we set out to attain the scientific knowledge and practical skills to develop a horse management & training concept accessible to all horse owners. Most importantly it had to match our philosophy of how horses should be treated - with fairness, dignity and integrity.*

*Today, our dream is a reality with positive horse magic based on leading edge science in animal behaviour and learning theory and practical techniques founded on the use of positive reinforcement, the fairest of all training approaches, in our view.*

*There is nothing new in positive reinforcement - indeed Thorndike scientifically proved its existence when he studied cats in 1911 and no doubt, people have been using positive reinforcement techniques on each other - with great success - since time began.*

*But positive horse magic was born because we wanted to help all horse owners explore the awesome possibilities positive reinforcement training can offer. We hope it brings you an all-encompassing approach of how to develop the relationship with your horse to new, exciting heights.*

*At the Natural Animal Centre, positive horse magic is a living concept. We sincerely hope you and your horse experience as much enjoyment, fun and pure magic as we have had in developing it.*

*Yours positively,*

*Ross and Heather Simpson*

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\* ~ minimum suggested reading prior to starting the training module

*What is positive horse magic?*

When you see the magical results dolphin and agility dog trainers produce, it is truly amazing that we as horse trainers have taken so long to catch on. Great people managers are also able to motivate people to new levels of enthusiasm.

The secret of all this success is simple.  
behaviours that are wanted are rewarded and inappropriate or unwanted behaviours are interrupted or replaced.

Positive horse magic teaches you how to use positive reinforcement when you train your horse so that you too can attain the magic. The key difference is that the horse (like the dolphin) gets to enjoy each success rather “grin and bear” discomfort until he understands which behaviour you are trying to get him to perform.

To start, you will use clicker training but as you progress, you will move beyond the clicker to other forms of positive reinforcement such as using natural horse play patterns, learning how to pace rewards differently to create higher levels of enthusiasm . . . and much, much more!

As you journey through the modules, you will progress to working without food rewards (both on the ground and in the saddle).

You will follow a path that will cause your horse to become calmer and more responsive allowing you to develop his athletic talent sympathetically.

Positive reinforcement also allows you to focus on developing performance through fun. No journey ought to be without enjoyment. If at any time you find things slip off the positive path take a break to find out what is missing. Let your horse be your teacher in this respect; he will let you know if it has become a non-rewarding experience.

*“You will follow a path that will cause your horse to become calmer and more responsive allowing you to develop his athletic talent sympathetically”*

*The two concepts of positive horse magic*

**Management**

science of horse behaviour

understanding of your horses needs

release his mind for new learning

reveal  
and  
release  
the  
magic

develop enthusiasm

shape excellence

assess horses individually

**Training**

*Getting Started*

Putting the theory before the horse

To help you become an adaptable and independent trainer, we offer you not just a set of techniques to master, but also the scientific logic of why they work. With an understanding of the 'why', you will learn how to adapt effectively to the many and varied situations you will face when training your horse.

The theory sections are first in the Module. Ideally, read them more than once before starting your training and they will come to mean more and more as you progress in both theory and practice.

Successful distance learning programmes depend on your ability to understand and adapt as your horse reacts. The better your understanding of the theory, the easier it will be for you to be flexible and hence successful.

*The training concepts*

At the very heart of the programme is the fact that calm horses learn more effectively than stressed ones. As a basic building block, calmness is a solid foundation to any and all training. Each module (whether on the ground or riding) is designed to help you progress towards athletic movement.

In positive horse magic, everything starts on the ground. Each module prepares you for the next in the sequence, with the ground skills preparing you for the riding modules and more advanced and athletic ground work.

The above diagram gives you an overview of some of the tasks you will master in each module. The arrows provide an idea of how the various tasks prepare the way for subsequent modules and more advanced tasks.

## *Concept 9: Follow me Closely*

**Objective** To strengthen the bond between you. Teach him to follow you at the walk, changing directions and from walk to halt.

**Equipment** Clicker, food

**Method** Check that he will consistently walk at your shoulder with the rope attached. Take the rope and halter off and accelerate slowly into walk, clicking and rewarding for him staying with you. Slow down gradually to a halt, clicking and rewarding his staying at your shoulder. Think of having an elastic thread linking you together, accelerate too quickly and it will stretch a little but then snap.

Start the change of direction by turning across him; if he is on your right side then turn to your right. Only once the transitions and turns towards him are solid should you try turns away from him. When you start these, remember the concept of the elastic thread. Make the turns in wide arcs, avoiding any sudden movement that will snap the thread.

If you lose him at any stage lure him back by holding the food reward out for him. Click when he moves forward, returning to you. Then continue but shape the concept of him staying with you more gradually. Stay at the walk until you have completed concepts 10 & 11 which follow.

**Solutions** He does not follow you. Go back to the halter and rope and shape the behaviour of him staying at your shoulder so it is consistent (concept five).

He starts stealing food or mugging you when movement is introduced. Slow down the process if he is losing his calmness with the introduction of movement. Re-establish his calmness by asking him to touch the cone on the ground at a stand still. Go back to movement using the halter and rope to begin with and then progress to follow me closely.

He lags behind you. Keep to straight lines luring him forward with the food reward. The concept of the elastic thread is especially important for this situation. If necessary go back to shaping the exercise with the rope only applying 1 oz of contact. Be patient and reward every positive move forward and then every fraction of acceleration.

