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Welcome to Spring

During this time of renewal and growth, we experience HOPE and an uplifting of our hearts.



One of our horse teachers, Spirit Walker, wanted me to share his healing journey - a journey of Love and Hope! He hopes parts of his story will spark new insights and growth for people.

The Gift of Spirit Walker!

Spirit Walker (formerly called Buddy) joined our horse rehabilitation program here at

Horse Spirit Connections in August 2011. We always knew how important safety was to horses - it is their first concern! However, our journey with Spirit has led us to have a deeper understanding and compassion for what this means on all levels: physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Spirit has found the courage to be a beacon for those suffering from trauma and PTSD. As teachers our horses share their life experiences and learnings as they guide humans to heal.



Here is Spirit's Story

Spirit had raced at the Finger Lakes Gaming and Race Track in New York where he showed some promise and won a number of races. After his second year of racing, he ended up at the Finger Lakes Thoroughbred Rescue Centre. When he came to us, his thin, four-year-old body couldn't support him and he had lost the spirit to run. Spirit was emaciated and suffering from rain rot and mud fever. His nose and cheek are permanently disfigured from what appears to be the effects of rough treatment from a chain. In his short four years of life, ours became his sixth home. He was not only physically depleted, he had given up.

Unfortunately, Spirit's first introduction to our herd was traumatic. He presented himself as such a victim that neither one of our herds would accept him. My heart broke when they

physically attacked him in the paddock and this sensitive horse suffered even more abuse. We quickly put him on his own to recover from his additional injuries and the trauma of rejection. After a few weeks, Aria agreed to join him while he was being nurtured back to health and settling into a new way of life. Eventually Monty and Angelina came into his herd.



Disassociation

It took many years to realize the depth of trauma Spirit suffered. Being a prey animal, horses are very present to their surroundings. Being present, when horses feel fear they go into a flight or fight response. The

protection Spirit developed for himself during his first four years of life became disassociation which caused him to freeze or act inappropriately. Because he couldn't physically leave his awful experiences at the race track, he mentally checked out. Of course, in retrospect, this was one of the main reasons our horses did not want him to be part of their herd - he was dangerous to the whole group. His unsuitable responses would not help the herd be safe.

Disassociation is a protective measure that we as humans also employ to protect ourselves. Personally, disassociation was something I employed as a young child which was unconsciously maintained late into my adulthood. My journey with our horses has healed and opened my heart negating the need to check out. Being fully present, no matter what happens, allows love and compassion to flow through my life: both for myself and others.

Learning to Trust

When we rescue horses, we let them BE a horse again, looking after their physical needs and creating a safe place for them to relax. We wait until they tell us when they want to connect with humans again and then we ask them if they want to engage in helping humans heal through the FEEL Approach. Horses are recognized as sentient beings and

can make choices in their lives. Normally, this can take anywhere from one month to eight months. In Spirit's case, he didn't trust horses or people so it took two and half years! First, he had to learn to be in relationship with horses.

During the next two years, he went through all the traditional milestones that should have occurred during his first four years of life: kicking up his heels and freely racing through the fields; developing confidence in himself; experiencing herd behaviour - how to be in a family. During this healing time he learned how to appropriately express his sexual interest in the mares (they kept him in line!); he learned how to be in relationship with his herd members and created his own little herd (including the lead mare) within the bigger herd; he learned how to play with the big boys and most importantly earned respect for who he was! This opened Spirit's heart to himself and his herd mates. Being in his heart allowed him to remain present and stop the disassociation.



Spirit's trust level with humans was so low, it took two and a half years for this to develop. We learned early on that Spirit was afraid to go in the arena which is where our round pens were situated and a lot of the liberty work takes place with our horse teachers. We assumed there must have been an incident in his past so that the arena became a trigger and reminded him of a very scary place to be. Therefore, Spirit did not engage in the majority of our teaching exercises. We did not force him; we wanted his confidence and trust

to develop naturally. However, as people met our horses in the barn or outside in the paddocks, he started to make very deep and healing connections with the few people he could resonate with.

We began his initiation in the arena by bringing in his trusted herd mates with him so they could teach him there was nothing to be afraid of. On one of these occasions, there was some snow on the roof of our arena which started to melt and swoosh down the sides of the arena covering. This created a very loud and unexpected noise! My heart leapt into my throat - how was he going to respond? Spirit startled and went into a flight response not a freeze response. BUT he didn't go to his herd mates, he came to me!!! This is when I knew that Spirit had started to trust humans. I was ecstatic! With this newfound knowledge, we started his introduction to the FEEL activities and had him engage more frequently with people.

Stepping into the Role of Teacher

Spirit did his first Reflective Round Pen activity in the arena with Catherine Davies, one of our FEEL Practitioners, during her FEEL Training. Below are her comments:

"Even before I asked Spirit if he wanted to join me in the round pen, it felt like he had already made a choice. He was just waiting for the invitation. I could feel his quiet

resolve; as we walked to the arena it never wavered, not even amidst the swirl of my own self-doubt.

It brings tears to my eyes as I remember the way we danced lightly together in the sacred space created by each member of the FEEL team holding space. The entire arena seemed to fill with the grace of Spirit - his deep awareness of the honor and responsibility contained in this new path.

It was a feeling he carried with him into the barn where the other horses seemed to pause in recognition. Spirit had grown.

I know everyone in our group felt very grateful to have experienced Spirit's quiet power as he stepped into his role as a teacher and healer at Horse Spirit Connections.

Me - there are no words to describe how blessed I feel to have been right by his side."



Heart Connection

Spirit's gentle soul started to allow love to come into his heart, first by his new horse friends and then gradually by humans. He started to overcome his trauma by connecting his heart to others. *"He learned that opening his heart allowed him to stay present by helping him ground his energy in his body."* He began trusting himself. Spirit had to become vulnerable to find his strength.

More and more Spirit stepped into the role of wise teacher. This empowering new career did not require him to be anything other than his big-hearted self, connecting with people and sharing his wisdom.

Trauma Re-engaged!

Then in 2015, his trauma loop unexpectedly reengaged. In the act of taking him out to his paddock, I was walking him from the barn and had just turned in the front of the arena to go towards his field. In front of us the big iron gate was closed. Suddenly there was a loud retort! It sounded like a gunshot coming from our neighbours' adjacent field. Spirit reacted instantly, went into a blind panic and charged directly for the gate. The lead rope slipped from my fingers and horrified I watched him run directly into



this big iron gate. The force of the impact dropped the gate to the ground. Spirit became tangled up in the gate and as it fell, Spirit gouged his front leg and somehow managed to run into the field.

I was afraid his terror would drive him to the far end of our property and he wouldn't let me help him. To my great surprise, he came to a standstill and waited for me. I was feeling

so blessed he still trusted me as he let me guide him slowly back to the barn.

Afterwards we determined Spirit reacted to the sound thinking it was a gunshot - the one that would signify he was to bolt from the chute and start galloping around the racetrack. Physically Spirit healed in two weeks. Emotionally and mentally it became a long road. He started to think the gate was the gate that slammed shut behind him in the chute - trapping him and forcing him to race. It became very difficult to lead him through the gate - he wanted to bolt as soon as he was starting through the gate. After months and months, it slowly started to improve. I realized that everyone became anxious before they led Spirit out. As horses are so sensitive to energy, he would immediately pick up on our fear and this only fed his fear! We learned to breath, be fully present and open our hearts as we were leading him out.

Spirit's Foundation Rocked!

Then Thor passed away suddenly in 2016 and Spirit's world was rocked! He had lost his anchor, his foundation. Again, we didn't realize all the supports that made up Spirit's safe world. His herd relationships shrank to three horses within the bigger herd and he became so protective of his mares! That was the role he focused on, becoming more insular and impatient. Early in 2017, trying to protect his mares he entered into a fight with one of our neighbours' horses through a double fence. Receiving a horrific gash on his back leg, he began the healing journey again.



Abruptly, the trauma around the gates came back with a vengeance. It became dangerous to turn him out into the paddocks. As soon as you started to release the halter, he would go to pivot, rear up and start to gallop away. We all experienced numerous rope burns on our hands in the process. He was back to disassociating!

We tried letting him go through on his own - this was scarier to him. He was losing trust in us - we couldn't keep him safe. We didn't understand him. He desperately wanted help but was spirally out of control. We connected through love and compassion but this wasn't enough. We accessed a lot of professionals for advice. We had a custom-made fly bonnet created that fit over the top of his head with crystals inserted - helping him ground. But he was still dangerous. In desperation we gave him a mild sedative before being turned out. This helped but it wasn't a long-term solution. Accordingly, we started retraining his mind, creating a new neural network. We changed his paddock to a place with less stimulation; we started a new herbal treatment (amazing! It helped take the place of the sedative); we gave him a carrot to eat before we took off his halter so he was engaged in eating and stood with him so he wasn't alone.

Throughout Spirit had Hope!

At the same time, we really looked at what safety meant to Spirit in all aspects - physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually - continually reinforced by love and compassion. Our dedication and hope created a safe space where his mind could stay present. With time,

patience, and most importantly love, Spirit is becoming a truly confident horse proud of his abilities.



Wounded Healer

Meanwhile during this healing voyage, Spirit honed his abilities and became an amazing teacher and healer for people. He is what we call a 'wounded healer'. He energetically 'feels' the people who can benefit from his hard-won lessons and brilliantly mirrors back to them what they need in the moment. People are having incredible moments of insights and feel 'felt' and 'seen' by him. Spirit Walker certainly walks between the worlds!

Recently Susan Smith, one of our FEEL Practitioners in training, had this experience with Spirit Walker and his Lady (the matriarch of the herd):

Later in the evening walking back to my little cabin I stopped to speak to Spirit Walker and Lady. It was like they were waiting for me. I told Spirit how much I appreciated him for how he watched over Lady and never went far from her. I loved how he was protective yet gave her room to 'be'. He really cared about her and I felt it in my heart. I told Lady how much I appreciated her for being the wise and wonderful Lady she was and for not being afraid to stand beside Spirit and that it was ok to be loved, cared for and protected. I said to Spirit that I would like to find a partner like him and he started licking and chewing and then Lady moved right up beside him, not one more in front or behind. They were equal and then they turned to each other and touched noses. Now tears of happiness ran freely down my face. It was a beautiful moment and lesson that they shared with me.



Spirit is now standing tall in his authentic Self!

Let Spirit help guide you on your journey to your authentic self. He hopes his story will touch some part of you and be an inspiration to live your life fully from an open heart.



Remember to **Like us on Facebook!**

Comments from recent Participants At our Discover Your Inner Self Workshop

"This was the best weekend of my life! There is so much about myself that I never knew. Whether it was something negative or positive, the facilitators and the group or the horses would help you reflect upon yourself to guide you towards a better journey, not just spiritually, but emotionally, mentally, and physically present."

Amber S

"The impact on both body and mind by working with horses and reflecting on the experience with thoughtful and passionate people was transforming."

Terry W

"Horse Spirit Connections helped me to understand the value and importance of living in the moment, creating that space for yourself and embracing it to the fullest. I will take these tools I've learned and apply them in order to live a happier life and to not focus on things that have negative effects on anxiety. These tools will make my mind quiet and complete. Thank you."

Haley S



Upcoming Activities

Horse Spirit Connections provides private sessions, personal retreats and workshops.

See our [2018 Workshops here.....](#) Our next signature workshop 'Horse Medicine Workshop' occurs August 10 to 12, 2018.

Become a FEEL Certified Practitioner

Horse Spirit Connections founded the FEEL (Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning)® Certification Program in 2008 to explore, expand, and share the incredible teachings of the horses.

Attain your dreams of a fulfilling career with horses. The FEEL Certification program is not just a training program, it leads you to an inspirational career bringing profound change to people's lives.

The FEEL (Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning) Certification program is suitable for coaches, educators, facilitators, equine professionals, wellness practitioners, and other individuals who are looking for practical training and experience in developing FEEL programs in the expanding field of Equine Facilitated Learning and Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy.

Participants learn to create a horse-centered, experiential learning environment that supports personal discovery. Throughout the training, prospective FEEL Practitioners gain self-knowledge and acquire skills and experience to develop their own FEEL programs where horses are valued for their roles as teachers and healers.

Graduates have taken the FEEL Training for a variety of reasons - a new career celebrating their love with horses and helping people, personal development, and deepening their relationship with horses. It is so personally gratifying to be instrumental in bringing such a powerful healing modality into the world for both humans and horses.

Our trainings are limited to eight participants, so reserve your space today.

Are the horses calling you?
Enroll today!

Ontario Campus

At Horse Spirit Connections
Tottenham, Ontario, Canada
With Wendy Golding and Andre Leclipteux,
Founders of the FEEL Approach

Spring 2018: FULL!

Includes all three on-site sessions

April 18 to 22, 2018

July 11 to 16, 2018

October 10 to 15, 2018

Contact: Wendy Golding 905-936-4450 Wendy@HorseSpiritConnections.com

Fall 2018:



With Wendy Golding and Andre Leclipteux founders of the FEEL approach.

Includes all three on-site sessions

November 21 to 25, 2018

March 6 to 11, 2019

May 29 to June 3, 2019

Contact: Wendy Golding 905-936-4450

Wendy@HorseSpiritConnections.com



Fall 2018:

With Victoria Sambleson FEEL Trainer and Advanced
FEEL Practitioner and founder Andre Leclipteux

Includes all three on-site sessions

October 24 to 28, 2018

February 6 to 11, 2019

May 1 to 6, 2019

Contact: Victoria Sambleson 416-505-7962

ConnectingWithHorses@hotmail.com

www.ConnectingWithHorses.ca/feel-certification

British Columbia Campus

Mystic Water Ranch

Langley, British Columbia, Canada

With Brenda Brown, FEEL Trainer and Advanced FEEL Practitioner

Contact: Brenda Brown 604-788-7524

bmorehealthy@gmail.com

www.MysticWatersRanch.com

Sweden Campus

At The Horse Call

Rials - Norrtälje, Stockholms Lan

In Swedish

With Mia Holms, FEEL Trainer and Advanced FEEL Practitioner

Includes all three on-site sessions

May 2 to May 6, 2018

July 25 to July 30, 2018

November 7 to November 12, 2018

Contact: Mia Holms 46 (0)70-770-07 55

mia@thehorsecall.se or HorseDreamMia@gmail.com

Empower your life and others by partnering with horses

Visit the [FEEL Certification](#) section of our website, download the [FEEL brochure](#), email Wendy@HorseSpiritConnections.com or call Wendy at 905-936-4450 to learn more about this exciting program and change your life!

Comments from FEEL graduates!

"The FEEL training at Horse Spirit Connections was life changing. Wendy and Andre are impeccable facilitators and not only pass on tremendous knowledge and wisdom, but also hold space for remarkable self-discovery. The herd was a blessing to work with and offered feedback that opened me back up to my authentic self. The FEEL Approach has taught me new ways of connecting with others and my relationships with the horses, and people in my life have all changed for the better. The learning environment safely pushed me to edges that needed travelling and made the vulnerability of being there, with myself, possible. I leave having returned home to my true self and I cannot wait to share the FEEL Approach with others!"

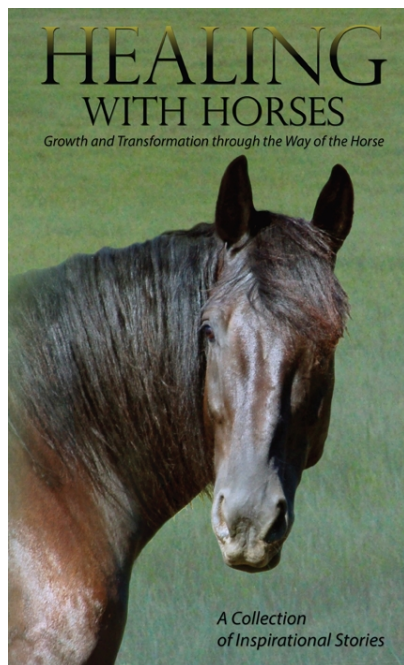
Emma Hicks, Ontario

"The FEEL program has been a personal transformational journey for me. Through attending and completing the program, I feel I was able to finally bring forth myself and step into a role in my life that I had felt called to but felt was always out of my reach. Wendy, Andre, the horses and the structure of the program created a vessel of learning, growth, and transformation that gave me the skills necessary to do this work and to be able to bring it out into the world. The process brought out my true and authentic self and I truly feel like a different person because of this. Thank you so much for all of your support in this journey."

Sarah Schatz, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

"I came to gain the skills for a new job and I walk away with so much more. I gained a stronger insight to myself and I know this self-discovery will continue as now I have skills to see that grow. FEEL has taught me how to have a much stronger relationship with my horses in a way I never could believe. Asking my horse to ride is now what I do and now that ride is a partnership. I cannot explain the joy and happiness that brings. Yes I now have skills to start up a new business but I have so much more."

Joan Marie Gjos, Northern Ontario



Healing With Horses

Wendy Golding & Andre Leclipteux, co-authors.

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