

“How to Simplify Life with Horses?”

Many of us horsey men and women are married to or live with 'non-horsey' types. Questions such as 'how long does it take to ride one horse?', and 'you've been gone all day...' can cause irritation. If this sounds familiar it could be time to simplify how we spend our time with our horses.

If you want to create more time and take back your life – read on!

“Once Upon A Time there was a young girl lucky enough to own her own dapple grey pony. The girl loved her pony and life felt good; she got up early each day, cycled to her pony to check on him before returning home for breakfast then school. After school she cycled back again to brush and ride her pony before returning home for tea, homework, TV, and bed.

One Christmas the little girl was given a present – a book on “How to Care for Your Pony”. Eager to do the right thing by her pony she couldn't put the book down: it taught her a lot! She learnt about grooming, strapping, tack cleaning, how to lunge her pony and of course all about rugs! Lots and lots of different rugs to collect! The more she read the more her confidence grew. She learnt to experiment with different hard feeds, girths, bits, protective leg boots and built up an impressive first aid kit. She collected so much 'stuff' that she needed more space – her simple field shelter and small collection of buckets and brushes were no longer enough!

Such had her responsibilities grown that she now stabled her pony at night, needing hay and straw, she kept all her 'stuff' in a tack room, her feeds in a feed room and had to fit a large wicker basket to her cycle for fetching and carrying. She was spending so much time caring for her pony's 'stuff' that she hardly had time to spend with him! Daily riding was still accomplished but it had to be squashed between feed preparations, tack cleaning, rug brushing, feeding and mucking out. One day she realised she didn't really have time to cycle home, eat her tea or to do her homework. She would have to cycle faster, eat quicker, skip homework and sleep less! This wasn't good!”

The morale of this story is:



It is easy to get swept up in 'needing to collect more stuff for our horse'; be eager to show off 'how much we know' to help others, and forget how to simply 'be' with our own horse. As a result, time can be miss- spent on behind the scenes activities instead of time in the saddle or watching him eat.

If you find yourself stuck in this cycle what can you do? How can you break free without sacrificing the quality of care of your horse?

6 Steps...

Step 1: Pay attention to the questions your non horsey partner asks! Does your horse need to be stabled 52 weeks of the year? How simple could life be with more turn out and a field shelter or high grade turnout rug? These questions may allow us to break free of doing things simply because we've always done them!

Step 2: Look at your routines! Does all your tack need cleaning daily? Washing only your bit and girths may suffice till the weekend.

Step 3: Scalability! Can you make up feeds for the whole week in one go? Can hay nets for the week be filled up ahead of time?

Step 4: Identify waste! Consider a time and motion study on yourself: how many times do you walk back and forth retracing your steps instead of stopping, thinking and planning each trip to maximise carrying what you need.

Step 5: Compare and contrast! Have a look around your yard. What do others do and not seem to do. How do they do things? What's different? Maybe you can adapt some of your routines to simplify or cut out unnecessary steps.

Step 6: Turn off your 'auto pilot': ask yourself "what do I really WANT to do today with my horse?" Do it! Let the rest take care of itself!



“Six Sigma (6σ) is a business strategy that fine-tunes processes to almost zero-degree of error tolerance as a way to reduce waste, defects and irregularities in both products and services”.

Failing all else... find yourself a friendly IT husband /wife or friend of... and ask them to quickly teach you about the six sigma principles of waste elimination and process improvement. If this person happens to be your hubby – then celebrate a new way of 'coming together' with the language of cyber space instead of 'being at odds' over this strangest of human passions!

To share your experiences of 'taking back time' - contact us at [www. info@jigsawequine.com](mailto:info@jigsawequine.com) we always love to have your feedback.