

OrthoHorse© Newsletter

Newsletter about Ortho-Bionomy© - bodywork for equines and humans & related topics

Issue 3

May/June 2011



The horse above is the only horse I saw in my recent trip to Copenhagen. What you might notice about him is he has not moved, probably not in centuries. He is not a candidate for bodywork!

If your horse stands absolutely still like this, and has a rider that sits the same way, neither of you need bodywork.

But for living creatures - movement is everything – it is going on in the body all the time.

As I say in each issue, for those not yet familiar with Ortho-Bionomy, it is a

form of bodywork based on structure derived from osteopathy, that works with and relies on the body's self healing capacity. It is not a replacement for veterinary or medical care, but can complement it.

People often ask me what is Ortho-Bionomy good for. The following is a list of what types of cases I am currently working with:

Liver, heart, fluids, endocrine, lymph, pelvic imbalance, spinal misalignment, hindquarter stiffness (including not tracking forward, unable to bend or pick up a lead easily or at all), shoulder

pain (including torn rotator cuff, old breaks), back pain, neck pain, poll and jaw pain or stiffness, facial pain, lameness, gait irregularities, post surgical conditions, trauma, gastric distress, EPM, extremities, kidney, adrenals, pancreas.

Every one of these conditions has to do with movement – whether of a limb, spine, an organ or fluids.

Of course, these are not all the conditions there are – they number as many as the stars in the sky, but I wanted to give you an idea of the breadth of Ortho-Bionomy – for both horses and people – just in one practice, in the space of 3 months.

My videos will give you a glimpse of what a session looks like. See videos by searching for OrthoHorse on YouTube or go to my website – www.susith.com/orthohorse

Here is a direct link to the videos:

[Bodywork demo – Dandi, a young Andalusian](#)
[Mustang Kodi](#)
[OrthoHorse - Donkey receives bodywork](#)

I'm going to try to post them regularly, so if you are interested you can subscribe to receive notices when one has been posted.

This issue features a piece entitled “What is it Like to Receive an Ortho-Bionomy Session,” “A Look at the BIG Picture,” and an article on horsekeeping – some ways of providing a natural-like setting for our horses for continued good health.

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WHAT IT IS LIKE TO RECEIVE AN ORTHO-BIONOMY SESSION

For the horse:

With horses, I do an assessment, which may involve checking the movement of the tail and neck, sometimes lifting the legs, based upon what I see. I ask the owner to walk the horse away from me so I can see how he moves. I use palpation to identify areas of restriction or pain, and of resource, to give me a broader and at the same time, more specific, picture.

Sometimes I work in a specific area and other times I will work away from the area of pain if it seems too stressful to the horse for me to be there. Often during the course of a session, the horse will begin to relax and feel more at ease, pain may lessen and he will let me come into the areas that were painful at the start.



This horse on the left is receiving a session. The one on the right is hoping

to receive some work too so he is pressing as close to the practitioner as he can.



Kash is really relaxing into the work.



Doc is now reading the instructions on how to fit a saddle.

Not all bodywork sessions go like this one, obviously. As a practitioner you try to go with the flow as much as possible.

For the Human:

The session is done fully clothed. We start by talking about what the client wants to work on. The goal is to find the best position and to keep finding those positions and a good relationship between parts of the body. The same things apply as in horse work: I use palpation to identify areas of restriction or pain, and of resource,

to give me a broader and at the same time, more specific, picture. The work is gentle but powerful.

The client is encouraged to offer information – if a trigger point hurts or a technique is okay or not.

I also like to see how people can find their own way – the frequency they need in visits, listening to their own bodies to know when they need help, noticing what problems have gone away since they started receiving the work.

One client said he knew he needed a session when he felt one leg was longer than the other. This kind of awareness deepens as time goes on, and it doesn't mean a lot of sessions.

Sometimes people need frequent visits in the beginning, especially if they have had an accident, which confuses the communication within the body and disrupts organs and fluid flow. Ortho-Bionomy is a language. The more you speak it, the more fluent you become. The more it can help you. After awhile the body speaks it without thinking about it. It moves toward self-correction like a flower tips its head toward the sunlight. It is not necessary to have frequent sessions any more, unless you experience a new trauma or accident. Even so, the body already speaks the language and seeks to right itself. In that case, it just needs help connecting the dots.

If anything Ortho-Bionomy is a proactive modality – it is not the type of modality where you come and lie on the table and someone does some form of bodywork to you. It is generally preceded by asking, finding a place to meet, a place where the person feels at ease starting in the relationship.

I noticed recently how much I ask people to move on the table or to walk around the room – it might be because I work with horses too. Horses often need to move a lot during a session and their movement informs me of what is going on, how they are processing the work, how we are in relation to one another. They need to move to reorganize and integrate. People are the same in that way.

It is the give and take, the exchange of information, whether spoken or unspoken, that makes Ortho work so well.

“I felt great immediately- noticed changes when coming home - like I had a new/healthy neck. Wow! That was a big surprise for my neck. My energy was way better – felt much straighter, sitting straighter, and my pelvis/sacrum pain was pretty much gone. Arm was more functional with less pain. I felt straighter – not twisted; and, my posture felt way better. I was feeling very positive like just doing everything and as if anything would soon be possible. I did not do everything and anything, but the positive feeling was there. I found myself day-dreaming about riding again. I slept great that night; however, by Sunday a.m., I felt some stiffness but still felt good.” – Elois Ewers

Horse & Rider

Working with a horse and rider together is a great opportunity to define how the human body relates to that of the horse, and vice versa. The work increases postural awareness so that riders can work on deeper connection. Riding a horse is a time when we are spine to spine with another being, and that connection is very important and central to our

comfort and success as riders. The horses greatly appreciate our increased awareness. When I might suggest this type of approach might be after a rider has experienced an injury, or after a horse has experienced an injury, for riders who need to find their seat and/or balance.

Sometimes I work with the horse and rider separately and then see how the changes in their bodies become interpreted once they come together in the saddle. Other times I will work with the pair together and connect them up through Ortho-Bionomy.



A Look at the BIG Picture

Above I listed a number of conditions that may benefit from Ortho-Bionomy.

Because there are other elements at play in a horse's well being, I also look at exercise, habits, where she lives, how does she eat and how often, supplements, shoes or barefoot, companions, teeth floating, saddle fit and many other pertinent factors.

Horse owners are usually very involved in their horse's healing. Healing doesn't involve one thing: I'm called in to do a bodywork session, we sometimes need to make adjustments

in space, saddle fit, feed, feet, etc. It could be a combination of things, not just a need for bodywork.

The bodywork usually reveals any need for additional support, and the best owners are those who are willing to explore alternatives.

In the fall of 2010, a 12-year-old gelding named The Kid was intermittently lame in the right foreleg. He also bucked at the canter when asked to pick up the right lead.

Upon assessment, I noted that he had some atrophy in the gluteal muscles. His neck, poll and shoulder were also out of alignment, which put a torque in the rest of the spine. There was a bi-directional pattern going on with the left hind limb (where the atrophy was next to the sacroiliac joint) and the right foreleg. He was fussy and had some obvious pain patterns.

He responded well to treatments and the lameness and atrophy were resolved pretty quickly, but we felt that we needed to look at saddle fit. He would stop the bucking for awhile after a treatment but there was still something going on.

This took some experimentation with different saddles and pads and finally getting one of his saddles refitted. We assessed him at liberty, under saddle and with a rider.

During this time his owner was also receiving Ortho treatments and seeing improvements in posture and overall well being. She reported feeling better in the saddle.

Ortho treatments began to hold longer and he and his owner began to go on some trail rides on the weekends. He was traveling well. We began to notice

he was a little underweight so he got some additional groceries and actually a Natural Feeder, which ensured that he have the proper natural position for eating and a steady supply of hay all day long.

Four months later, this guy was bombing down the trail. He has very strong feet and can travel barefoot over just about anything. All those problems fell away and right now he doesn't need bodywork, just mileage.

Now you could say, well, you could save yourself a lot of money by just getting the saddle refitted first – except remember, the horse was lame on and off so he wasn't a reliable mount. Something deeper was going on. Once that shifted with the bodywork, we could see the other problems more clearly and address them as they presented themselves. I liken it to peeling an onion, though hopefully without the tears. You peel back layer by layer, exposing what's underneath.

In a case like this, getting to the deeper matter gives the horse a better chance of speedy recovery and it's not so likely that the condition will reoccur. The horse's nervous system reorganizes so that it takes better care of itself – real self-correction at work. The exercise of riding then reinforces that self-correction.

A NATURAL SETTING

The other day I was at a barn where the horses had 50 acres to roam around on. That's an unusual circumstance for New Mexico horses, but it is ideal. A horse on 50 acres can move when and if he wants to, he can taste different plants which aid digestion, he can stand in water

sometimes if there is a mud puddle or dirt tank on the land.

Although most of us don't have 50 acres, with a little creativity, we can probably provide a more natural setting for our horses.

Things that horses need and seek are: shelter, food, space, water, companionship (of like minded individuals), exercise, curiosity. When too many of these are lacking, the horse can become emotionally distraught or shut down. Even horses that are seemingly well cared for often have very little physical space and/or companionship. They may or may not have stablemates with whom they can play and rub against. In human terms the reasons for this may be real estate costs or the worry that an expensive horse might get injured playing with another horse or by having too much space.

But the emotional cost is high. These horses are also more susceptible to the common diseases of the day which are attributed to food consumption and exercise.

The way we feed is another issue. Feeding horses is generally arranged around human schedules – once in the morning and once in the afternoon, and lunch if they're lucky. The horse gobbles his food in most cases, then stands around for the rest of the day. The horse's digestive system is designed for ingesting small amounts of food over a 19-20 hour period, the rest of the time sleeping. In the wild he would be grazing small bits of grass and roaming to find the tastiest bits to eat, walking to the waterhole and maybe standing in mud (good for the feet!). He would be nose to the ground, stretching out his topline while doing

this. The constant nibbling is also very relaxing to the nervous system.

A big pasture provides food (if there is any), space, water, exercise, curiosity and shelter if there are trees. Being able to move around on uneven footing also allows the hooves to do what they would naturally – adjust to uneven terrain and maintain circulation, which strengthens them.

In the absence of real grazing and/or shelter, we can provide hay and a run-in shed.

Free choice hay is a good way to feed, except here our hay blows away. There are now feeder boxes with slats that you can fill with a bale of hay and your horses can essentially have that free choice while the hay stays put. There are also nets with tiny holes an inch long and wide that allow your horses to nibble slowly as they would in nature. We can provide variety in hays, fresh greens, carrots, melon rinds, and other things horses like.

In terms of exercise, companionship and curiosity, we may feel we need to ride our horses more often or take them for walks if they don't live where there is a lot of physical space. If they have the companionship of other horses such as being turned out with them, or being able to chat across the fence, they'll do better than if they can't see another horse for miles.

One client of mine bought three goats for her horse and he loves the goats. Seabiscuit hated goats, and wanted only another horse for companionship.

To satisfy the curiosity of a horse, we can provide interesting work or play, a few cows in the next pasture, people working on projects, trail rides, walks, a change of scene, interesting

companions, Carolyn Resnick Waterhole Rituals © (more on this in a later issue), perhaps a horse soccer ball, horses running loose in the neighborhood (hopefully not your own), or variety in food.

ONE WITH THE HERD

Horses have a highly developed social nervous system that ideally develops as a result of living in a large herd. Consequently, a great deal of their communication revolves around the creation and maintenance of a social hierarchy that allows them to live peacefully. The hierarchy includes dominance relationships within bands of horses within a herd, with some bands clearly more dominant than others. This hierarchy is essential for finding and gaining access to limited resources and good grazing spots, water, shelter and shade.

“In captivity, horses most often are companionship starved from not being kept in herds and are not be able to work on relationships. By allowing a horse to teach us how they want to be led they are nurtured and experience a greater well being, and feel a sense of companionship that they are lacking from being in captivity.

By giving them our full attention and respect, you truly step into the world of horses to discover a cross-species bond that only horses can offer us. Once the bond is built and we give them freedom we find that he sees us as family, not that he is a part of our family, but we have become a part of his. By giving up looking for problems, we find the place of connection and build from there. This is when we are on the road to developing true horsemanship skills. I remember that

a famous America Indian, a spiritual leader said that he needed to find out where his people wanted to go so he could lead them there. It is like that!”

--Carolyn Resnick blog



Little Dobby of [Pecos Valley Arabians](#), owned by Andrea Deane, being bottle fed after his mama died from a terrible colic when he was just 8 days old. They used TTeam TTouch to help Dobby with this huge transition.



Dobby now drinking out of a bowl offered by Lynette Deane because he didn't like the bottle. Andrea said it was tough going for awhile there but now he's starting to thrive!

ODDS & ENDS

Fires & Horses UC Davis report

The New Mexico Livestock Board has just recently lifted a ban on horses traveling to horse events because of the EHV-1 (equine herpesvirus-1). TheHorse.com held a webinar which was recorded and is now available at <http://www.TheHorse.com/Webinars>

Introduction to the Natural Feeder Acclimation to the Natural Feeder

Available at Desert Wind Saddlery.
505.474.7795
lorraine@desertwindsaddlery.com

For more information on Ortho-Bionomy and additional work, see

www.susith.com/orthohorse

Susan Smith
505.983.2128
505.501.2478 (mobile)

'Closeness, friendship, and affection: keeping your own horse means all these things.'
Bertrand Leclair

READING & WATCHING LIST

Buck the Film trailer

Horses for Life

Swedish Hoof School videos

Think Like a Horse

Philippe Karl - the Art of Riding

For the Horse.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June

25-26 **EPR/EO I**, NMAHA, Santa Fe, NM USA

[EPR Ortho website](#)

July

TBA – EPR & Equine Ortho-Bionomy for Horse and Rider

Bodywork Tips for Horse and Rider....

Enhance your riding and your horse's performance with this class – A new 4-hour clinic format taught by Zarna Carter & Susan Smith for horse owners to learn *Bodywork Tips for Horse and Rider*.....how to do some bodywork on their own horses. Learn to work on your horse, experience Ortho-Bionomy on horseback and learn how to enhance your own posture. Some of the class may be done on horses, on horseback, or for people sitting or standing. This is a bring-your-own-horse clinic - please call (Susan: 505-501-2479; Zarna: 352-219-5977) or email (susith@aol.com; zarnacarter@hotmail.com) for more information. Space is limited.

6 EPR Study Group, Lycia Adams Studio, 1027 Don Diego, Santa Fe, NM

7-8 Fusion for Horse and Rider, Rancho Mariposa, Santa Fe, NM USA

9-10 EPR Isometrics New Class, Rancho Mariposa, Santa Fe, NM USA

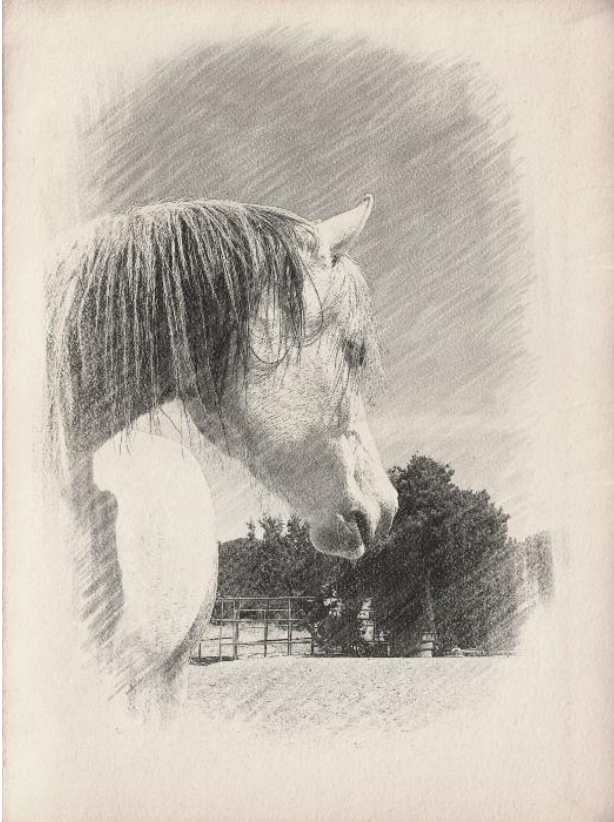
[EPR Ortho website](#)

10-16 [Fort Stanton Endurance Ride - Multiday](#) Fort Stanton, NM

August

6-7 EPR IV, Rancho Mariposa, Santa Fe, NM USA [EPR Ortho website](#)

6 – Valles Caldera Endurance Ride
[Ride details](#)



LETTERS

Thank you for the newsletter and the article on geriatric horses. It's nice to know I'm not alone. I greatly enjoyed the Temple Grandin lecture. I hung around after it was over and was able to get her to sign my copy of *Animals in Translation*, a book I've read many times. - Trish Hug

Wow, Susan! You've been busy! The newsletter is really good and full of interesting things to read. You can tell that you spent lots of time organizing and collecting and I'm sure you'll have plenty left for the May/June issue. I particularly enjoyed reading about our geriatric friends and I know many of your readers will appreciate the information. - Susie Spicer

Loved the newsletter. SO timely when I think of my time with Doc and Kash...loved the Geriatric Horse considerations. - Tommie Brasel