

Quantum Savvy Horsemanship 

RELEASE FOCUSED TRAINING

Changing the way we think about horses to connect with their hearts and minds



By Meredith Ransley

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Produced by Quantum Savvy Press

Australia

Many and heartfelt thanks go to; Bindy Trapnell for photos and support, Shane Ransley for your knowledge, input, encouragement and passion, all the wonderful Quantum Savvy students and horses around the world who are out there living the dream, and special thanks to Vicki Kibourn, Allan Mitchell, Mel Peacock and Monica Andreewitch for being such inspirational horsemen and students. It is a pleasure and an honour to feature you in this book.

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Contents

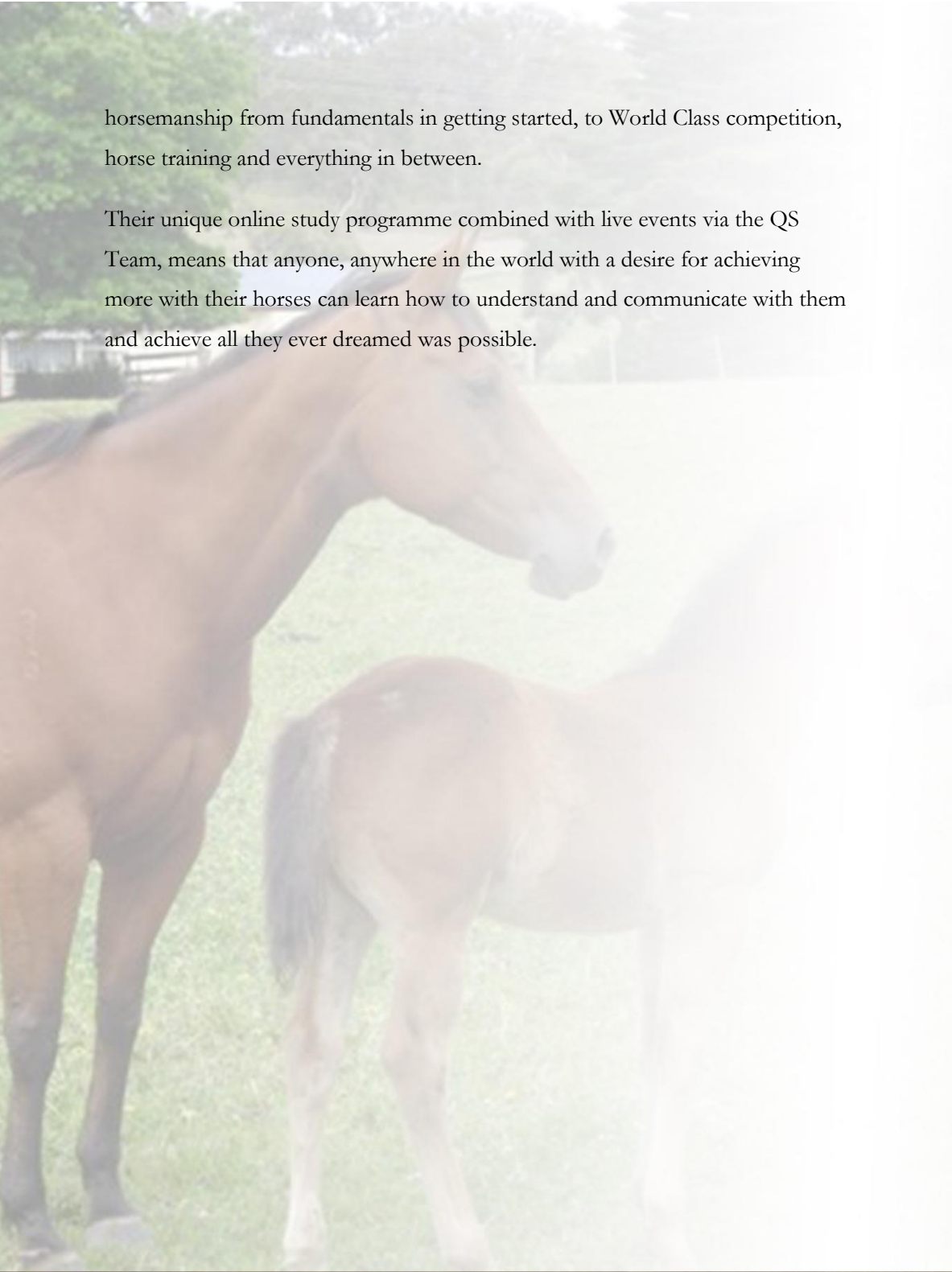
About Shane and Meredith	4
CHAPTER	
Introduction.....	6
ONE What is Release Focused Training?	9
TWO What horses REALLY want. - How they see the world. What motivates them. How they communicate.....	14
THREE The subject of Pressure.	22
FOUR The human default system (pressure /control).....	33
FIVE How can horse and human come happily together?	39
SIX Doing what we know - repeating what we've seen.....	42
SEVEN Applying RFT in a practical sense	48
EIGHT Release Focused Training, Conventional Pressure type training, Repetition Training and Tricks.....	56
NINE Building Rapport	63
SUMMARY	68

About Shane and Meredith

For nearly two decades, Shane and Meredith have been studying and teaching horsemanship to students across the world. Combining their love of horses with their passion for sharing, they developed the Quantum Savvy Horsemanship programme to give all horse owners a step-by-step pathway to their horsemanship dreams.

Based in South-East Queensland Australia, they travel the country and the world along with their family, bringing Release Focused Training to thousands of people and horses. Their horsemanship centre is a gathering place for students from all disciplines and walks of life, where they can study all facets of





horsemanship from fundamentals in getting started, to World Class competition, horse training and everything in between.

Their unique online study programme combined with live events via the QS Team, means that anyone, anywhere in the world with a desire for achieving more with their horses can learn how to understand and communicate with them and achieve all they ever dreamed was possible.

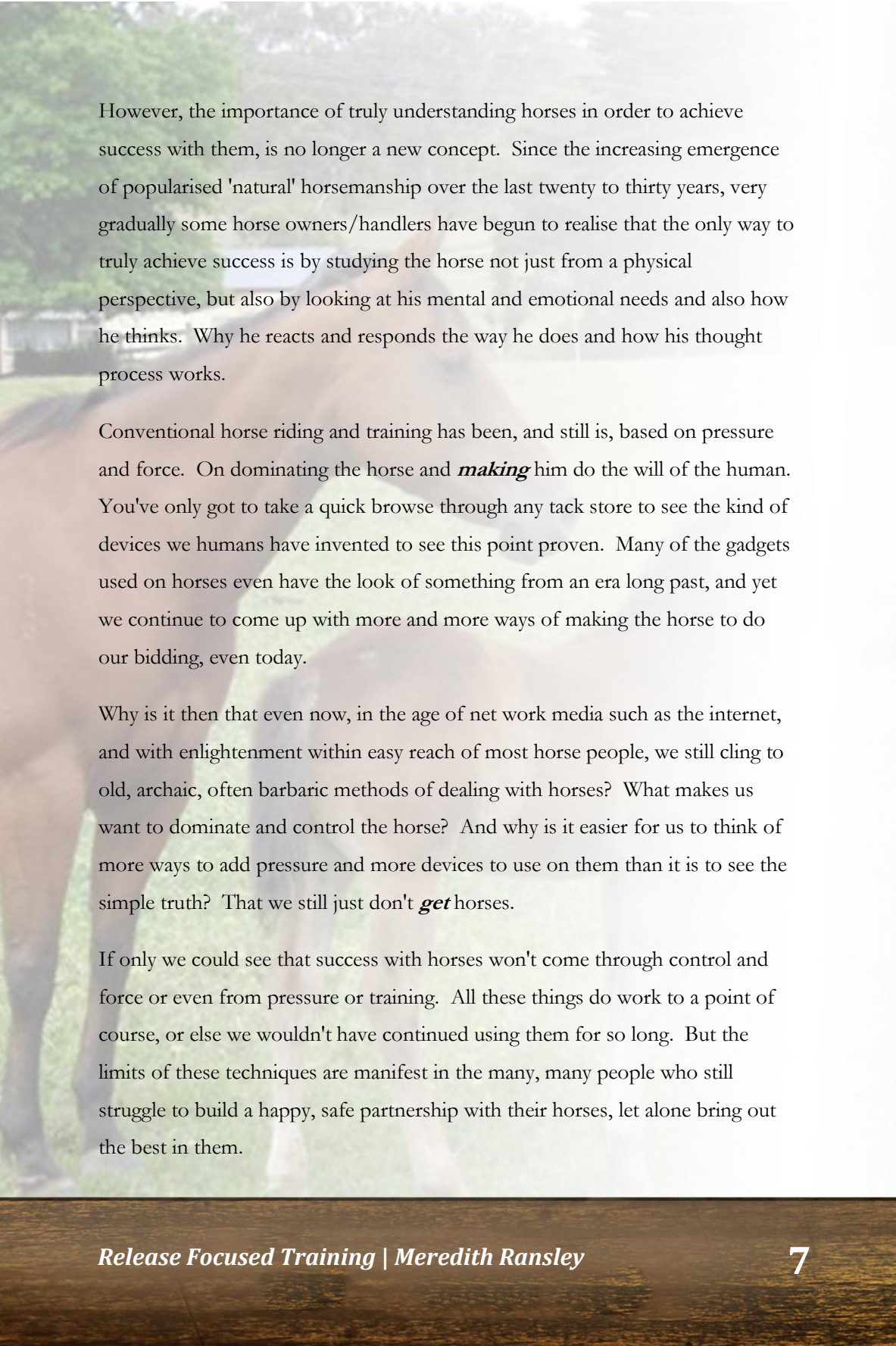
Introduction

Horses are beautiful creatures. They are majestic, intelligent, social and easy to be around. They can make you feel better just by being in their presence. Any horse lover will attest to this. A few hours spent with your horse can brighten your day more than anything else can come close doing. Owning a horse can be the most rewarding experience a person will ever have in any sport or pastime.

Or at least it should be! The trouble is that for many horse owners, though this is the dream, it is often far from the reality. So often it seems that while the horse owner has one idea about how things should go, the horse has a different idea altogether. No matter how hard the owner tries, the two are just on a different page when it comes to getting the message across.

For generations humans have needed, wanted or dreamed of being with horses. In the past we've relied on them for our day to day survival, and in the present for our recreation and sport. Some folk have reached a modicum of success. A handful have attained excellence. But for the most part, we have struggled to get horses past being potentially dangerous let alone doing as we wish.

Being imaginative, inventive creatures, we humans have come up with a plethora of techniques, gadgets, tools and methodologies to try to control and dominate the horse, in order to reach some success with them. And yet, even after several thousand years, we still don't seem to have succeeded. Everyday around the world, more people get hurt and killed around horses than in any other sport. Horses are still being subjected to cruel and inhumane practises in the extreme, and in less obvious and deliberate ways to mental and emotional abuse and unhappiness. We still just don't understand horses.

A person is riding a horse in a field. The rider is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The horse is dark-colored. The background shows a grassy field with trees and a building in the distance.

However, the importance of truly understanding horses in order to achieve success with them, is no longer a new concept. Since the increasing emergence of popularised 'natural' horsemanship over the last twenty to thirty years, very gradually some horse owners/handlers have begun to realise that the only way to truly achieve success is by studying the horse not just from a physical perspective, but also by looking at his mental and emotional needs and also how he thinks. Why he reacts and responds the way he does and how his thought process works.

Conventional horse riding and training has been, and still is, based on pressure and force. On dominating the horse and *making* him do the will of the human. You've only got to take a quick browse through any tack store to see the kind of devices we humans have invented to see this point proven. Many of the gadgets used on horses even have the look of something from an era long past, and yet we continue to come up with more and more ways of making the horse to do our bidding, even today.

Why is it then that even now, in the age of net work media such as the internet, and with enlightenment within easy reach of most horse people, we still cling to old, archaic, often barbaric methods of dealing with horses? What makes us want to dominate and control the horse? And why is it easier for us to think of more ways to add pressure and more devices to use on them than it is to see the simple truth? That we still just don't *get* horses.

If only we could see that success with horses won't come through control and force or even from pressure or training. All these things do work to a point of course, or else we wouldn't have continued using them for so long. But the limits of these techniques are manifest in the many, many people who still struggle to build a happy, safe partnership with their horses, let alone bring out the best in them.

So what then is the answer? What will make the difference and allow us all to have happy, safe, willing, soft, responsive horses who are just as keen to be on the journey with us as we are with them?

The answer is Release focused Training!

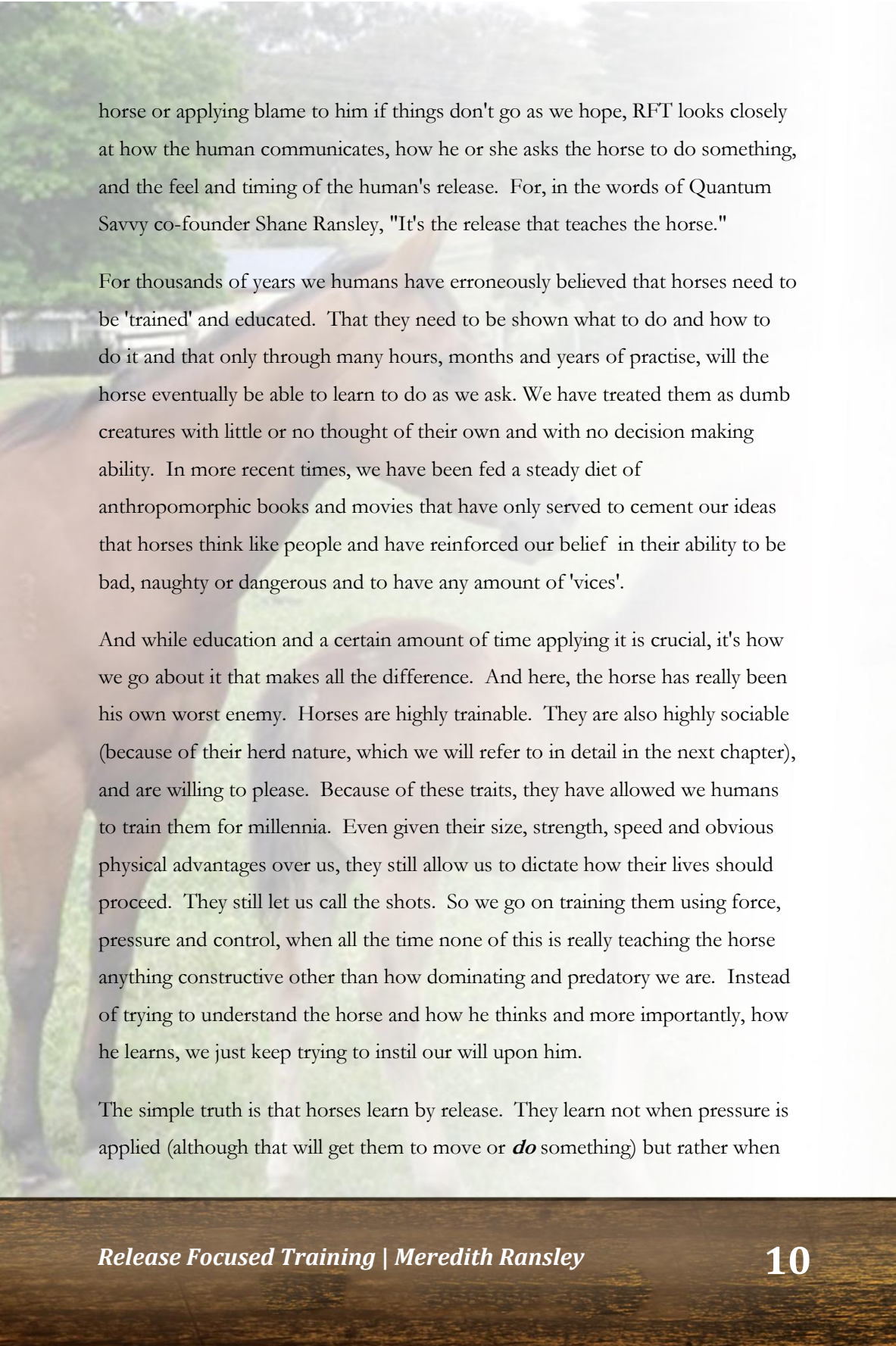


Chapter One - What is Release Focused Training?

Release Focused Training (RFT) is a simple methodology that forms the basis of the Quantum Savvy Horsemanship programmes. Rather than focusing on the horse and trying to *fix* or *train* him to do the things that we want (generally with pretty limited outcomes), RFT looks at the way in which a human communicates with a horse and how the horse perceives the human. Instead of applying human thoughts and expectations to the horse, it looks at how people can instead learn the language of the horse and develop an effective communication between the two. It is a very simple approach to attaining horsemanship that takes away a lot of the uncertainty and the unpredictable outcomes often found with conventional horse 'training'. In its place builds a trust, confidence and connection between horse and human that can and does withstand any challenge.

Quite simply, instead of the conventional use of *pressure to train horses*, it does the opposite. It *teaches people* to focus on *release* in order to teach horses. Even better, it teaches us how to *ask* our horse to do something by giving clear direction and options for the horse instead of just *telling* them what to do or *making* them do our bidding. In this way, we can teach our horse, educate him and develop his confidence and trust instead of just training his body and doing very little for his mind. Very little pressure is even needed.

Unlike nearly all other horse training programmes or techniques, RFT is not about the horse. It is solely about the human. Instead of trying to 'train' the

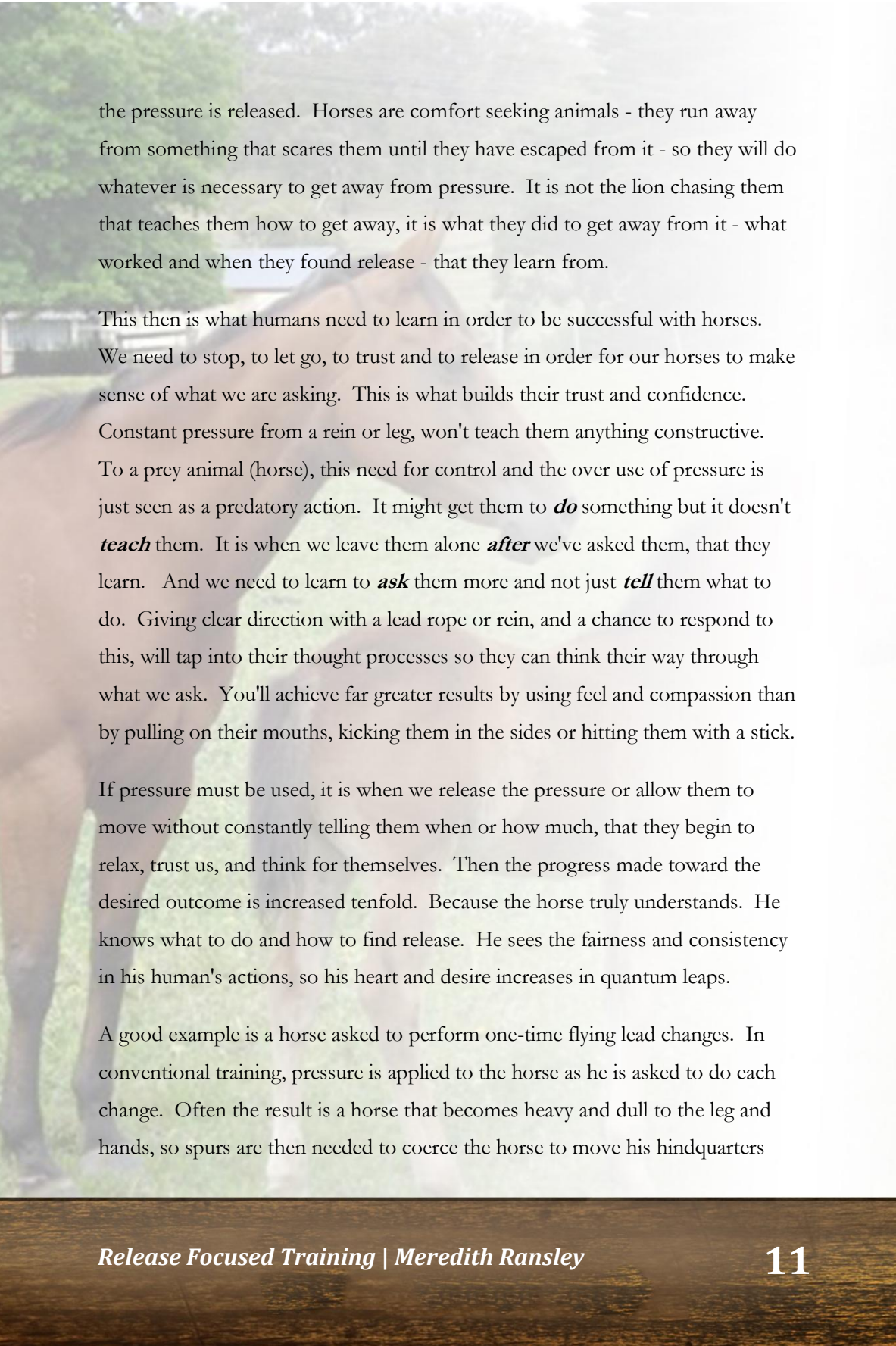
A person is riding a horse in a grassy field. The rider is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The horse is dark-colored. The background shows trees and a fence. The text is overlaid on the image.

horse or applying blame to him if things don't go as we hope, RFT looks closely at how the human communicates, how he or she asks the horse to do something, and the feel and timing of the human's release. For, in the words of Quantum Savvy co-founder Shane Ransley, "It's the release that teaches the horse."

For thousands of years we humans have erroneously believed that horses need to be 'trained' and educated. That they need to be shown what to do and how to do it and that only through many hours, months and years of practise, will the horse eventually be able to learn to do as we ask. We have treated them as dumb creatures with little or no thought of their own and with no decision making ability. In more recent times, we have been fed a steady diet of anthropomorphic books and movies that have only served to cement our ideas that horses think like people and have reinforced our belief in their ability to be bad, naughty or dangerous and to have any amount of 'vices'.

And while education and a certain amount of time applying it is crucial, it's how we go about it that makes all the difference. And here, the horse has really been his own worst enemy. Horses are highly trainable. They are also highly sociable (because of their herd nature, which we will refer to in detail in the next chapter), and are willing to please. Because of these traits, they have allowed we humans to train them for millennia. Even given their size, strength, speed and obvious physical advantages over us, they still allow us to dictate how their lives should proceed. They still let us call the shots. So we go on training them using force, pressure and control, when all the time none of this is really teaching the horse anything constructive other than how dominating and predatory we are. Instead of trying to understand the horse and how he thinks and more importantly, how he learns, we just keep trying to instil our will upon him.

The simple truth is that horses learn by release. They learn not when pressure is applied (although that will get them to move or *do* something) but rather when

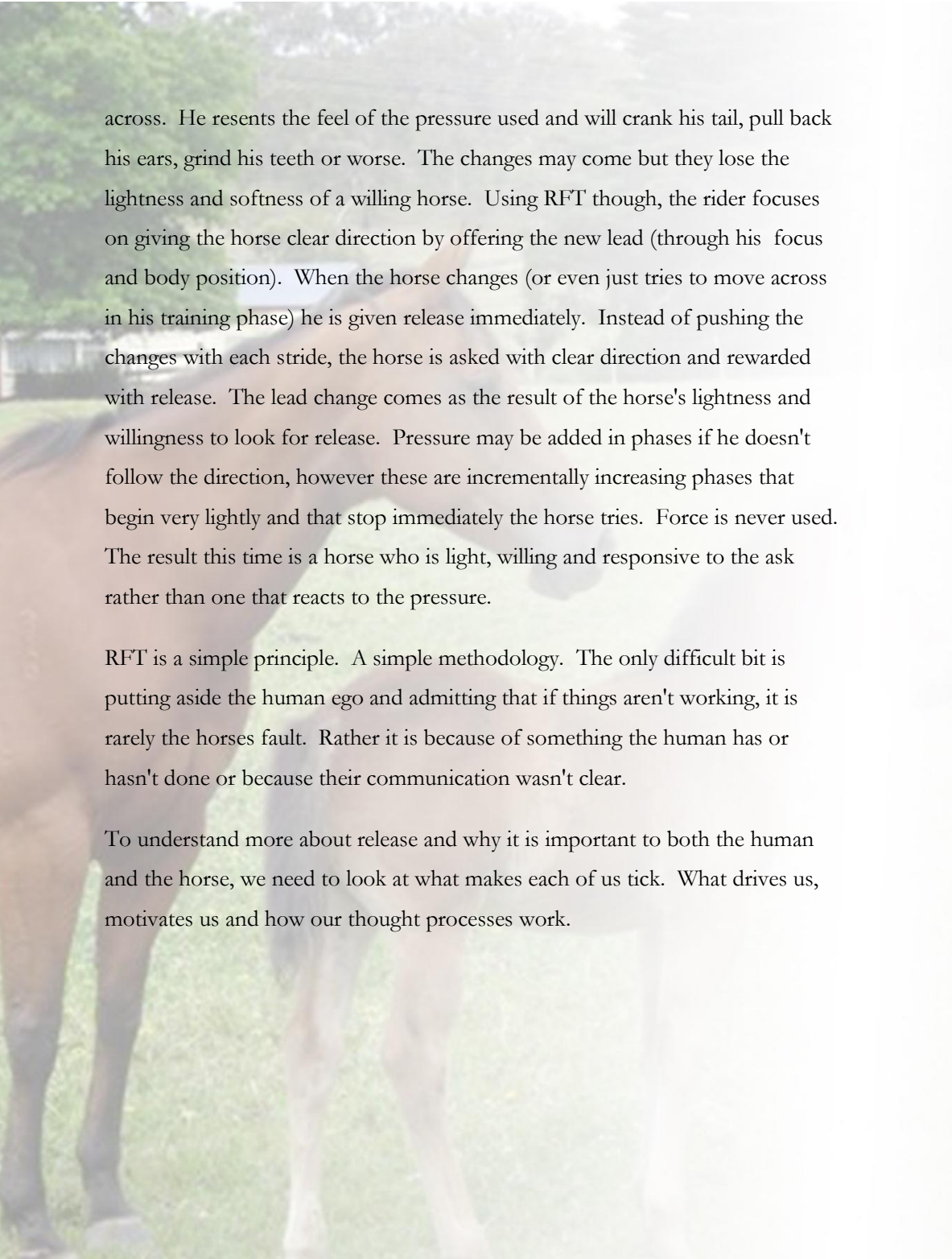


the pressure is released. Horses are comfort seeking animals - they run away from something that scares them until they have escaped from it - so they will do whatever is necessary to get away from pressure. It is not the lion chasing them that teaches them how to get away, it is what they did to get away from it - what worked and when they found release - that they learn from.

This then is what humans need to learn in order to be successful with horses. We need to stop, to let go, to trust and to release in order for our horses to make sense of what we are asking. This is what builds their trust and confidence. Constant pressure from a rein or leg, won't teach them anything constructive. To a prey animal (horse), this need for control and the over use of pressure is just seen as a predatory action. It might get them to **do** something but it doesn't **teach** them. It is when we leave them alone **after** we've asked them, that they learn. And we need to learn to **ask** them more and not just **tell** them what to do. Giving clear direction with a lead rope or rein, and a chance to respond to this, will tap into their thought processes so they can think their way through what we ask. You'll achieve far greater results by using feel and compassion than by pulling on their mouths, kicking them in the sides or hitting them with a stick.

If pressure must be used, it is when we release the pressure or allow them to move without constantly telling them when or how much, that they begin to relax, trust us, and think for themselves. Then the progress made toward the desired outcome is increased tenfold. Because the horse truly understands. He knows what to do and how to find release. He sees the fairness and consistency in his human's actions, so his heart and desire increases in quantum leaps.

A good example is a horse asked to perform one-time flying lead changes. In conventional training, pressure is applied to the horse as he is asked to do each change. Often the result is a horse that becomes heavy and dull to the leg and hands, so spurs are then needed to coerce the horse to move his hindquarters



across. He resents the feel of the pressure used and will crank his tail, pull back his ears, grind his teeth or worse. The changes may come but they lose the lightness and softness of a willing horse. Using RFT though, the rider focuses on giving the horse clear direction by offering the new lead (through his focus and body position). When the horse changes (or even just tries to move across in his training phase) he is given release immediately. Instead of pushing the changes with each stride, the horse is asked with clear direction and rewarded with release. The lead change comes as the result of the horse's lightness and willingness to look for release. Pressure may be added in phases if he doesn't follow the direction, however these are incrementally increasing phases that begin very lightly and that stop immediately the horse tries. Force is never used. The result this time is a horse who is light, willing and responsive to the ask rather than one that reacts to the pressure.

RFT is a simple principle. A simple methodology. The only difficult bit is putting aside the human ego and admitting that if things aren't working, it is rarely the horse's fault. Rather it is because of something the human has or hasn't done or because their communication wasn't clear.

To understand more about release and why it is important to both the human and the horse, we need to look at what makes each of us tick. What drives us, motivates us and how our thought processes work.



Chapter Two - What horses REALLY want.

How they see the world. What motivates them. How they communicate.

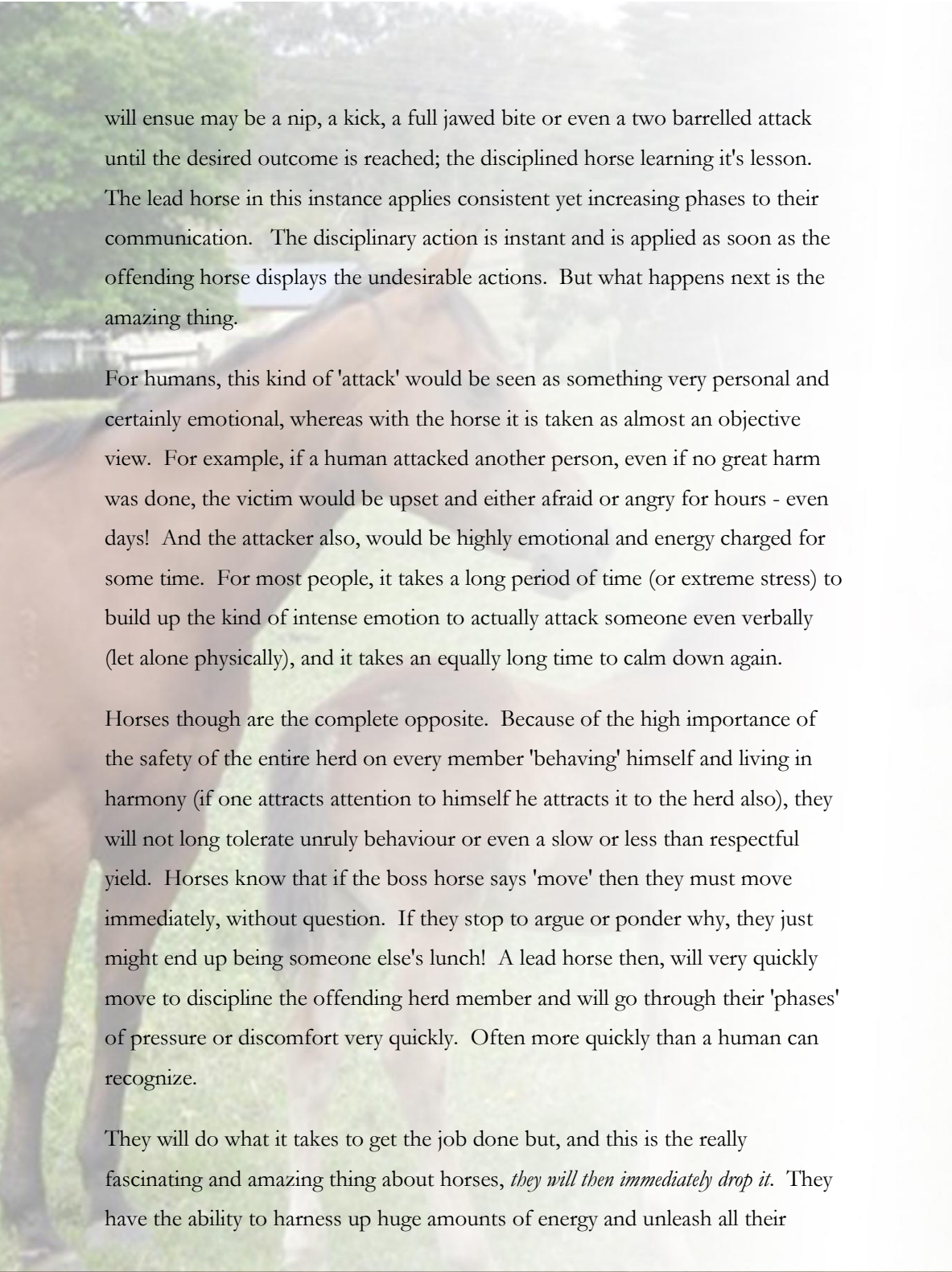
Horses are prey animals that live within a herd. Many of us know this these days, but have we really considered what this really means? The whole concept of 'safety in numbers' is apt for horses, as a horse in a herd group is more difficult for a predator on the hunt to single out and attack. If you watch a herd of horses moving about and on the run, you'll see something resembling a school of fish (more prey animals) - a group moving together matching each other's movements. They stop, turn and zig-zag almost together. The idea being to confuse the predator who is out looking for his lunch, making it difficult to choose which animal that lunch will be.

A horse on his own is an easy target and being so will make him feel extremely vulnerable. This is the basis for the fear of horses that are afraid to leave their friends or even their yard. It's wired into their amygdala (survival code) to stay close to their friends in order to be more safe. Horses will naturally want to stay within the safety of the herd and they will also naturally match the movements of those around them, again in order to 'blend in' and not stand out and therefore be singled out. They don't need to be constantly told to do this. It is something they instinctively know. However, as very young foals they are taught by first their mothers and later their 'aunties' to move along, to keep up and to stay close. A horse that doesn't keep up, or that causes trouble with the other horses and doesn't display respectful behaviour toward the rest of the herd, will be disciplined - and in no uncertain terms.

Horses are amazing creatures. On the whole they are peaceful, calm and graceful. As a prey animal resolute on not attracting the attention of a predator, it pays to be! Left to their own devices, their energy is for the most part calm and serene. This is one of the things that we horse lovers admire most intrinsically about horses. The peace of them. A good herd, with an excellent leader and content hierarchy, will go about their daily activities in relative peace. The matriarch of the herd will guide and lead the herd movements throughout the day, with just small cues to move or turn - perhaps an ear back, or a hind quarter shown - but often with no more than an expression or even just the position of her body. The rest of the herd will know what she means and follow her lead.



However, if the need arises she, and indeed other members of the family group, can and do become very active in their communications. If one member of the herd is playing up, causing trouble for the others, not yielding respectfully (moving away) or snappily, then the energy of the conversation increases. What



will ensue may be a nip, a kick, a full jawed bite or even a two barreled attack until the desired outcome is reached; the disciplined horse learning it's lesson. The lead horse in this instance applies consistent yet increasing phases to their communication. The disciplinary action is instant and is applied as soon as the offending horse displays the undesirable actions. But what happens next is the amazing thing.

For humans, this kind of 'attack' would be seen as something very personal and certainly emotional, whereas with the horse it is taken as almost an objective view. For example, if a human attacked another person, even if no great harm was done, the victim would be upset and either afraid or angry for hours - even days! And the attacker also, would be highly emotional and energy charged for some time. For most people, it takes a long period of time (or extreme stress) to build up the kind of intense emotion to actually attack someone even verbally (let alone physically), and it takes an equally long time to calm down again.

Horses though are the complete opposite. Because of the high importance of the safety of the entire herd on every member 'behaving' himself and living in harmony (if one attracts attention to himself he attracts it to the herd also), they will not long tolerate unruly behaviour or even a slow or less than respectful yield. Horses know that if the boss horse says 'move' then they must move immediately, without question. If they stop to argue or ponder why, they just might end up being someone else's lunch! A lead horse then, will very quickly move to discipline the offending herd member and will go through their 'phases' of pressure or discomfort very quickly. Often more quickly than a human can recognize.

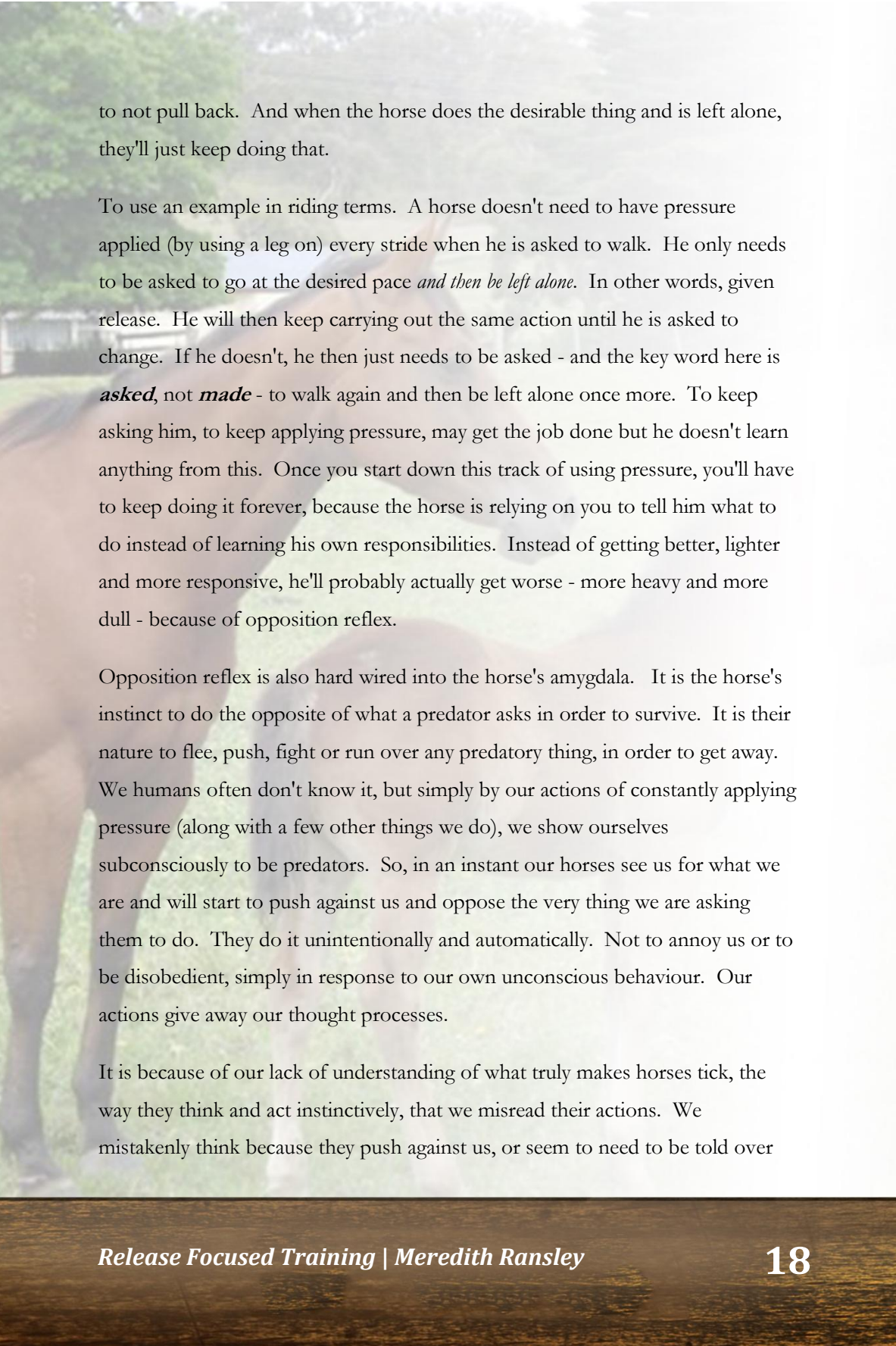
They will do what it takes to get the job done but, and this is the really fascinating and amazing thing about horses, *they will then immediately drop it*. They have the ability to harness up huge amounts of energy and unleash all their

power, without any kind of emotion or aggression behind it, and then be done with it a moment later. They don't harp on at the horse being disciplined. They say what they mean, get the desired result and it's over. And for the most part, a moment or two later, the two horses will be once again happily grazing side by side as if nothing has happened. This is the kind of yield that makes sense to the horse.

Horses, being herd animals that rely on each other, are comfort seeking creatures. In other words, they require and will strive for peace and serenity, in order to increase their safety. A quiet, peaceful herd attracts less attention from predators. They don't learn from the application of pressure either from a human or indeed another horse. They learn from and actively seek comfort - release.

It makes sense to them. And because they are matchers, they don't need to be told constantly over and over what to do. They only need to be shown that what they are doing is not desirable and they will stop doing it and try something else. This can be done by simply not offering release while the horse is doing the undesirable thing. For example, if a horse pulls back while on line, the tension is kept constant on the rope by the handler. As soon as the horse stops pulling back, the tension is immediately let go, thereby giving the horse release. If this pattern is repeated consistently, pretty soon the horse learns

Once you start down this track of using pressure, you'll have to keep doing it forever, because the horse is relying on you to tell him what to do instead of learning his own responsibilities. Instead of getting better, lighter and more responsive, he'll probably actually get worse - more heavy and more dull - because of opposition reflex.

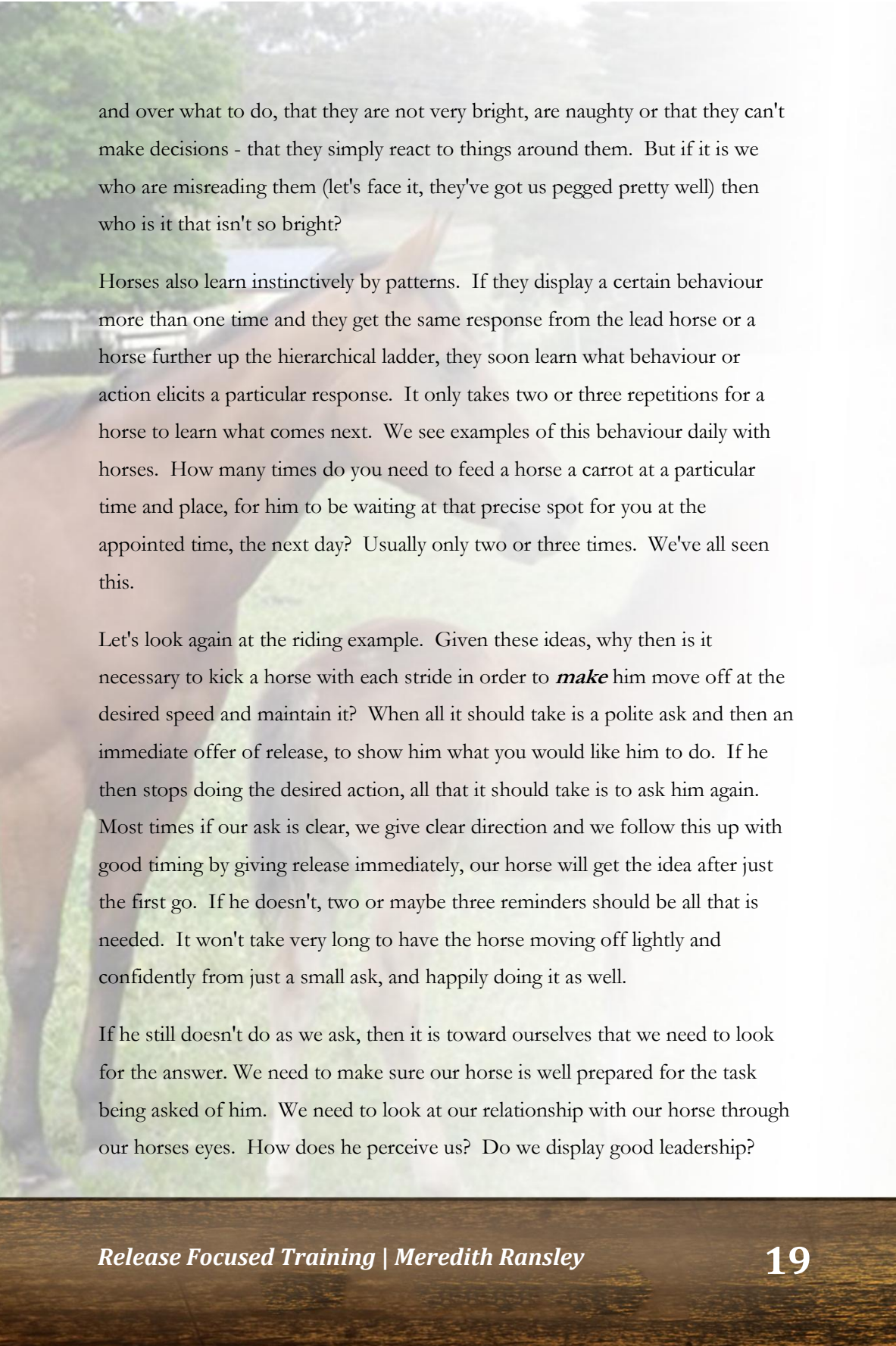
A person is riding a horse in a grassy field with trees in the background. The rider is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The horse is dark-colored and is being ridden in a relaxed manner.

to not pull back. And when the horse does the desirable thing and is left alone, they'll just keep doing that.

To use an example in riding terms. A horse doesn't need to have pressure applied (by using a leg on) every stride when he is asked to walk. He only needs to be asked to go at the desired pace *and then be left alone*. In other words, given release. He will then keep carrying out the same action until he is asked to change. If he doesn't, he then just needs to be asked - and the key word here is **asked**, not **made** - to walk again and then be left alone once more. To keep asking him, to keep applying pressure, may get the job done but he doesn't learn anything from this. Once you start down this track of using pressure, you'll have to keep doing it forever, because the horse is relying on you to tell him what to do instead of learning his own responsibilities. Instead of getting better, lighter and more responsive, he'll probably actually get worse - more heavy and more dull - because of opposition reflex.

Opposition reflex is also hard wired into the horse's amygdala. It is the horse's instinct to do the opposite of what a predator asks in order to survive. It is their nature to flee, push, fight or run over any predatory thing, in order to get away. We humans often don't know it, but simply by our actions of constantly applying pressure (along with a few other things we do), we show ourselves subconsciously to be predators. So, in an instant our horses see us for what we are and will start to push against us and oppose the very thing we are asking them to do. They do it unintentionally and automatically. Not to annoy us or to be disobedient, simply in response to our own unconscious behaviour. Our actions give away our thought processes.

It is because of our lack of understanding of what truly makes horses tick, the way they think and act instinctively, that we misread their actions. We mistakenly think because they push against us, or seem to need to be told over



and over what to do, that they are not very bright, are naughty or that they can't make decisions - that they simply react to things around them. But if it is we who are misreading them (let's face it, they've got us pegged pretty well) then who is it that isn't so bright?

Horses also learn instinctively by patterns. If they display a certain behaviour more than one time and they get the same response from the lead horse or a horse further up the hierarchical ladder, they soon learn what behaviour or action elicits a particular response. It only takes two or three repetitions for a horse to learn what comes next. We see examples of this behaviour daily with horses. How many times do you need to feed a horse a carrot at a particular time and place, for him to be waiting at that precise spot for you at the appointed time, the next day? Usually only two or three times. We've all seen this.

Let's look again at the riding example. Given these ideas, why then is it necessary to kick a horse with each stride in order to *make* him move off at the desired speed and maintain it? When all it should take is a polite ask and then an immediate offer of release, to show him what you would like him to do. If he then stops doing the desired action, all that it should take is to ask him again. Most times if our ask is clear, we give clear direction and we follow this up with good timing by giving release immediately, our horse will get the idea after just the first go. If he doesn't, two or maybe three reminders should be all that is needed. It won't take very long to have the horse moving off lightly and confidently from just a small ask, and happily doing it as well.

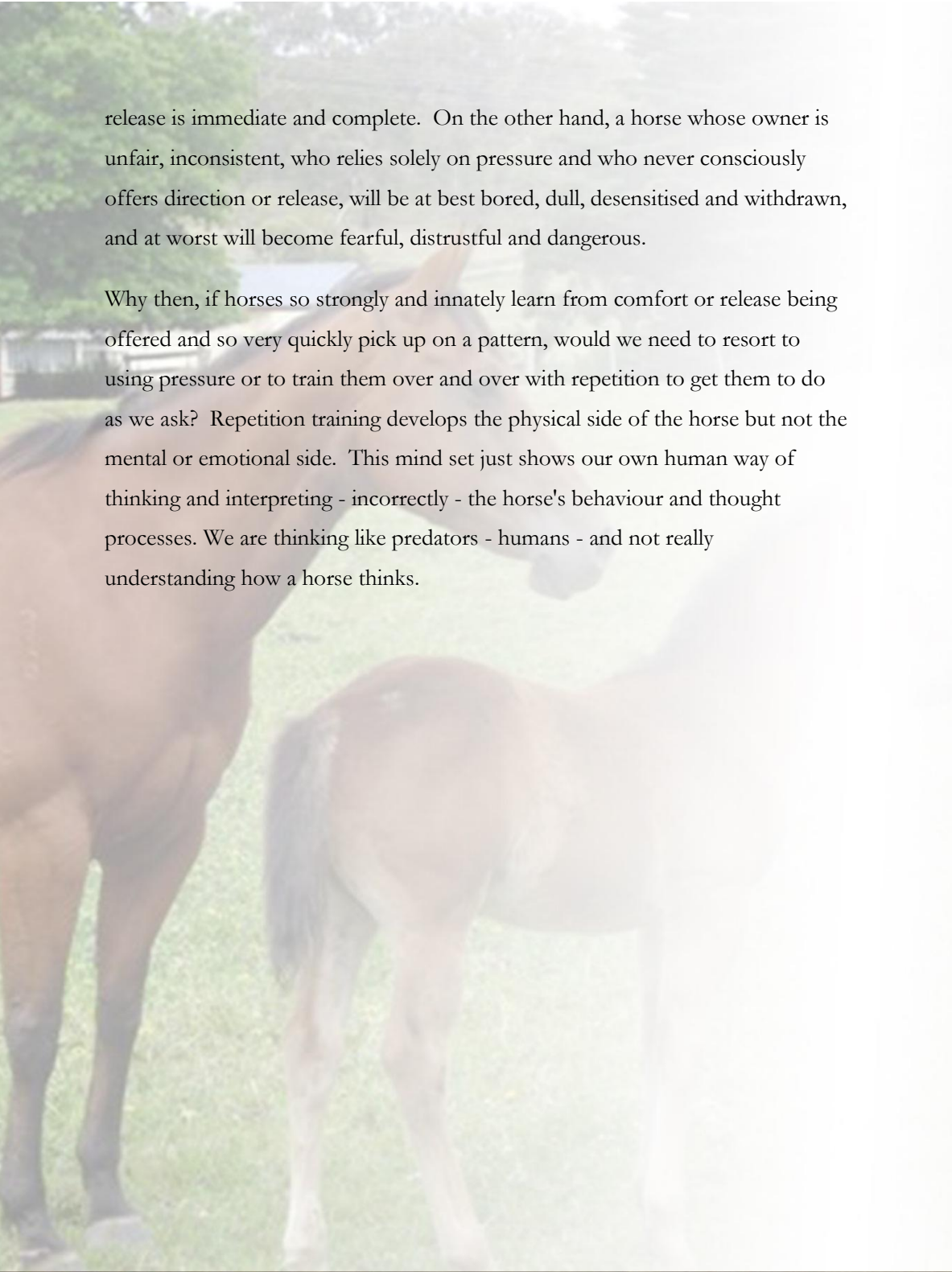
If he still doesn't do as we ask, then it is toward ourselves that we need to look for the answer. We need to make sure our horse is well prepared for the task being asked of him. We need to look at our relationship with our horse through our horses eyes. How does he perceive us? Do we display good leadership?

Does our horse respect us? Is he fearful or concerned for his safety? Is he confused and not understanding what is being asked of him?

Imagine in your work place or even at home, how you would feel if you were constantly being told what to do. Not only would you become so desensitised to being told that you'd no longer hear it unless further pressure was applied, but you'd also soon get pretty fed up with the person doing the telling. Even if you started out really liking the person, you'd fairly quickly become resentful of them, and lose respect and rapport with them. So too does this happen with the relationship between horse and human.



A horse whose owner or rider is fair in what they ask of the horse, is a horse who soon becomes relaxed, calm and happy because the human is relating to him in a way he understands. The horse knows where he stands. This is the owner who recognises the smallest of tries the horse offers, who offers clear direction rather than opting to go straight to pressure and whose timing of



release is immediate and complete. On the other hand, a horse whose owner is unfair, inconsistent, who relies solely on pressure and who never consciously offers direction or release, will be at best bored, dull, desensitised and withdrawn, and at worst will become fearful, distrustful and dangerous.

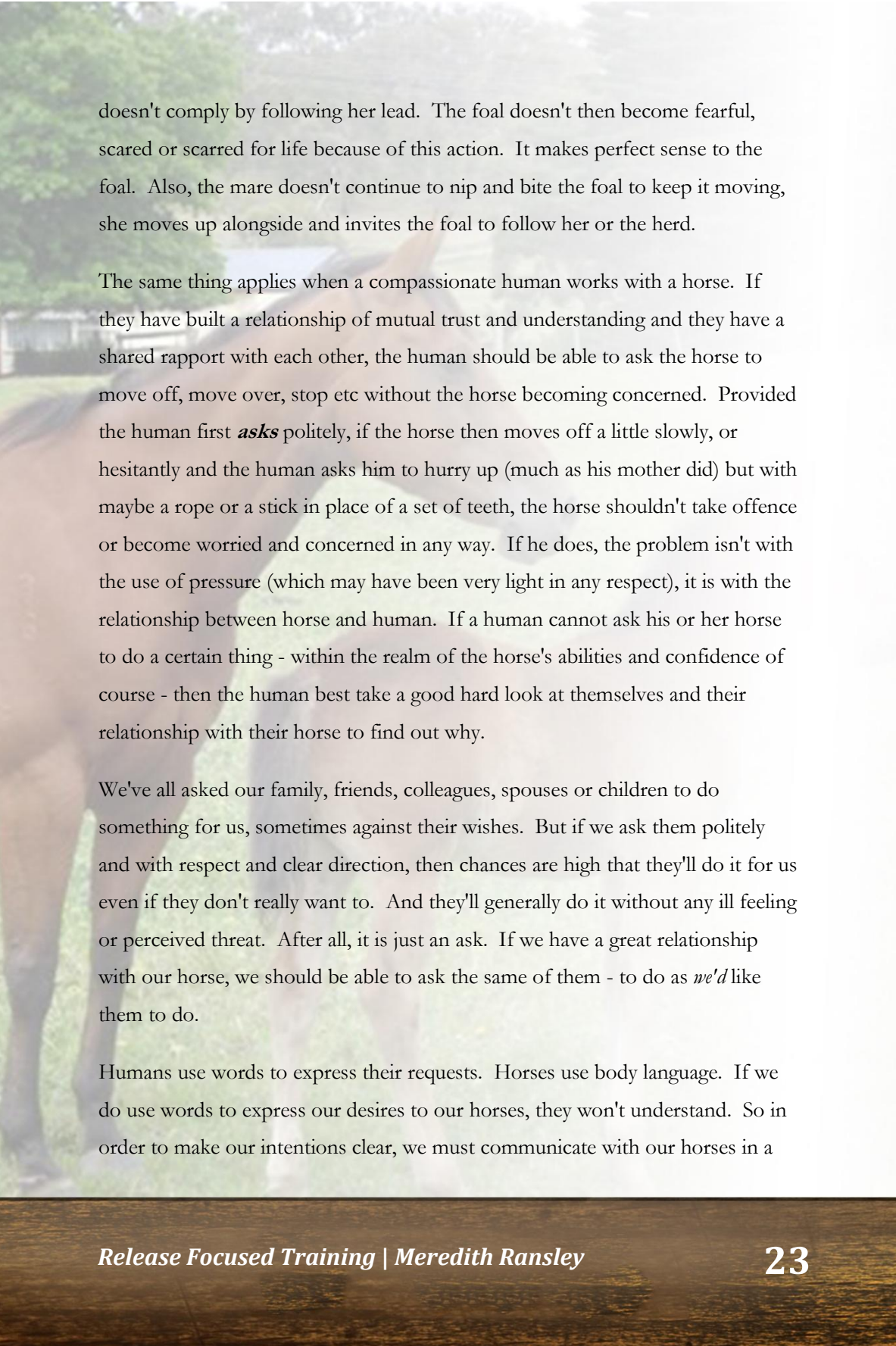
Why then, if horses so strongly and innately learn from comfort or release being offered and so very quickly pick up on a pattern, would we need to resort to using pressure or to train them over and over with repetition to get them to do as we ask? Repetition training develops the physical side of the horse but not the mental or emotional side. This mind set just shows our own human way of thinking and interpreting - incorrectly - the horse's behaviour and thought processes. We are thinking like predators - humans - and not really understanding how a horse thinks.

Chapter Three - The subject of pressure

There are those who say that we should never apply any pressure at all to a horse, and that to do so, however lightly, is to use 'negative reinforcement' against the horse. However some pressure, as discussed earlier, is a normal part of a horse's (or human's) life and is something he understands. Plus, we should be able to ask a question of our horse, or make a request of him, without him taking offense or becoming fearful and without it being a negative issue.

It has also been said, that those who purport to be kind and gentle with horses, still use 'pressure' in his training. That the horse will only do as he is asked because he knows he will suffer the consequences if he doesn't comply with what the human wants. While this may be true of some horse owners or trainers, this still to me is a limited and confused way to look at working with horses, and shows the instigators lack of understanding of how a horse thinks.

As in any relationship, there is nothing wrong with asking another being, horse or human, to do something that we would like them to do. It's not a 'negative' intent at all - it is just called living and working together. Sharing and helping each other as we coexist. We all move within the guidelines and parameters of each other to some extent. This is what gives life structure and meaning. It is what helps us all to feel comfortable and secure within our own existence. To not have these parameters set - of things we can and cannot do, places we can and cannot go for various reasons - is in part what creates uncertainty, confusion and fear. A foal asked by its mother to move, will get a little nip on the leg if it

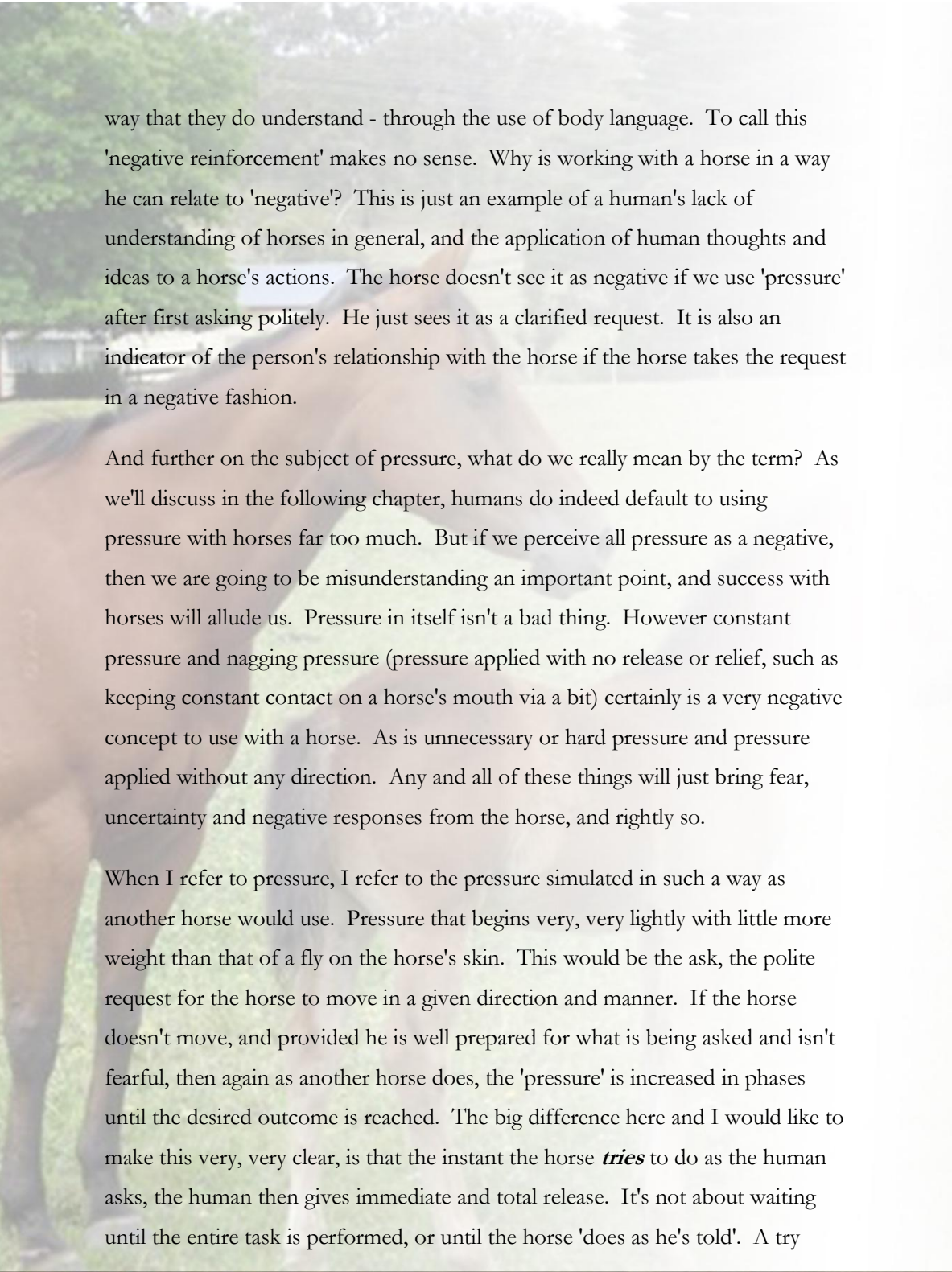


doesn't comply by following her lead. The foal doesn't then become fearful, scared or scarred for life because of this action. It makes perfect sense to the foal. Also, the mare doesn't continue to nip and bite the foal to keep it moving, she moves up alongside and invites the foal to follow her or the herd.

The same thing applies when a compassionate human works with a horse. If they have built a relationship of mutual trust and understanding and they have a shared rapport with each other, the human should be able to ask the horse to move off, move over, stop etc without the horse becoming concerned. Provided the human first *asks* politely, if the horse then moves off a little slowly, or hesitantly and the human asks him to hurry up (much as his mother did) but with maybe a rope or a stick in place of a set of teeth, the horse shouldn't take offence or become worried and concerned in any way. If he does, the problem isn't with the use of pressure (which may have been very light in any respect), it is with the relationship between horse and human. If a human cannot ask his or her horse to do a certain thing - within the realm of the horse's abilities and confidence of course - then the human best take a good hard look at themselves and their relationship with their horse to find out why.

We've all asked our family, friends, colleagues, spouses or children to do something for us, sometimes against their wishes. But if we ask them politely and with respect and clear direction, then chances are high that they'll do it for us even if they don't really want to. And they'll generally do it without any ill feeling or perceived threat. After all, it is just an ask. If we have a great relationship with our horse, we should be able to ask the same of them - to do as *we'd* like them to do.

Humans use words to express their requests. Horses use body language. If we do use words to express our desires to our horses, they won't understand. So in order to make our intentions clear, we must communicate with our horses in a

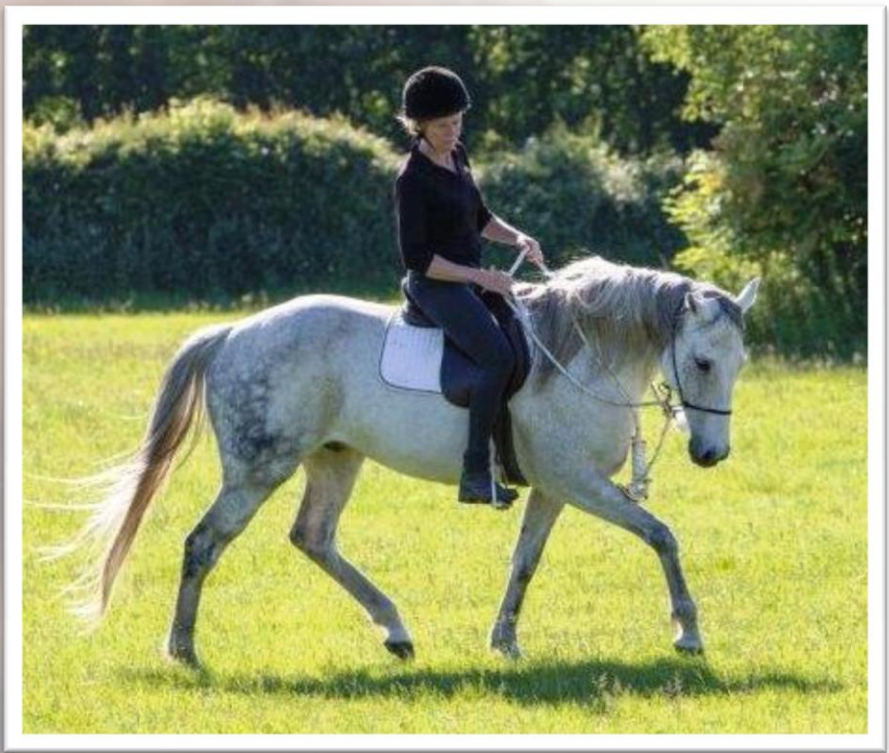


way that they do understand - through the use of body language. To call this 'negative reinforcement' makes no sense. Why is working with a horse in a way he can relate to 'negative'? This is just an example of a human's lack of understanding of horses in general, and the application of human thoughts and ideas to a horse's actions. The horse doesn't see it as negative if we use 'pressure' after first asking politely. He just sees it as a clarified request. It is also an indicator of the person's relationship with the horse if the horse takes the request in a negative fashion.

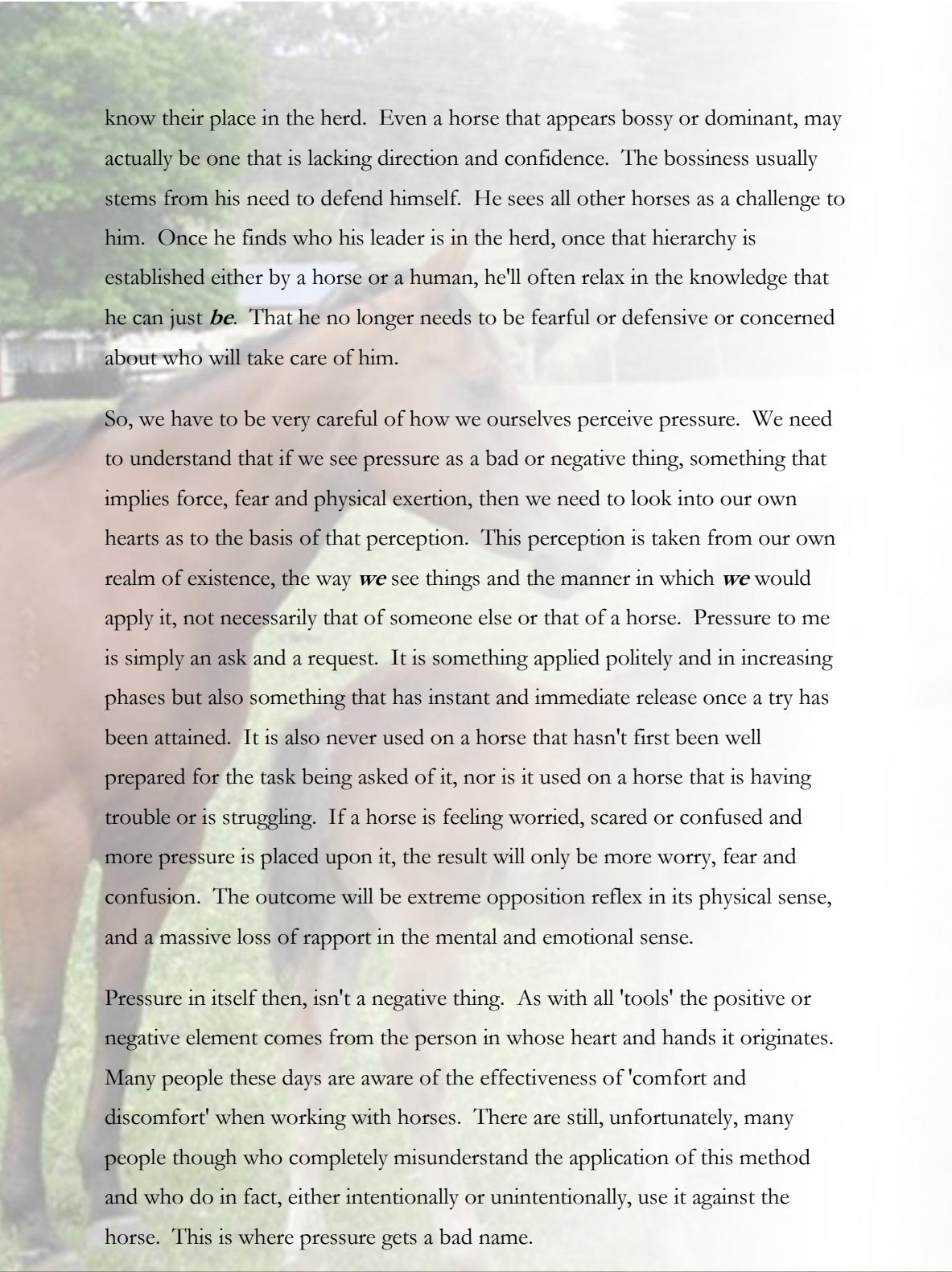
And further on the subject of pressure, what do we really mean by the term? As we'll discuss in the following chapter, humans do indeed default to using pressure with horses far too much. But if we perceive all pressure as a negative, then we are going to be misunderstanding an important point, and success with horses will allude us. Pressure in itself isn't a bad thing. However constant pressure and nagging pressure (pressure applied with no release or relief, such as keeping constant contact on a horse's mouth via a bit) certainly is a very negative concept to use with a horse. As is unnecessary or hard pressure and pressure applied without any direction. Any and all of these things will just bring fear, uncertainty and negative responses from the horse, and rightly so.

When I refer to pressure, I refer to the pressure simulated in such a way as another horse would use. Pressure that begins very, very lightly with little more weight than that of a fly on the horse's skin. This would be the ask, the polite request for the horse to move in a given direction and manner. If the horse doesn't move, and provided he is well prepared for what is being asked and isn't fearful, then again as another horse does, the 'pressure' is increased in phases until the desired outcome is reached. The big difference here and I would like to make this very, very clear, is that the instant the horse *tries* to do as the human asks, the human then gives immediate and total release. It's not about waiting until the entire task is performed, or until the horse 'does as he's told'. A try

might be something as small as the horse merely shifting his weight in the right direction. Or even just thinking about moving toward where the human asks. It is about showing the horse that he is on the right track and giving him comfort for his effort. Horses understand this as we discussed earlier. By offering release as soon as the horse tries, the horse soon gains confidence in the human and what is being asked of him. He knows how and where to find release, and that he is in control of the moment he does find it. A true connection between horse and human will build from this point.



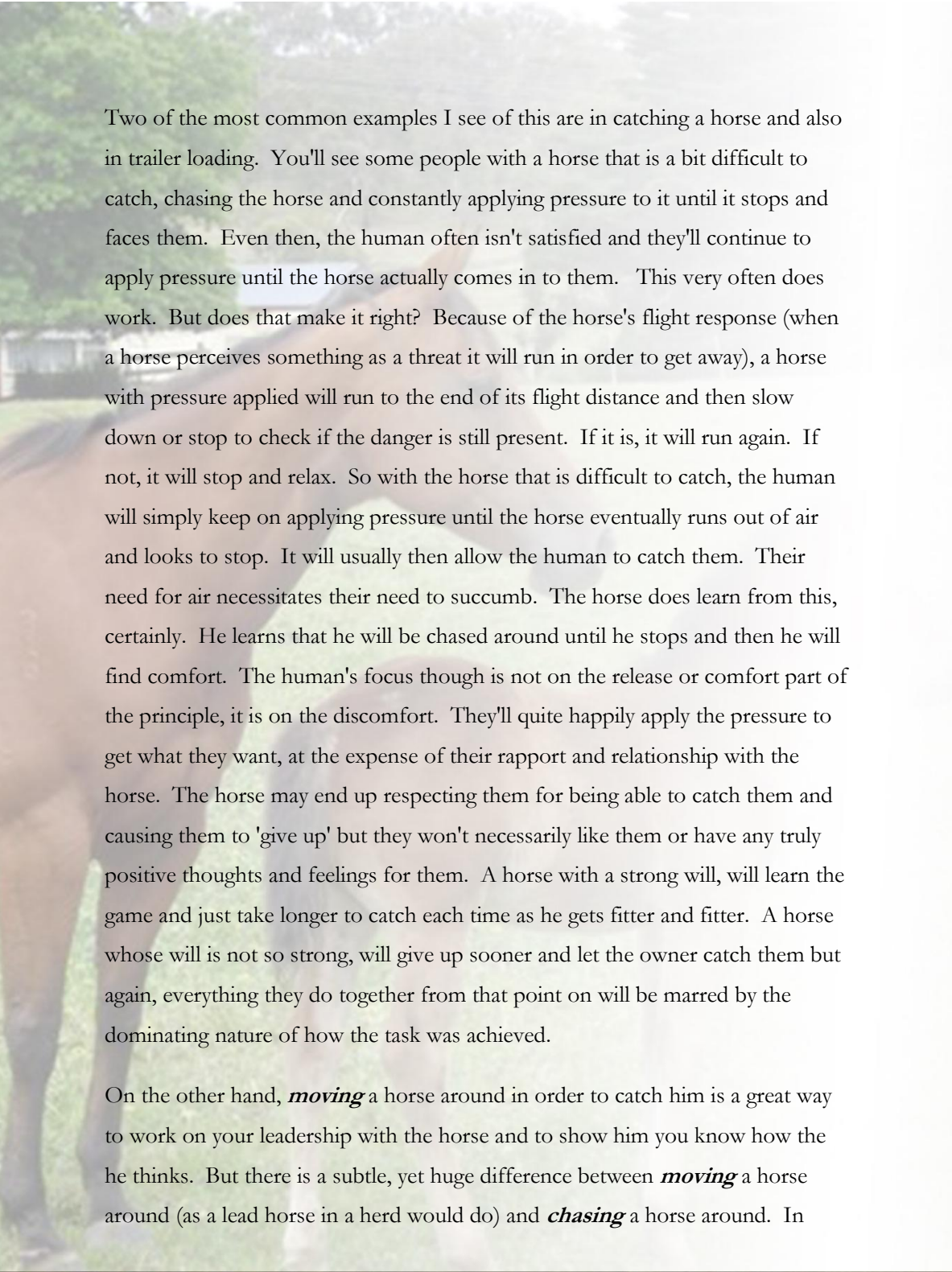
Horses love to know where they stand in the scheme of things. Because they are hierarchical creatures, they take comfort in knowing their place in the world. They don't take offence or become worried if they are shown where to be and how to be. Quite the opposite; they become relaxed and confident once they

A person wearing a green shirt is leading a horse in a grassy field. The background shows trees and a building. The text is overlaid on the image.

know their place in the herd. Even a horse that appears bossy or dominant, may actually be one that is lacking direction and confidence. The bossiness usually stems from his need to defend himself. He sees all other horses as a challenge to him. Once he finds who his leader is in the herd, once that hierarchy is established either by a horse or a human, he'll often relax in the knowledge that he can just **be**. That he no longer needs to be fearful or defensive or concerned about who will take care of him.

So, we have to be very careful of how we ourselves perceive pressure. We need to understand that if we see pressure as a bad or negative thing, something that implies force, fear and physical exertion, then we need to look into our own hearts as to the basis of that perception. This perception is taken from our own realm of existence, the way **we** see things and the manner in which **we** would apply it, not necessarily that of someone else or that of a horse. Pressure to me is simply an ask and a request. It is something applied politely and in increasing phases but also something that has instant and immediate release once a try has been attained. It is also never used on a horse that hasn't first been well prepared for the task being asked of it, nor is it used on a horse that is having trouble or is struggling. If a horse is feeling worried, scared or confused and more pressure is placed upon it, the result will only be more worry, fear and confusion. The outcome will be extreme opposition reflex in its physical sense, and a massive loss of rapport in the mental and emotional sense.

Pressure in itself then, isn't a negative thing. As with all 'tools' the positive or negative element comes from the person in whose heart and hands it originates. Many people these days are aware of the effectiveness of 'comfort and discomfort' when working with horses. There are still, unfortunately, many people though who completely misunderstand the application of this method and who do in fact, either intentionally or unintentionally, use it against the horse. This is where pressure gets a bad name.

A person wearing a green shirt is leading a horse in a field. The horse is dark-colored and is being led by a green lead rope. The background shows a grassy field with trees and a building in the distance.

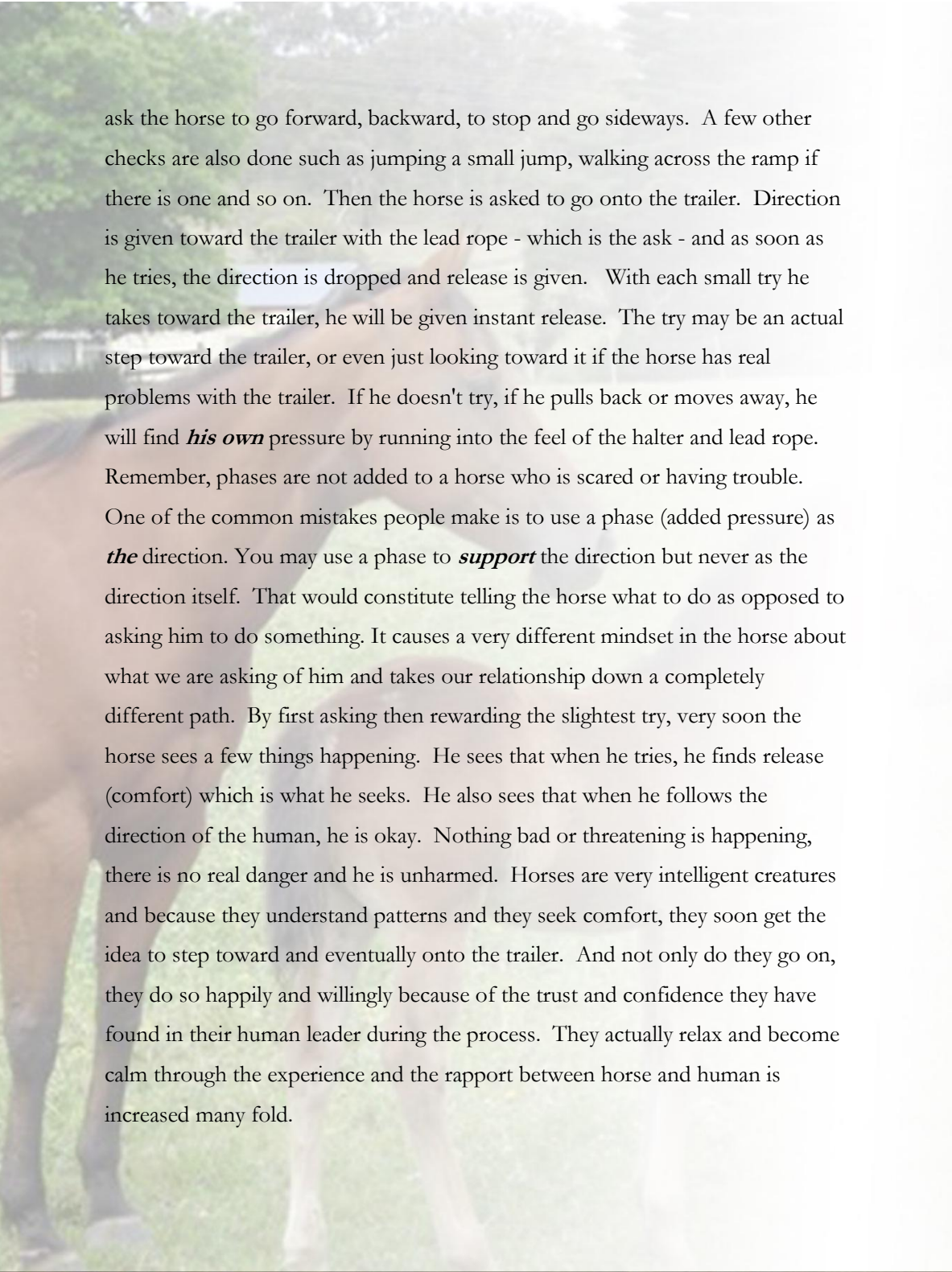
Two of the most common examples I see of this are in catching a horse and also in trailer loading. You'll see some people with a horse that is a bit difficult to catch, chasing the horse and constantly applying pressure to it until it stops and faces them. Even then, the human often isn't satisfied and they'll continue to apply pressure until the horse actually comes in to them. This very often does work. But does that make it right? Because of the horse's flight response (when a horse perceives something as a threat it will run in order to get away), a horse with pressure applied will run to the end of its flight distance and then slow down or stop to check if the danger is still present. If it is, it will run again. If not, it will stop and relax. So with the horse that is difficult to catch, the human will simply keep on applying pressure until the horse eventually runs out of air and looks to stop. It will usually then allow the human to catch them. Their need for air necessitates their need to succumb. The horse does learn from this, certainly. He learns that he will be chased around until he stops and then he will find comfort. The human's focus though is not on the release or comfort part of the principle, it is on the discomfort. They'll quite happily apply the pressure to get what they want, at the expense of their rapport and relationship with the horse. The horse may end up respecting them for being able to catch them and causing them to 'give up' but they won't necessarily like them or have any truly positive thoughts and feelings for them. A horse with a strong will, will learn the game and just take longer to catch each time as he gets fitter and fitter. A horse whose will is not so strong, will give up sooner and let the owner catch them but again, everything they do together from that point on will be marred by the dominating nature of how the task was achieved.

On the other hand, *moving* a horse around in order to catch him is a great way to work on your leadership with the horse and to show him you know how he thinks. But there is a subtle, yet huge difference between *moving* a horse around (as a lead horse in a herd would do) and *chasing* a horse around. In

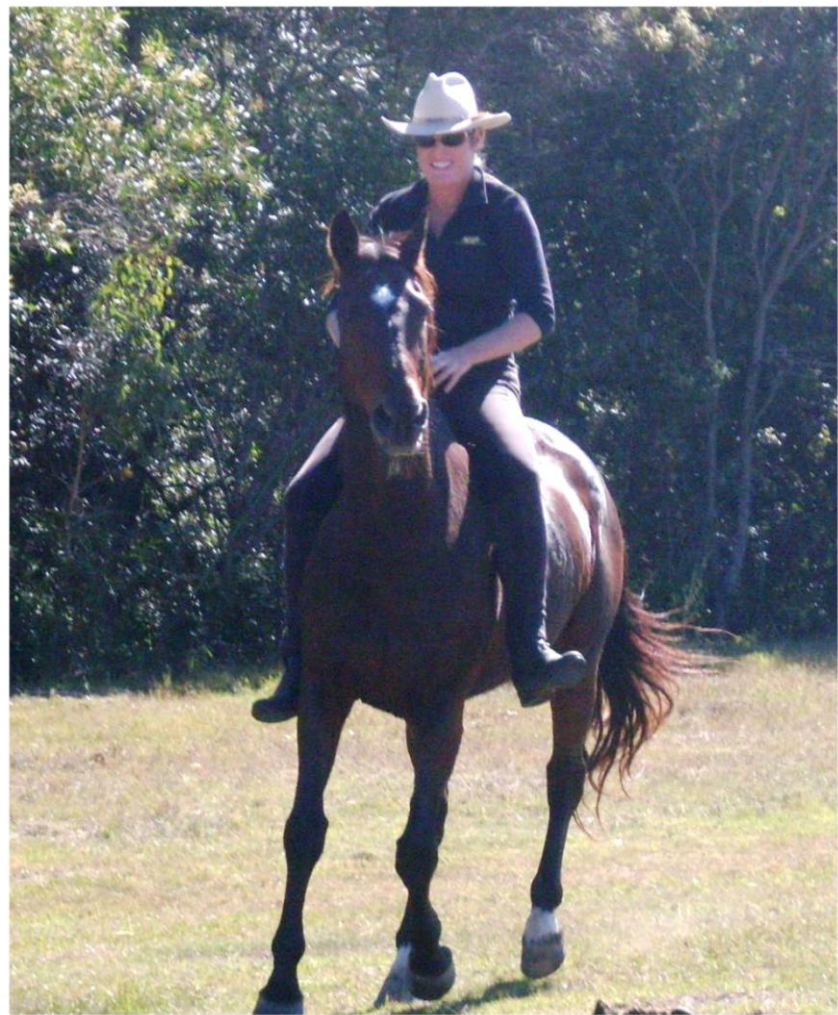
essence, chasing a horse around just implies keeping pressure on him until he looks to slow down or stop. Moving a horse around shows him that you can influence his speed, direction and gait. A lead horse in a herd will use this technique as a disciplinary measure if a herd member is causing trouble. She will push the horse from the herd and keep it out, not by using constant pressure, but by simply showing it that she can dictate when, if and how it is allowed back into the safety of the herd. Full details on this can be found in my liberty programme.



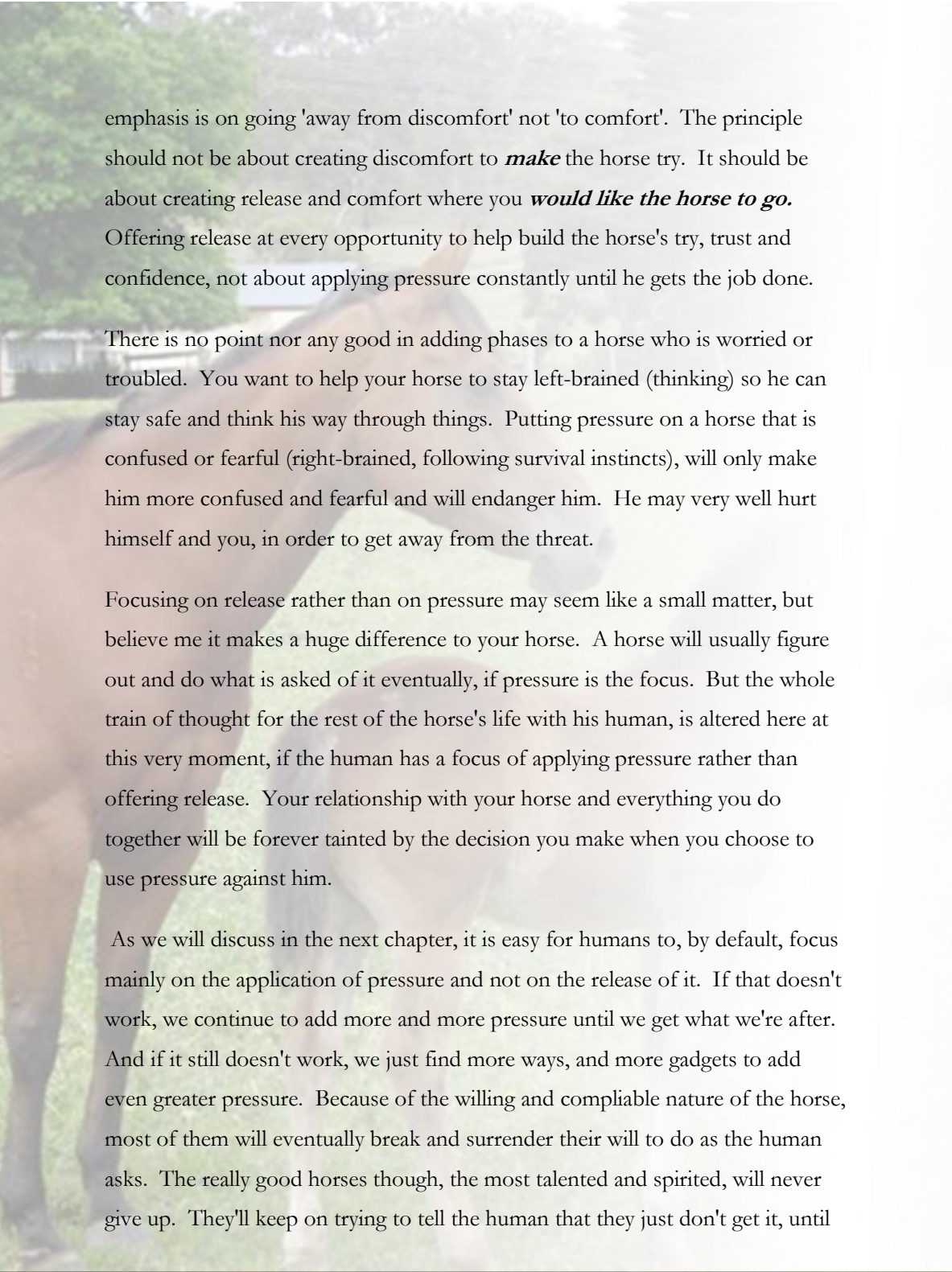
Trailer loading also offers a fantastic opportunity to see how release works with horses. It is also a prime example of how the majority of people tend to focus on pressure rather than release. In Quantum Savvy, because of our principle of teaching people to offer release and to work on their timing, it is relatively easy to help a horse overcome his fear of trailer loading and to load quite happily. Firstly, using RFT, a few basic yields are established. For example being able to

A person wearing a green safety vest is leading a light-colored horse into a dark trailer. The horse is stepping forward into the trailer. The background shows a grassy field and trees.

ask the horse to go forward, backward, to stop and go sideways. A few other checks are also done such as jumping a small jump, walking across the ramp if there is one and so on. Then the horse is asked to go onto the trailer. Direction is given toward the trailer with the lead rope - which is the ask - and as soon as he tries, the direction is dropped and release is given. With each small try he takes toward the trailer, he will be given instant release. The try may be an actual step toward the trailer, or even just looking toward it if the horse has real problems with the trailer. If he doesn't try, if he pulls back or moves away, he will find *his own* pressure by running into the feel of the halter and lead rope. Remember, phases are not added to a horse who is scared or having trouble. One of the common mistakes people make is to use a phase (added pressure) as *the* direction. You may use a phase to *support* the direction but never as the direction itself. That would constitute telling the horse what to do as opposed to asking him to do something. It causes a very different mindset in the horse about what we are asking of him and takes our relationship down a completely different path. By first asking then rewarding the slightest try, very soon the horse sees a few things happening. He sees that when he tries, he finds release (comfort) which is what he seeks. He also sees that when he follows the direction of the human, he is okay. Nothing bad or threatening is happening, there is no real danger and he is unharmed. Horses are very intelligent creatures and because they understand patterns and they seek comfort, they soon get the idea to step toward and eventually onto the trailer. And not only do they go on, they do so happily and willingly because of the trust and confidence they have found in their human leader during the process. They actually relax and become calm through the experience and the rapport between horse and human is increased many fold.



In other methodologies, you'll find people totally misunderstanding and misusing the principle of comfort and discomfort. The horse, being fearful of going into the trailer, will find discomfort (pressure) being applied everywhere else that it goes outside of the trailer and comfort (release) only inside the trailer. The horse, being very clever, will eventually discover that it can find comfort if it goes into the trailer, so it will go in to get away from the pressure. But here the

A person wearing a green shirt is leading a dark-colored horse on a leash. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a fence. The text is overlaid on the image.

emphasis is on going 'away from discomfort' not 'to comfort'. The principle should not be about creating discomfort to **make** the horse try. It should be about creating release and comfort where you **would like the horse to go**. Offering release at every opportunity to help build the horse's try, trust and confidence, not about applying pressure constantly until he gets the job done.

There is no point nor any good in adding phases to a horse who is worried or troubled. You want to help your horse to stay left-brained (thinking) so he can stay safe and think his way through things. Putting pressure on a horse that is confused or fearful (right-brained, following survival instincts), will only make him more confused and fearful and will endanger him. He may very well hurt himself and you, in order to get away from the threat.

Focusing on release rather than on pressure may seem like a small matter, but believe me it makes a huge difference to your horse. A horse will usually figure out and do what is asked of it eventually, if pressure is the focus. But the whole train of thought for the rest of the horse's life with his human, is altered here at this very moment, if the human has a focus of applying pressure rather than offering release. Your relationship with your horse and everything you do together will be forever tainted by the decision you make when you choose to use pressure against him.

As we will discuss in the next chapter, it is easy for humans to, by default, focus mainly on the application of pressure and not on the release of it. If that doesn't work, we continue to add more and more pressure until we get what we're after. And if it still doesn't work, we just find more ways, and more gadgets to add even greater pressure. Because of the willing and compliant nature of the horse, most of them will eventually break and surrender their will to do as the human asks. The really good horses though, the most talented and spirited, will never give up. They'll keep on trying to tell the human that they just don't get it, until

the horse is eventually deemed 'dangerous' or 'stupid' and ends up in a dog food can.

There are many techniques we humans use on horses, but again as Shane says, "Just because it works, doesn't make it right."

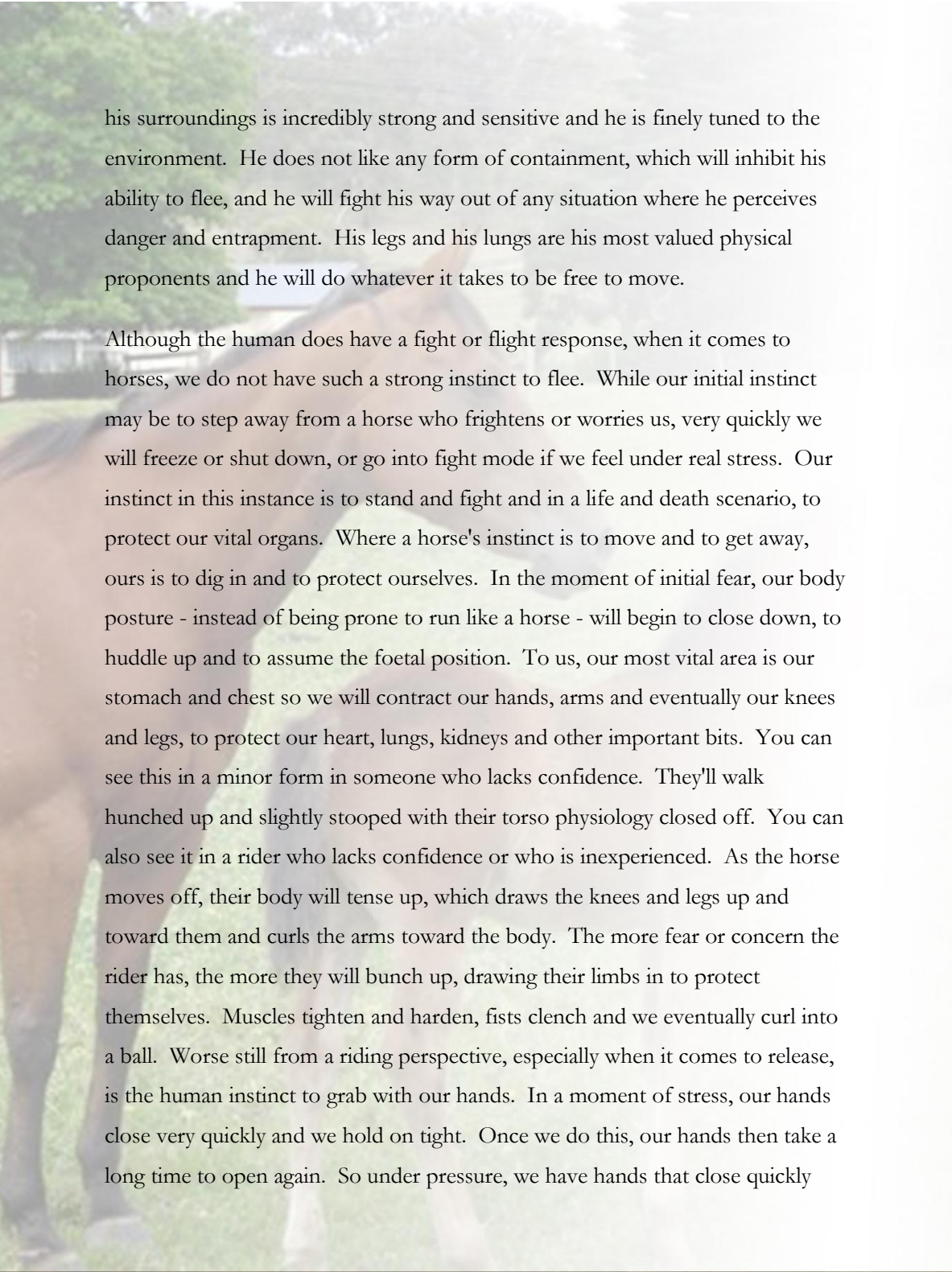


Chapter Four - The human default system (pressure /control)

Given then that humans have a massive brain complete with reasoning power, and couple that with a huge love for horses (one would hope), how is it that we can get it so wrong? Why, after thousands of years, do we still not really understand horses, how they think and what makes them tick? Even now, when the concept of pressure and release (or comfort and discomfort) is known by an ever increasing number of people, we still so easily focus on the pressure side of the equation. Why do we default back to using pressure when it is the release that teaches the horse? Even those of us who know and are aware of this principle, can still find it oh-so-easy to be drawn toward the use of pressure, however lightly and well intentioned.

For the answer, we must once again look toward the amygdala. Among other things, the amygdala is responsible for our response to fear. For whether we go into fight or flight mode under pressure. *Sometimes, when a person has suffered extreme physical or psychological trauma (including massive stress), they will assume the fetal position or a similar position. Sufferers of anxiety are also known to assume the fetal position during panic attacks. - Wikipedia*

Our survival code is at complete opposites to that of the horse. For the horse, the instinct to flee is the strongest survival mechanism. His entire body, soul and spirit is geared up to be able to get away from danger very quickly. His sense of

A person is riding a horse in a grassy field. The rider is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The horse is dark-colored. The background shows trees and a building. The text is overlaid on the image.

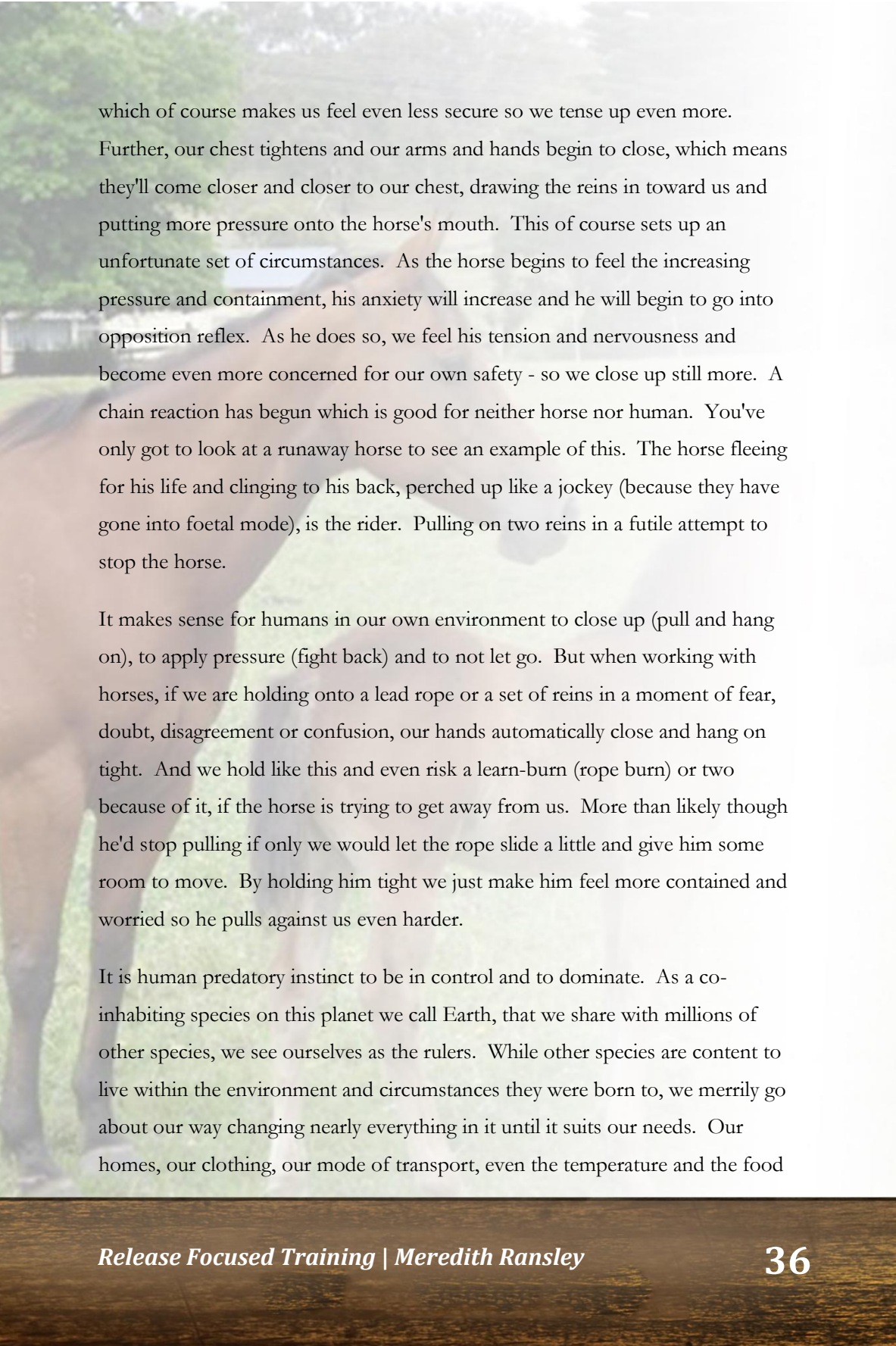
his surroundings is incredibly strong and sensitive and he is finely tuned to the environment. He does not like any form of containment, which will inhibit his ability to flee, and he will fight his way out of any situation where he perceives danger and entrapment. His legs and his lungs are his most valued physical proponents and he will do whatever it takes to be free to move.

Although the human does have a fight or flight response, when it comes to horses, we do not have such a strong instinct to flee. While our initial instinct may be to step away from a horse who frightens or worries us, very quickly we will freeze or shut down, or go into fight mode if we feel under real stress. Our instinct in this instance is to stand and fight and in a life and death scenario, to protect our vital organs. Where a horse's instinct is to move and to get away, ours is to dig in and to protect ourselves. In the moment of initial fear, our body posture - instead of being prone to run like a horse - will begin to close down, to huddle up and to assume the foetal position. To us, our most vital area is our stomach and chest so we will contract our hands, arms and eventually our knees and legs, to protect our heart, lungs, kidneys and other important bits. You can see this in a minor form in someone who lacks confidence. They'll walk hunched up and slightly stooped with their torso physiology closed off. You can also see it in a rider who lacks confidence or who is inexperienced. As the horse moves off, their body will tense up, which draws the knees and legs up and toward them and curls the arms toward the body. The more fear or concern the rider has, the more they will bunch up, drawing their limbs in to protect themselves. Muscles tighten and harden, fists clench and we eventually curl into a ball. Worse still from a riding perspective, especially when it comes to release, is the human instinct to grab with our hands. In a moment of stress, our hands close very quickly and we hold on tight. Once we do this, our hands then take a long time to open again. So under pressure, we have hands that close quickly

and open slowly. Just the opposite to what we need when riding horses. The human instinct then is to close up and contract.



Now, with horses this is an unfortunate and unhelpful state to get into. As a rider, it makes it difficult to stay on the horse. To be able to balance and have a secure, deep seat, we need to have nice, long, relaxed legs and a relaxed backside. If our buttocks and legs tense up, it effectively pops us up out of the saddle,



which of course makes us feel even less secure so we tense up even more. Further, our chest tightens and our arms and hands begin to close, which means they'll come closer and closer to our chest, drawing the reins in toward us and putting more pressure onto the horse's mouth. This of course sets up an unfortunate set of circumstances. As the horse begins to feel the increasing pressure and containment, his anxiety will increase and he will begin to go into opposition reflex. As he does so, we feel his tension and nervousness and become even more concerned for our own safety - so we close up still more. A chain reaction has begun which is good for neither horse nor human. You've only got to look at a runaway horse to see an example of this. The horse fleeing for his life and clinging to his back, perched up like a jockey (because they have gone into foetal mode), is the rider. Pulling on two reins in a futile attempt to stop the horse.

It makes sense for humans in our own environment to close up (pull and hang on), to apply pressure (fight back) and to not let go. But when working with horses, if we are holding onto a lead rope or a set of reins in a moment of fear, doubt, disagreement or confusion, our hands automatically close and hang on tight. And we hold like this and even risk a learn-burn (rope burn) or two because of it, if the horse is trying to get away from us. More than likely though he'd stop pulling if only we would let the rope slide a little and give him some room to move. By holding him tight we just make him feel more contained and worried so he pulls against us even harder.

It is human predatory instinct to be in control and to dominate. As a co-inhabiting species on this planet we call Earth, that we share with millions of other species, we see ourselves as the rulers. While other species are content to live within the environment and circumstances they were born to, we merrily go about our way changing nearly everything in it until it suits our needs. Our homes, our clothing, our mode of transport, even the temperature and the food

we prefer are all controlled by us. But of course our need to control doesn't end there. We also like to be in control of the people and animals around us. Not generally in an arrogant way, but in a more subtle, subconscious way that again suits our needs.

This then also applies to our horses. A horse is a living, breathing creature with thoughts and feelings of its own. Just because we bought them and paid for them, doesn't mean *they* know that they are now our property. They are just a horse, doing what horses do. Grazing, sleeping, hanging around with their friends in whatever environment we choose to put them. And as much as we love them, still subconsciously see them as our possessions. We think they should do as we ask, when we ask. In our arrogance, we generally don't take the time to consider that perhaps first we should learn how to understand them, to

A horse is a living, breathing creature with thoughts and feelings of its own. Just because we bought them and paid for them, doesn't mean *they* know that they are now our property. They are just a horse, doing what horses do. Grazing, sleeping, hanging around with their friends in whatever environment we choose to put them.

communicate with them in a way they understand and are comfortable with, and to learn what makes them tick. Perhaps then we would realise that we need to attain some new skills in order to communicate our wishes to them. Rather, when they don't do as we wish, we blame them. As if it is their fault that they don't understand us! We know that horses will try to do as we want. Many horse owners will attest to this point; just how much heart and desire a horse has to try for us. Yet when horses

don't 'get it' we still assign the blame to them and not where it should go - to us! Worse, we compare their actions to things that we do and the way we see things, so that when they do something, for example inflict a terrible injury on themselves while trying to flee in fear, we call them 'stupid' and 'brainless'. Yet to the horse, getting away, even injured, is far better than staying put and risking death.

The human's natural instincts then are to use pressure to get the desired outcome we are after and to try to control the very things around us, including our horses. Given that the horse's instincts are the antithesis of this, how then are we ever going to come together and form a successful partnership with our horse where both of us feel happy, content and confident?



Chapter Five - How can horse and human come happily together?

Fortunately we have a few things working in our favour. For starters we have this huge brain with lots of reasoning power, so we can learn to change ourselves, our way of thinking and of doing things. We can take the time to learn what truly makes horses tick, what drives and motivates them and what their needs really are, as we've already discussed in previous chapters.

We can put aside our ego in favour of our horse, so that instead of feeling the need to control him, we can give him the freedom he needs to move and to be. Then he can happily offer us his best, on his terms instead of ours. With his heart and desire and effort instead of us *making* him do what we want. Instead of blaming him when things go wrong, we can look to ourselves for the answers and try to find out why things didn't go the way we wished. We can learn the skills we need so that we can better communicate with him.

Also, we can stop putting human emotions and thoughts onto our horses behaviour and labelling him by comparison to people. Horses don't do naughty things, or try to annoy us or hurt us out of spite or malice. They just don't think that way. When horses act up, all they are trying to do is to tell us that something is wrong. They feel fearful, confused, or threatened in some way. Saying a horse is being naughty or stupid is simply showing a lack of understanding of how horses think and behave. Vices are just a list of names that humans have come up with, for horse behaviours that they don't

understand. It is so important - for us to stay safe and for horses to have a better life - that we learn to think like a horse not a human.

And we also need to become more emotionally fit. If we are so keen on controlling things, here then is something really valuable and productive to be in control of, for our own sake as well as that of our horse. Instead of letting our emotions take control of us, if we are unhappy with our horses in any way, we need to be able to stay calm, even tempered and left brained (thinking logically). There are times that our horses will test us, but it is important to know that if we feel our emotions come up, it is usually because of our own fear or lack of understanding. Working on our own horsemanship skills will help with both of these.

But most importantly and relevantly to every success we will ever have with horses, is to have the right head-set and the right heart-set. We've got to have our thoughts coming from the right place. Whatever we choose to do with horses, it's not about what we actually **DO** that matters, it is when we stop doing what we were doing. Humans, being *makers* and *controllers*, always think we need to **do** more with a horse or **do something** with a horse, to get him to do as we wish. Someone who asks, "What do I need to do to get my horse to.....?" still doesn't have the right thing in their head. Which usually means they also don't have the right thing in their heart. The very nature of the question shows our natural default to use pressure - to **do** something. If our horse does something we don't want him to do, instead of asking "What do I do to fix it?", ask instead "What caused him to do that? What was he thinking or feeling for him to do it this way?"

Our emotions control our thoughts and our thoughts control our actions. So, long before we **do** something, we need to be aware of what our thoughts are. And if we can be aware of our thoughts, we must also look at our emotions, or

what is in our hearts. If our hearts are in the right place, then our emotions, thoughts and actions will follow accordingly. To be able to recognise the try in our horses, those tiny moments when our horse starts to actively seek what it is we are asking of him, we need to be emotionally balanced and clear headed. If our emotions are up, logic tends to go out the window and our thoughts become clouded. When this happens we miss the *try* that our horse offers us. Through Release Focused Training - people learning how to have better timing and release when working with horses - we know that it is the release that teaches the horse. Therefore it is imperative that we see even the smallest of tries so that we can offer instant release to the horse. This is what builds his trust and confidence in us and what will build even greater try in him next time. Rapid progress is then what follows.

Approach all that you do with your horse from a place of compassion and understanding in your heart and you'll find your head asks better questions and consequently finds better answers.

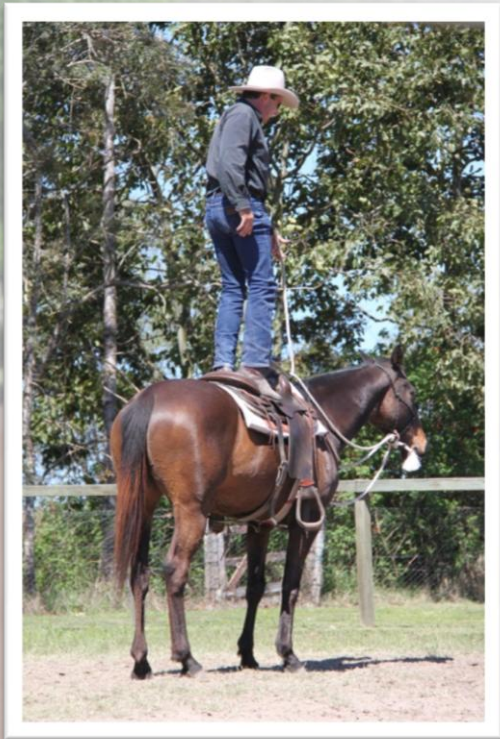


Chapter Six - Doing what we know - repeating what we've seen.

The biggest trouble we face, with making these changes within ourselves in order to reach success with horses, is that it means changing our very beliefs about horses and forgetting the traditional way things have long since been done with them.

Tradition in horses is amazingly strong. Doing things the 'old way' and handing on techniques and theories about horses and horse training, persists as in no other area of life. It is easy for those who have found a better way of being with horses to then be judgemental about those who haven't. And yet we're all horses lovers. With the exception of those few who have horses merely to stroke their ego or as a status symbol, we all really do want what is best for our horses. So why then do we cling so doggedly to old fashioned beliefs and ideas about horse ownership and handling?

It all comes down to the realm of our own experience. Most of us, without even realising it, just live within the comfortable limits of our own existence. We're born, we grown up, we work, we have a family, we grow old, we die....all pretty much like everyone else around us. Certainly we have different jobs and enjoy different sports and pastimes, but for the most part we live and grow within the social structure that surrounds us. We know on an intellectual level that people in other parts of the world live differently, but for the most part we don't really think about that. We just accept that what we, and our family and neighbours do, is the way things are.

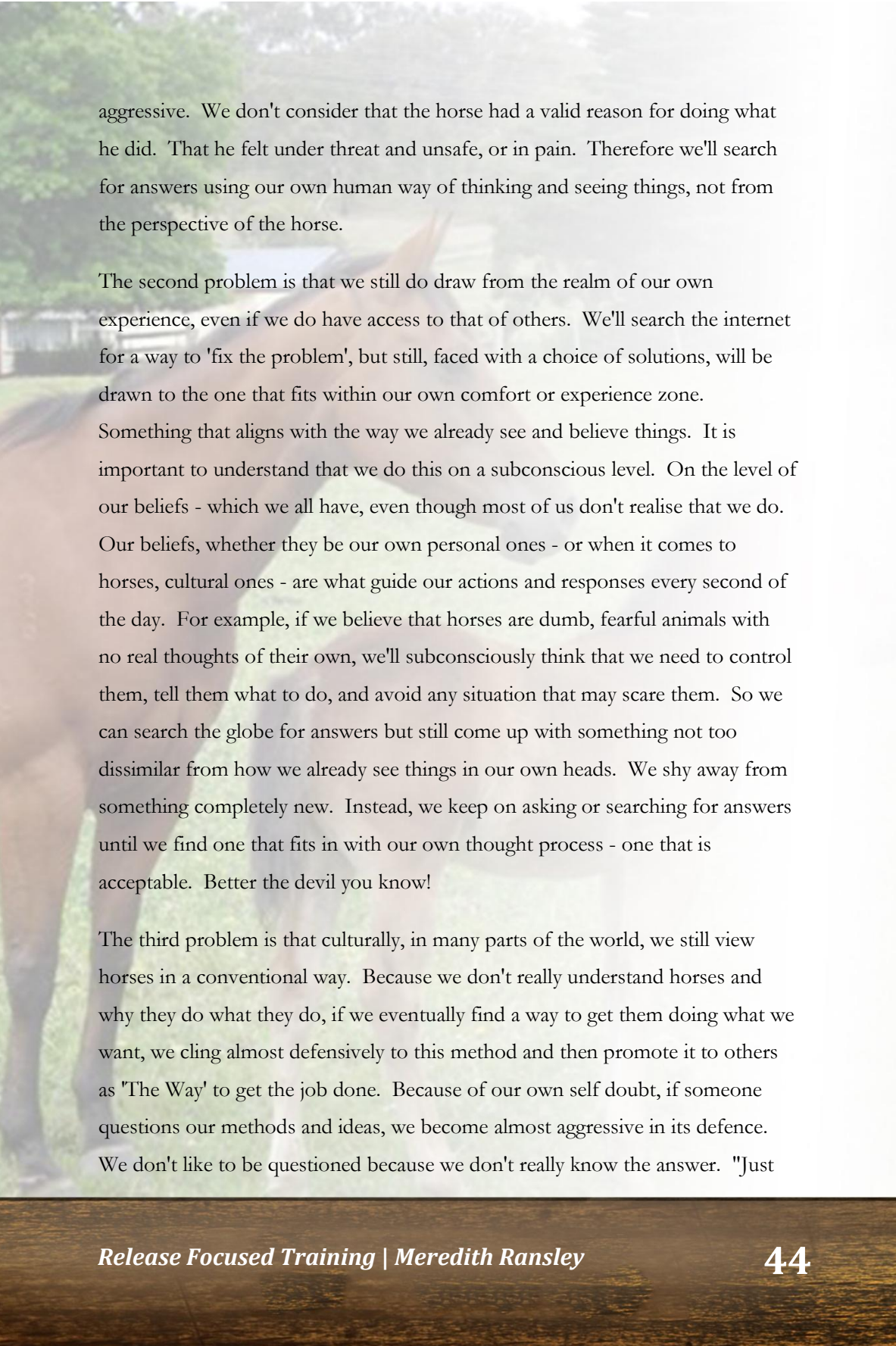


But if all we ever see and all we ever experience are the things around us, or within easy access of us, this then becomes the realm of our experience. The box in which we live. This becomes the 'library' of our resources from which we draw.

It makes sense then, that if we have a problem with our horse, or we don't understand why he does a certain thing, we go to our 'library' to find the answer. We'll draw from those around us who have the appearance of

more knowledge than us and take their advice.

Sure, in this day and age of the internet, we do have access to the realm of experience of other people. And this is very fortunate for the horse, for at least we have the possibility of finding a better way of doing things for them. But here, we are faced with three problems. The first of which is our own default system as we discussed earlier. Our default (which means subconscious action) is to see things from the human perspective. We can only think and make decisions based on our own experiences. Most of us never even consider that other people (let alone other creatures) think in a way different to us. We only see the world through our own filters and perceptions, so when a horse does something that we don't understand, our brain searches for an answer, a reason, for the behaviour. For example, if a horse bites us or kicks us, we see this from a human perspective and label the behaviour, and indeed the horse, as naughty or

A person is riding a dark horse in a grassy field. The rider is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The background shows trees and a fence. The image is slightly blurred, giving it a soft, artistic feel.

aggressive. We don't consider that the horse had a valid reason for doing what he did. That he felt under threat and unsafe, or in pain. Therefore we'll search for answers using our own human way of thinking and seeing things, not from the perspective of the horse.

The second problem is that we still do draw from the realm of our own experience, even if we do have access to that of others. We'll search the internet for a way to 'fix the problem', but still, faced with a choice of solutions, will be drawn to the one that fits within our own comfort or experience zone.

Something that aligns with the way we already see and believe things. It is important to understand that we do this on a subconscious level. On the level of our beliefs - which we all have, even though most of us don't realise that we do. Our beliefs, whether they be our own personal ones - or when it comes to horses, cultural ones - are what guide our actions and responses every second of the day. For example, if we believe that horses are dumb, fearful animals with no real thoughts of their own, we'll subconsciously think that we need to control them, tell them what to do, and avoid any situation that may scare them. So we can search the globe for answers but still come up with something not too dissimilar from how we already see things in our own heads. We shy away from something completely new. Instead, we keep on asking or searching for answers until we find one that fits in with our own thought process - one that is acceptable. Better the devil you know!

The third problem is that culturally, in many parts of the world, we still view horses in a conventional way. Because we don't really understand horses and why they do what they do, if we eventually find a way to get them doing what we want, we cling almost defensively to this method and then promote it to others as 'The Way' to get the job done. Because of our own self doubt, if someone questions our methods and ideas, we become almost aggressive in its defence. We don't like to be questioned because we don't really know the answer. "Just

because," is a catch phrase used in abundance when it comes to horses. After a time we just accept that this is the way things are done. We don't know why we do it, but if someone with a position of respect has told us authoritatively that this is how it's done, we do it to!

The horse world is filled with superstition and habit. "You've got to fall off your horse seven times before you're a good rider". "Mares are harder to work with than geldings". "Always mount from the near side", (so you don't get stabbed by your sabre!)....the list of fallacies is endless but we cling to them just the same.

So even if we do search outside our own realm of experience, chances are we'll be drawn to methods that are in sympathy with our own existing ideas, based on our own experience. We will only be asking the questions from a human perspective, not that of the horse. And we may find that most of the

information out there is the same as everywhere else anyway!

Horses are amazing, sensitive, athletic, clever, sociable, easy-going, fun creatures. And yet in the hands of many horse owners they become the antithesis of this.

Because of our lack of understanding and horsemanship, they become nervous, flighty, unpredictable and dangerous.

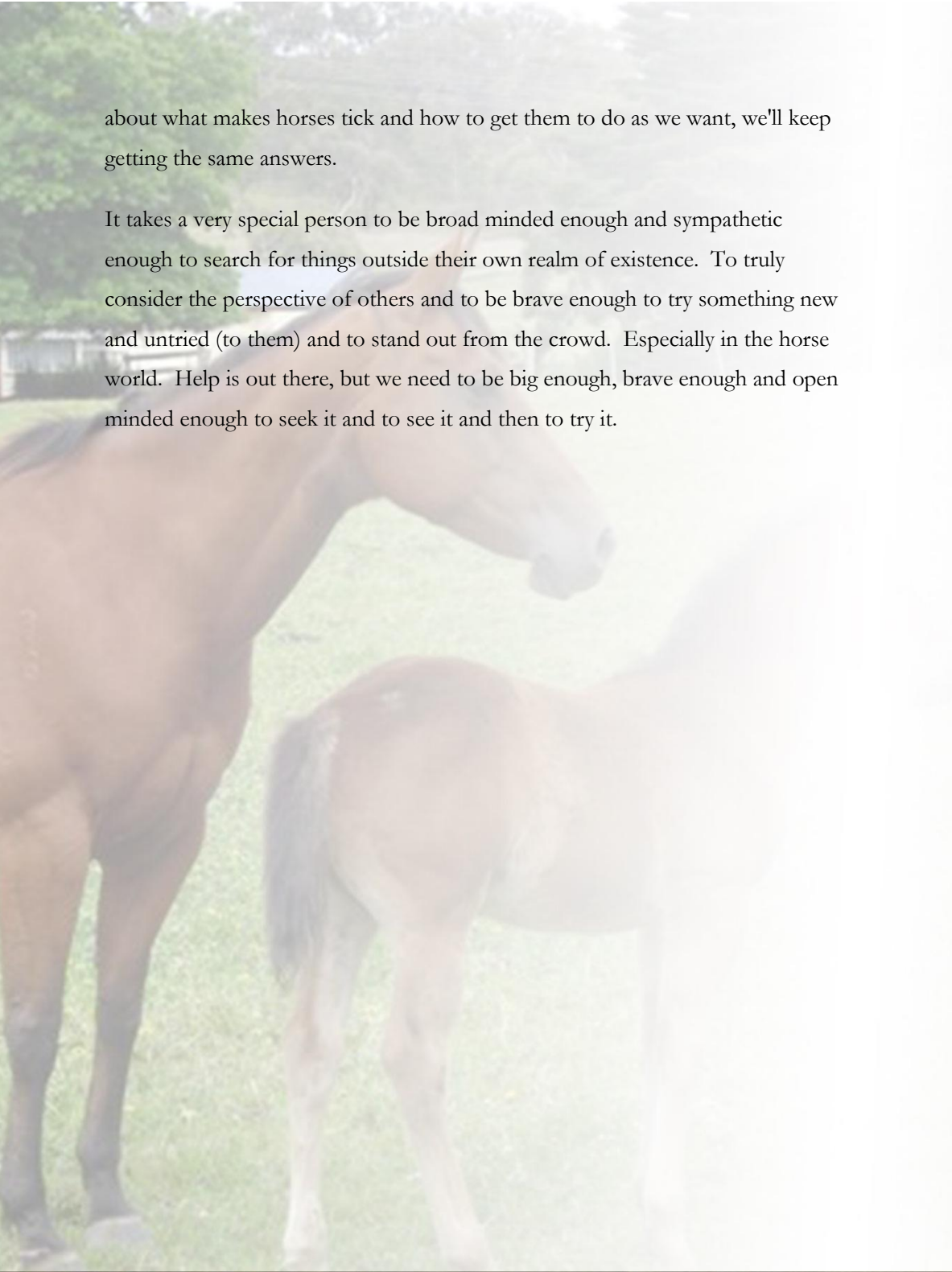
And, even if we aren't actually having noticeable 'problems' with our horses, are we really achieving all we could do? It seems for many of us, that we accept the limitations of our achievements with horses as the norm. Yet horses and humans together are capable of incredible things. Most of us these days have seen people working with

horses at liberty (off line), bridle less, bareback and so on and yet we seem content to accept that, on a day to day basis, horses are not easy to work with.

The reality for many horse owners is that horses are unpredictable at best and downright dangerous at worst. How many horse owners accept that their horse is a little hard to catch, or is not easy to get onto the trailer, doesn't like having their hooves picked up, can only be ridden when conditions are favourable, or that competitive performances are unpredictable, that the horse will be emotional and impulsive on trail rides and hacking, or will need any manner of contraption to keep them under control? Or that they need to be fed a special diet to calm them down!



Horses are amazing, sensitive, athletic, clever, sociable, easy-going, fun creatures. And yet in the hands of many horse owners they become the antithesis of this. Because of our lack of understanding and horsemanship, they become nervous, flighty, unpredictable and dangerous. They become a hazard to themselves and everyone around them. It doesn't need to be this way. But if we keep looking for answers in the same places, keep thinking along the old traditional ways



about what makes horses tick and how to get them to do as we want, we'll keep getting the same answers.

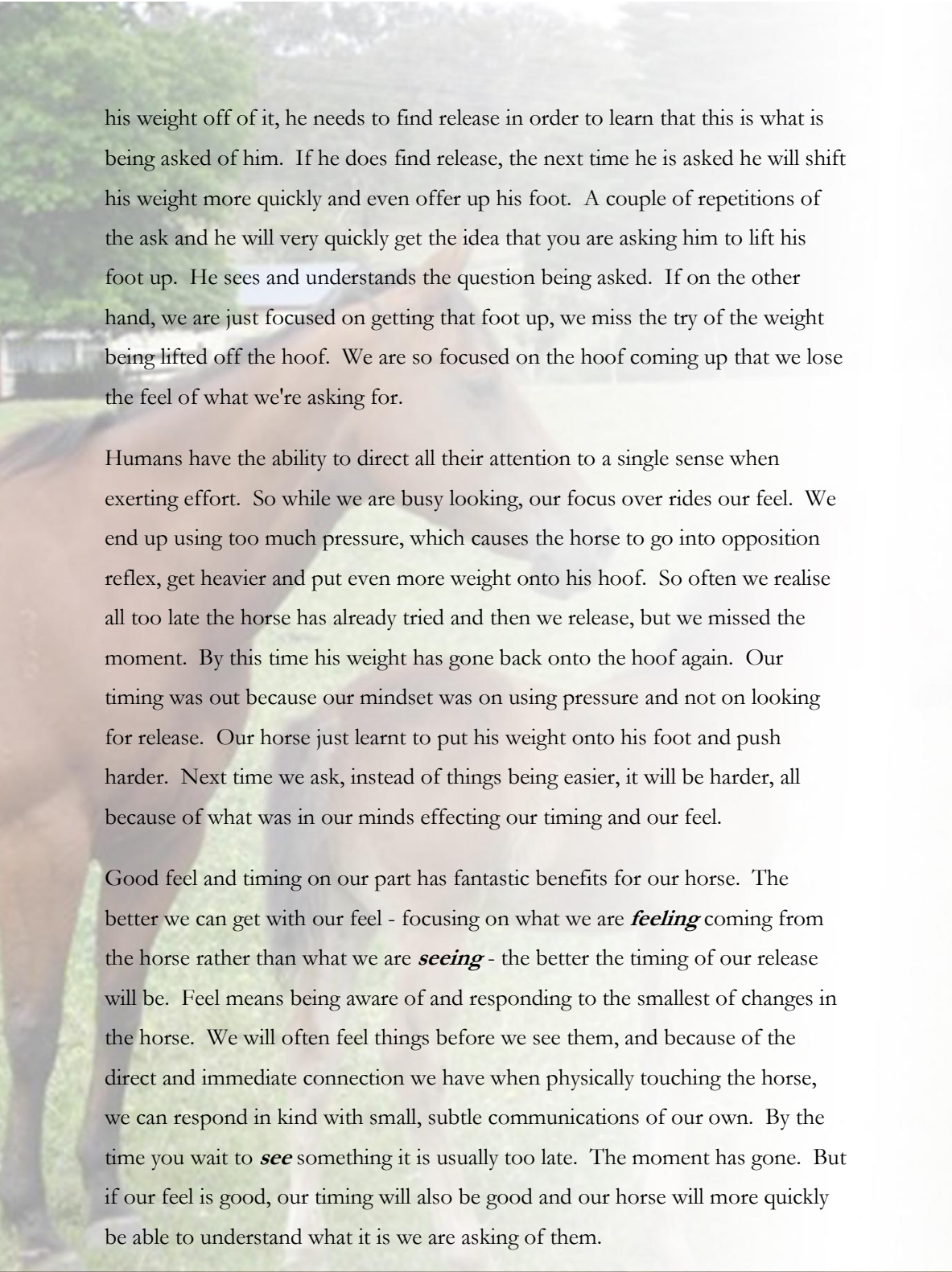
It takes a very special person to be broad minded enough and sympathetic enough to search for things outside their own realm of existence. To truly consider the perspective of others and to be brave enough to try something new and untried (to them) and to stand out from the crowd. Especially in the horse world. Help is out there, but we need to be big enough, brave enough and open minded enough to seek it and to see it and then to try it.

Chapter Seven - Applying RFT in a practical sense.

What then does Release Focused Training mean in a practical sense? How does it apply and what kind of outcomes can we expect from using this methodology? As with all things a horse does, every action, reaction and response he has is influenced by the very things around him; his environment, his herd, and us! How we go about him therefore, has a direct effect on his thoughts and behaviour. If we approach our horse with high energy and aggression, he'll respond by being tense and flighty. If we are nervous and timid, he'll be suspicious and cautionary, if we have make and control in our hearts, he'll be braced and ready to fight or flee. If on the other hand, we approach him calmly and with politeness and respect, he will respond in kind.

Just a very tiny change in our demeanour will have an enormous effect on our horse and the outcomes we achieve with him. Let's look at RFT in our use of phases as the example. If we have *make* in our hearts or control in our minds, it will affect our timing and our release. If our main concern is the horse doing as we want, our default system will cause us to be too heavy handed - to use pressure (even in tiny amounts) rather than release - and we will be so focused on the end result that we will miss the tries the horse offers us along the way.

As we looked at earlier, our instinct is to grab, to close our hands quickly and to then open them again very slowly. This has a marked and immediate effect on our horse. Remember that they learn by release, which needs to be instant. If for example you are asking your horse to pick up his hoof, the instant he takes

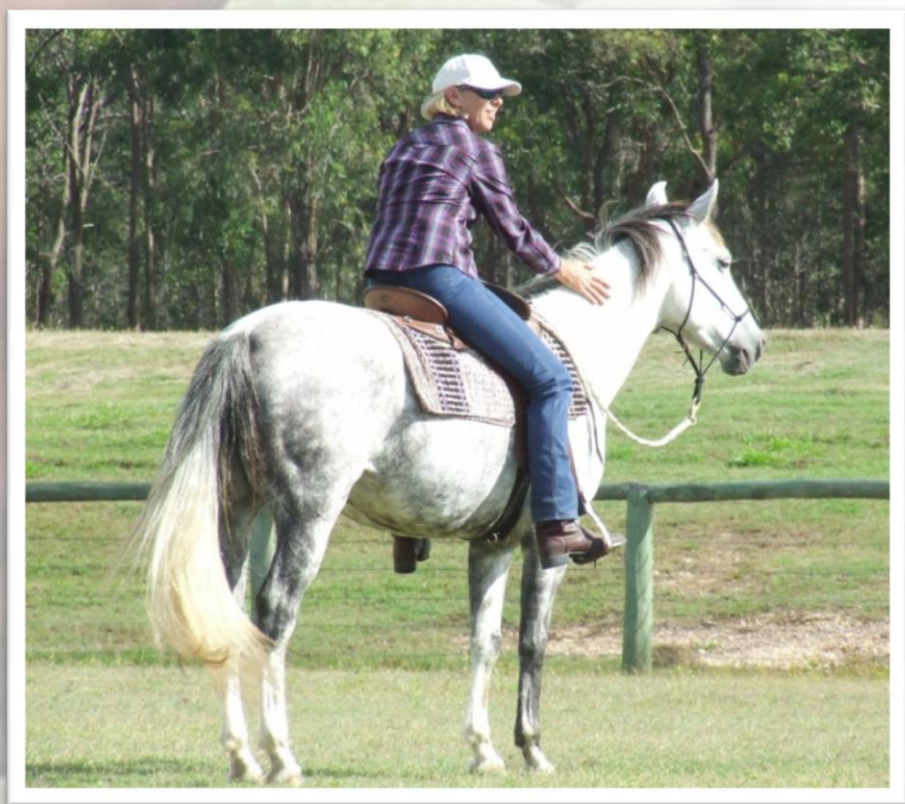
A person wearing a green shirt is shown from the side, focused on working with a horse's hoof. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with trees and a building. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

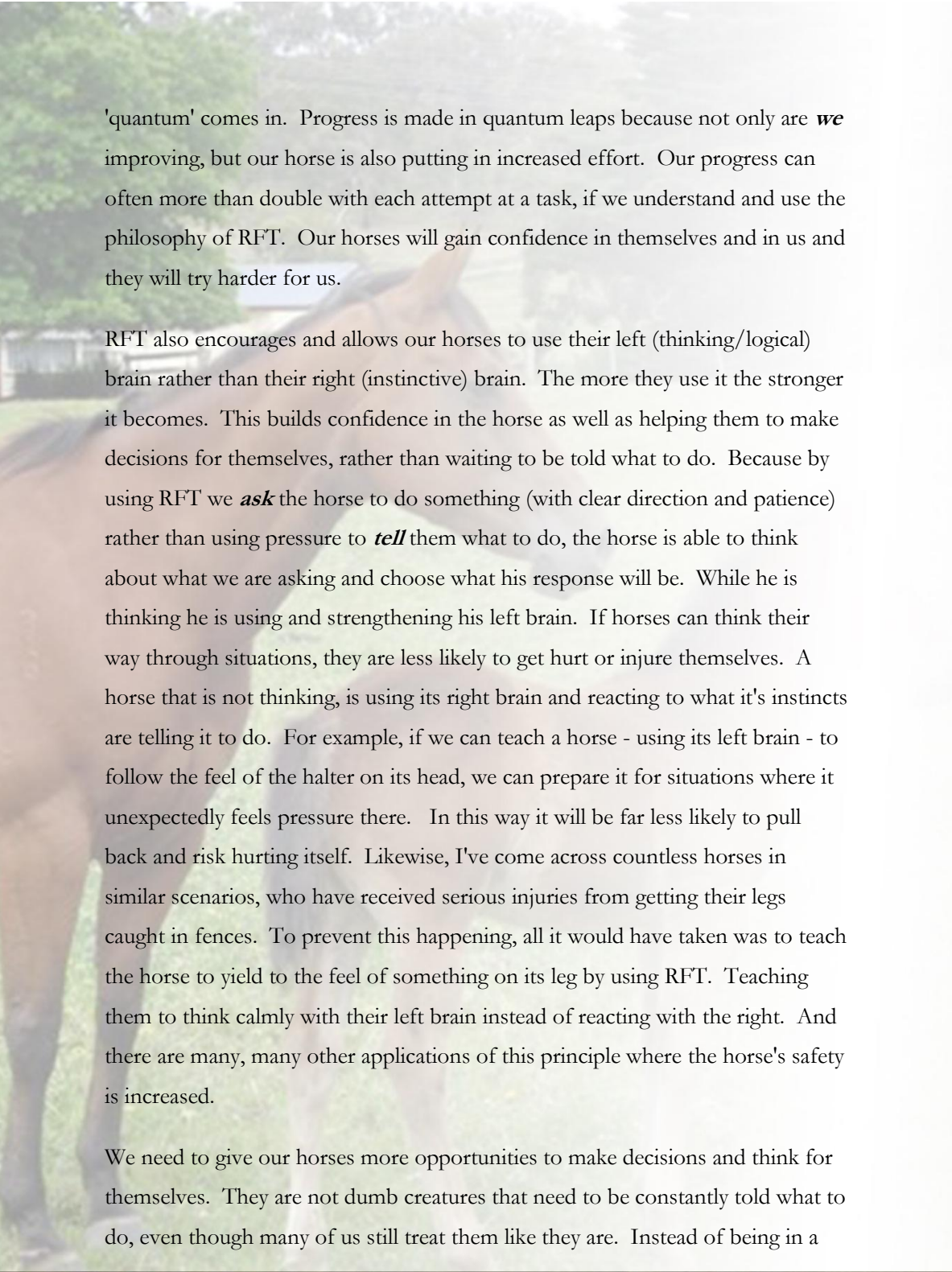
his weight off of it, he needs to find release in order to learn that this is what is being asked of him. If he does find release, the next time he is asked he will shift his weight more quickly and even offer up his foot. A couple of repetitions of the ask and he will very quickly get the idea that you are asking him to lift his foot up. He sees and understands the question being asked. If on the other hand, we are just focused on getting that foot up, we miss the try of the weight being lifted off the hoof. We are so focused on the hoof coming up that we lose the feel of what we're asking for.

Humans have the ability to direct all their attention to a single sense when exerting effort. So while we are busy looking, our focus over rides our feel. We end up using too much pressure, which causes the horse to go into opposition reflex, get heavier and put even more weight onto his hoof. So often we realise all too late the horse has already tried and then we release, but we missed the moment. By this time his weight has gone back onto the hoof again. Our timing was out because our mindset was on using pressure and not on looking for release. Our horse just learnt to put his weight onto his foot and push harder. Next time we ask, instead of things being easier, it will be harder, all because of what was in our minds effecting our timing and our feel.

Good feel and timing on our part has fantastic benefits for our horse. The better we can get with our feel - focusing on what we are *feeling* coming from the horse rather than what we are *seeing* - the better the timing of our release will be. Feel means being aware of and responding to the smallest of changes in the horse. We will often feel things before we see them, and because of the direct and immediate connection we have when physically touching the horse, we can respond in kind with small, subtle communications of our own. By the time you wait to *see* something it is usually too late. The moment has gone. But if our feel is good, our timing will also be good and our horse will more quickly be able to understand what it is we are asking of them.

Horses are able to move in many directions, often all at the one time! Which can make offering release tricky. For example, if a horse is asked to pick up his foot, and as he does he shifts his weight backward or sideways or both, and our timing is a bit out, he may be unsure about what he is getting release for. If we are a bit slow and he steps sideways as he picks his foot up, and we release at that moment, he may think that we are wanting him to step sideways. But if our timing is good and our release is immediate when the foot comes off the ground, he can understand straight away what we are asking. If we are consistent with the timing of our release, he will gain confidence in us and what we ask of him, and also in himself. He will also gain confidence in his ability to know what we ask and in finding his own release very quickly. This in turn will build his desire to try for us, so he will in fact try harder next time. This is where the principle of

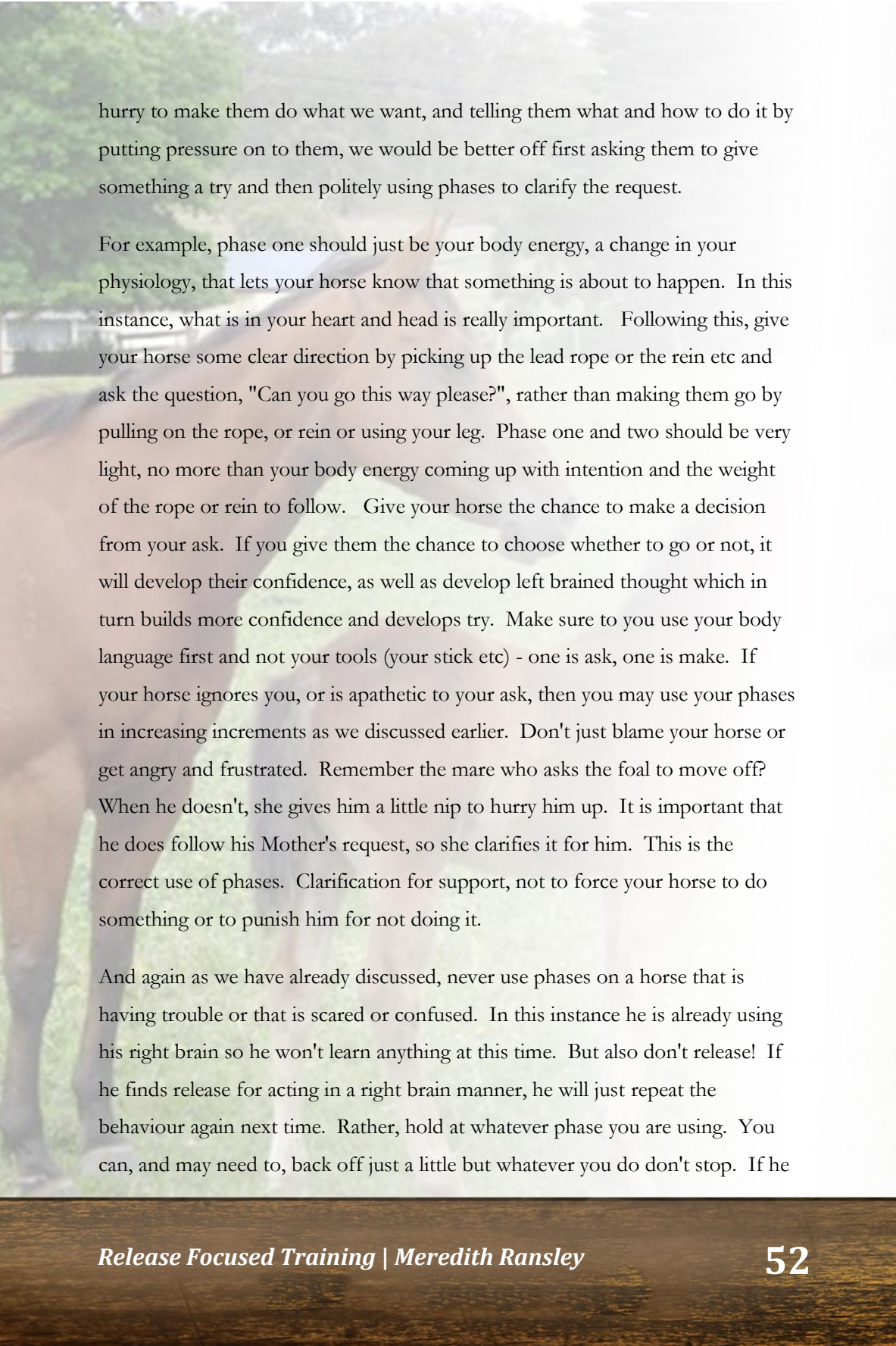


A background image showing a person's hand reaching out to touch a horse's face. The horse is dark-colored and the person's hand is light-skinned. The background is slightly blurred, showing greenery and a fence.

'quantum' comes in. Progress is made in quantum leaps because not only are **we** improving, but our horse is also putting in increased effort. Our progress can often more than double with each attempt at a task, if we understand and use the philosophy of RFT. Our horses will gain confidence in themselves and in us and they will try harder for us.

RFT also encourages and allows our horses to use their left (thinking/logical) brain rather than their right (instinctive) brain. The more they use it the stronger it becomes. This builds confidence in the horse as well as helping them to make decisions for themselves, rather than waiting to be told what to do. Because by using RFT we **ask** the horse to do something (with clear direction and patience) rather than using pressure to **tell** them what to do, the horse is able to think about what we are asking and choose what his response will be. While he is thinking he is using and strengthening his left brain. If horses can think their way through situations, they are less likely to get hurt or injure themselves. A horse that is not thinking, is using its right brain and reacting to what it's instincts are telling it to do. For example, if we can teach a horse - using its left brain - to follow the feel of the halter on its head, we can prepare it for situations where it unexpectedly feels pressure there. In this way it will be far less likely to pull back and risk hurting itself. Likewise, I've come across countless horses in similar scenarios, who have received serious injuries from getting their legs caught in fences. To prevent this happening, all it would have taken was to teach the horse to yield to the feel of something on its leg by using RFT. Teaching them to think calmly with their left brain instead of reacting with the right. And there are many, many other applications of this principle where the horse's safety is increased.

We need to give our horses more opportunities to make decisions and think for themselves. They are not dumb creatures that need to be constantly told what to do, even though many of us still treat them like they are. Instead of being in a

A person is leading a horse with a lead rope. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The horse is dark-colored and is walking towards the right. The background is a grassy field with trees in the distance.

hurry to make them do what we want, and telling them what and how to do it by putting pressure on to them, we would be better off first asking them to give something a try and then politely using phases to clarify the request.

For example, phase one should just be your body energy, a change in your physiology, that lets your horse know that something is about to happen. In this instance, what is in your heart and head is really important. Following this, give your horse some clear direction by picking up the lead rope or the rein etc and ask the question, "Can you go this way please?", rather than making them go by pulling on the rope, or rein or using your leg. Phase one and two should be very light, no more than your body energy coming up with intention and the weight of the rope or rein to follow. Give your horse the chance to make a decision from your ask. If you give them the chance to choose whether to go or not, it will develop their confidence, as well as develop left brained thought which in turn builds more confidence and develops try. Make sure to you use your body language first and not your tools (your stick etc) - one is ask, one is make. If your horse ignores you, or is apathetic to your ask, then you may use your phases in increasing increments as we discussed earlier. Don't just blame your horse or get angry and frustrated. Remember the mare who asks the foal to move off? When he doesn't, she gives him a little nip to hurry him up. It is important that he does follow his Mother's request, so she clarifies it for him. This is the correct use of phases. Clarification for support, not to force your horse to do something or to punish him for not doing it.

And again as we have already discussed, never use phases on a horse that is having trouble or that is scared or confused. In this instance he is already using his right brain so he won't learn anything at this time. But also don't release! If he finds release for acting in a right brain manner, he will just repeat the behaviour again next time. Rather, hold at whatever phase you are using. You can, and may need to, back off just a little but whatever you do don't stop. If he

is right brained his feet are in motion so he is going through his flight response. Pretty soon he will get to the end of this and he will think again. In this moment he will try something other than the pulling or pushing or running away that he was doing, and he will step in the direction you are wanting him to go. It is then that you need to release - when he tries and starts using his left brain again. This takes a lot of good timing, coordination and confidence so make sure you have the horsemanship to back it up. Or else seek help from someone who does.

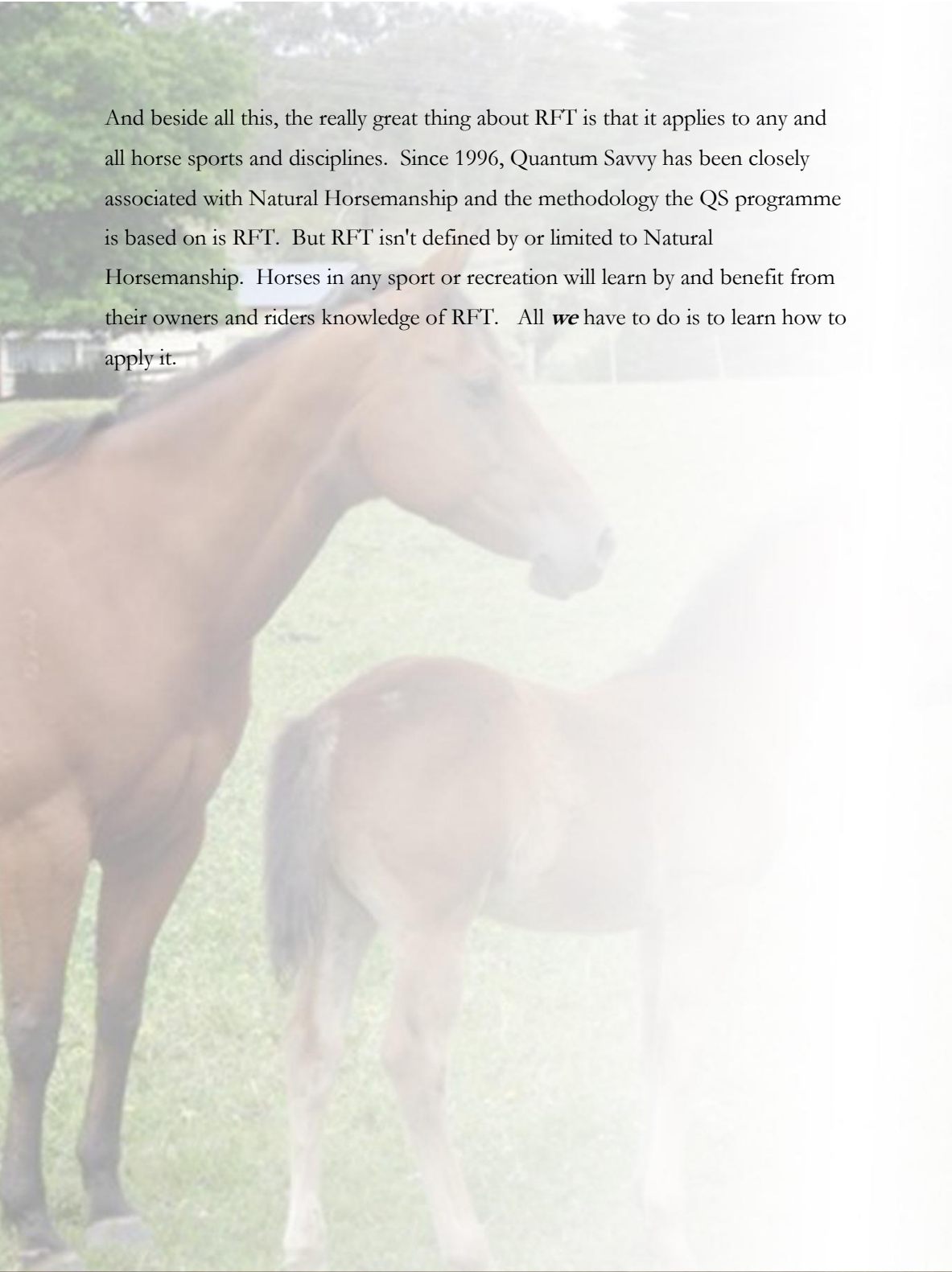


Of course, you do need to take the time to prepare your horse first, for whatever it is you are asking him to do. Only ask of him what is fair and what he has been prepared for beforehand. If it is trailer loading to use that example again,

don't just try to force him into the trailer. Make sure that you have some basic communications and direction together first. He will need to have good forward, to lead really well and to be confident in small spaces. This is all prior preparation and is crucial to success with trailer loading.

One last word on working with horses that have troubles and difficulties. And it comes back to not applying human thought and behaviour to a horse's actions. We often come across people who have rescued horses from terrible situations. They remove the horse from the environment but then just turn them out and do nothing with them, or ask nothing of them. They think in their human mind that the rescuing is over and that they are being kind to the horse. They are not. Doing nothing with the horse doesn't help him. A troubled horse needs direction and boundaries, just as he finds within his herd. He needs to learn where to be and how to be. Unless he knows where and what these boundaries are, he won't be able to relax. Leaving him alone (and often on his own) won't help him. It will just mean that he is left with his troubles and insecurities with no strategies to learn how to cope with them. Apathy will only make him worse. He has no coping strategies. The best thing you can do for him is to work with him. Don't shy away from the 'pressure' or perceived threat that made him the way he is. Show him how to not only survive but to thrive in the world by compassionately, but surely, working through his fear. Horses are amazingly adept at overcoming fears if we give them the chance. And I think all horses deserve the chance. ***Show him how to think his way through his emotions, this in turn will build his self confidence and help him lead a relaxed life rather than one of constant stress or fear.***

To a horse, RFT means confidence, clarity in the human world, trust, safety and rapport with their human. It makes sense to them, so they can relax and be themselves and enjoy their time with their human partner.

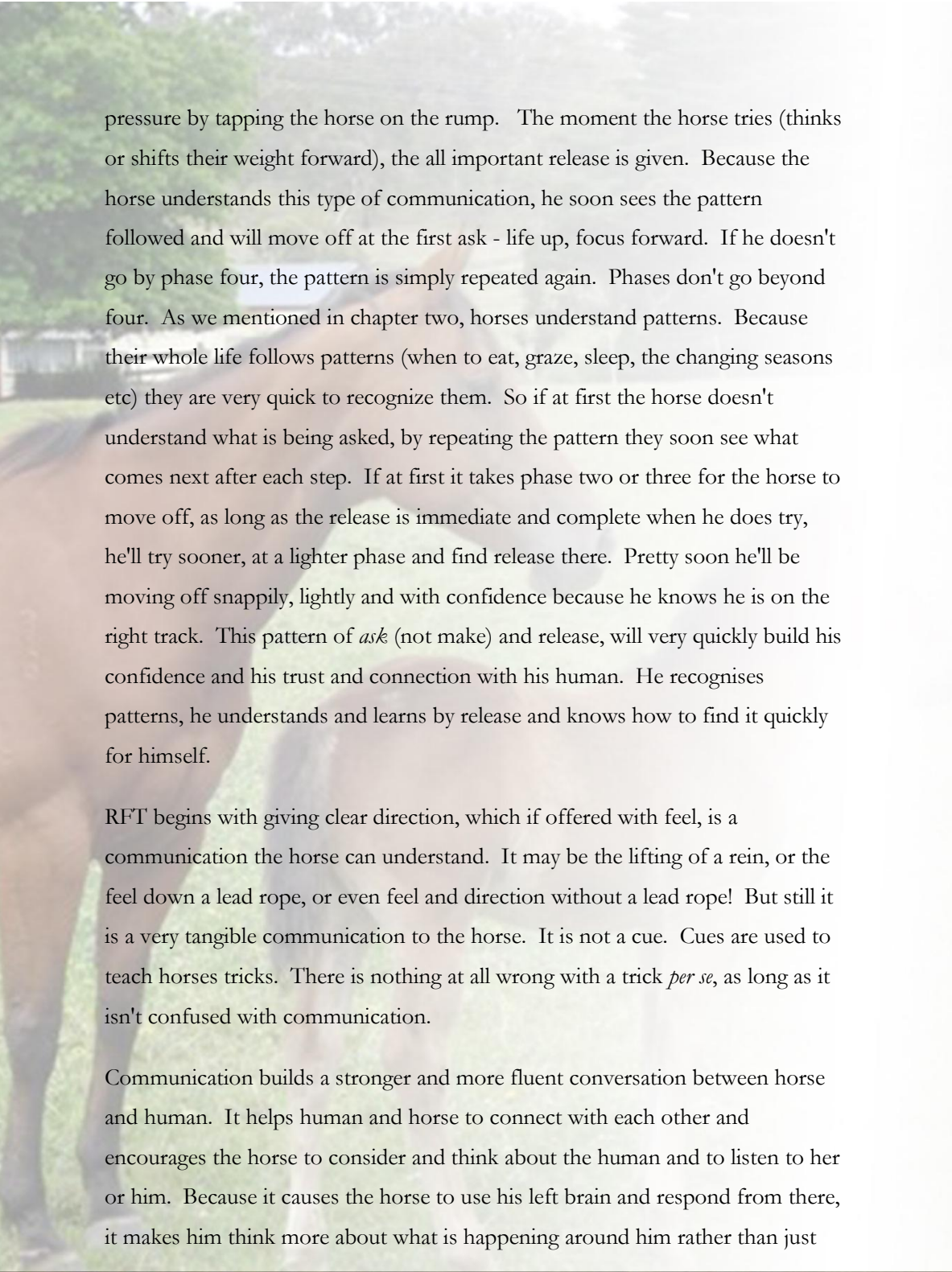


And beside all this, the really great thing about RFT is that it applies to any and all horse sports and disciplines. Since 1996, Quantum Savvy has been closely associated with Natural Horsemanship and the methodology the QS programme is based on is RFT. But RFT isn't defined by or limited to Natural Horsemanship. Horses in any sport or recreation will learn by and benefit from their owners and riders knowledge of RFT. All **we** have to do is to learn how to apply it.

Chapter Eight - Release Focused Training, Conventional Pressure type training, Repetition Training and Tricks.

How then does RFT compare to conventional training and what is the difference? As we have already discussed, RFT is based on the way a horse naturally learns - through when release is found - not by applied pressure. While using pressure on a horse may get him to do something, it doesn't guarantee that he will learn from the experience. It is when the pressure is removed that he learns so we need to be aware of what we are doing in the moment that the horse finds release. For example, to move off, the horse is 'asked' to go by the rider giving clear direction in the form of positive and clear body language (the rider brings their body energy up and focuses forward), which is followed by increasing phases if necessary until the horse follows the direction. If he doesn't move off when we ask and we give him release by stopping doing what we were doing (giving up when he doesn't go), he finds release for opposing us and not going. So next time we ask him to go we'll just get more opposition.

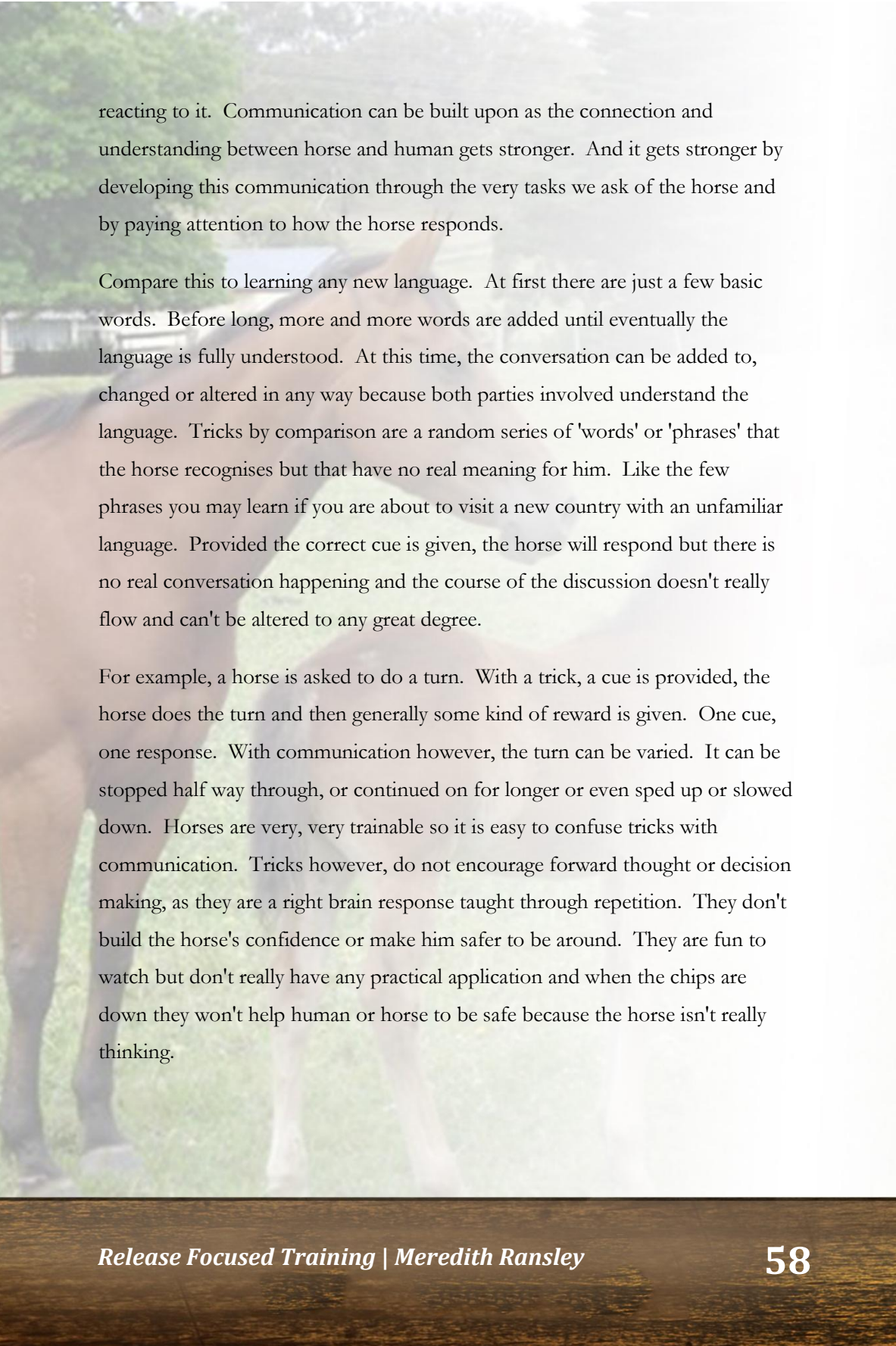
To clarify the use of phases in this instance; phase one - the rider brings their body life up and the rein is directed forward; phase two - the rider applies a squeeze with their backside and upper legs; phase three - the rider adds rhythmic pressure by tapping themselves on the leg; phase four, the rider adds rhythmic

A person wearing a green shirt is leading a horse. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a fence. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

pressure by tapping the horse on the rump. The moment the horse tries (thinks or shifts their weight forward), the all important release is given. Because the horse understands this type of communication, he soon sees the pattern followed and will move off at the first ask - life up, focus forward. If he doesn't go by phase four, the pattern is simply repeated again. Phases don't go beyond four. As we mentioned in chapter two, horses understand patterns. Because their whole life follows patterns (when to eat, graze, sleep, the changing seasons etc) they are very quick to recognize them. So if at first the horse doesn't understand what is being asked, by repeating the pattern they soon see what comes next after each step. If at first it takes phase two or three for the horse to move off, as long as the release is immediate and complete when he does try, he'll try sooner, at a lighter phase and find release there. Pretty soon he'll be moving off snappily, lightly and with confidence because he knows he is on the right track. This pattern of *ask* (not make) and release, will very quickly build his confidence and his trust and connection with his human. He recognises patterns, he understands and learns by release and knows how to find it quickly for himself.

RFT begins with giving clear direction, which if offered with feel, is a communication the horse can understand. It may be the lifting of a rein, or the feel down a lead rope, or even feel and direction without a lead rope! But still it is a very tangible communication to the horse. It is not a cue. Cues are used to teach horses tricks. There is nothing at all wrong with a trick *per se*, as long as it isn't confused with communication.

Communication builds a stronger and more fluent conversation between horse and human. It helps human and horse to connect with each other and encourages the horse to consider and think about the human and to listen to her or him. Because it causes the horse to use his left brain and respond from there, it makes him think more about what is happening around him rather than just

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hand reaching out to touch the face of a horse. The hand is positioned near the horse's eye and ear area. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage and a wooden fence. The overall tone is calm and gentle.

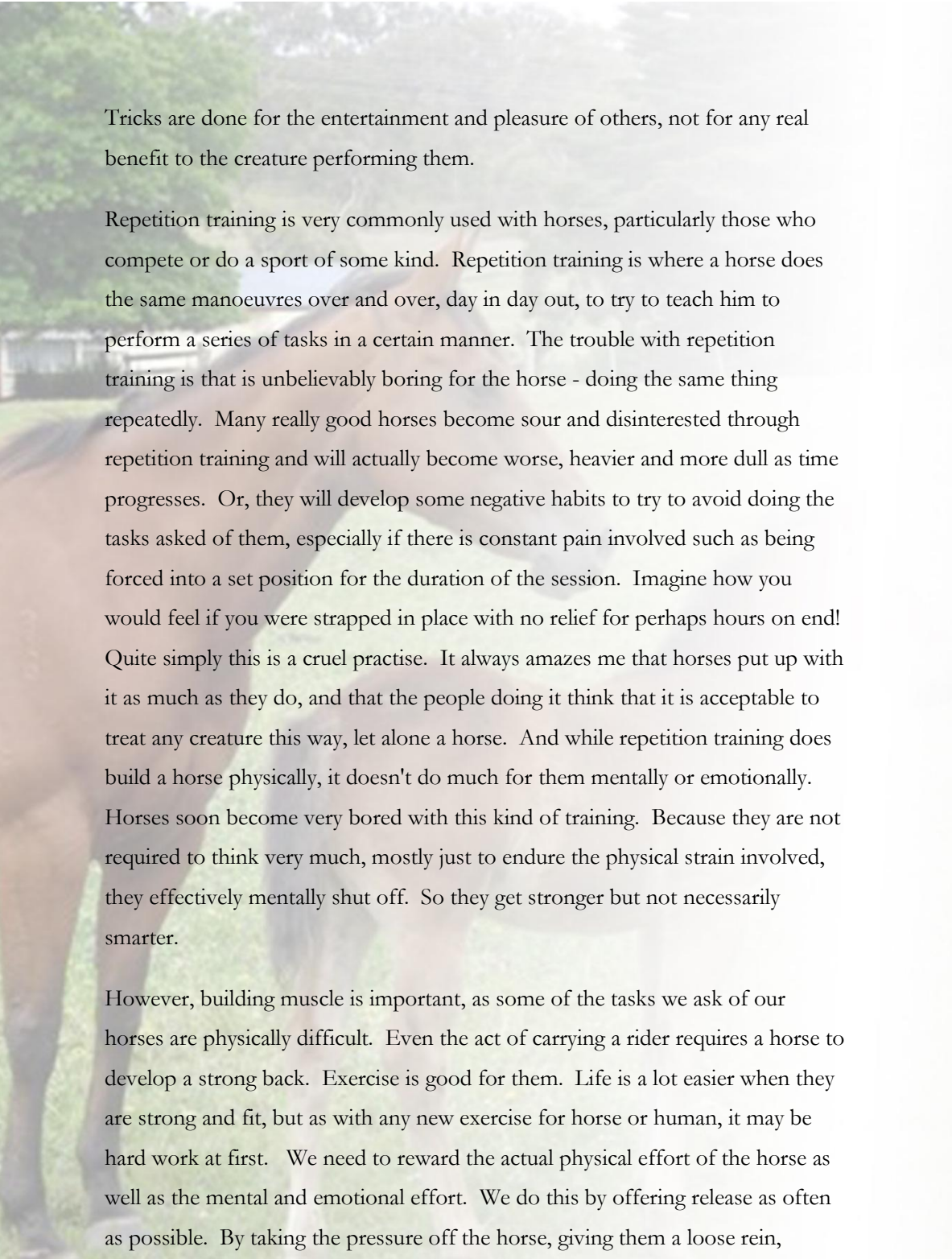
reacting to it. Communication can be built upon as the connection and understanding between horse and human gets stronger. And it gets stronger by developing this communication through the very tasks we ask of the horse and by paying attention to how the horse responds.

Compare this to learning any new language. At first there are just a few basic words. Before long, more and more words are added until eventually the language is fully understood. At this time, the conversation can be added to, changed or altered in any way because both parties involved understand the language. Tricks by comparison are a random series of 'words' or 'phrases' that the horse recognises but that have no real meaning for him. Like the few phrases you may learn if you are about to visit a new country with an unfamiliar language. Provided the correct cue is given, the horse will respond but there is no real conversation happening and the course of the discussion doesn't really flow and can't be altered to any great degree.

For example, a horse is asked to do a turn. With a trick, a cue is provided, the horse does the turn and then generally some kind of reward is given. One cue, one response. With communication however, the turn can be varied. It can be stopped half way through, or continued on for longer or even sped up or slowed down. Horses are very, very trainable so it is easy to confuse tricks with communication. Tricks however, do not encourage forward thought or decision making, as they are a right brain response taught through repetition. They don't build the horse's confidence or make him safer to be around. They are fun to watch but don't really have any practical application and when the chips are down they won't help human or horse to be safe because the horse isn't really thinking.



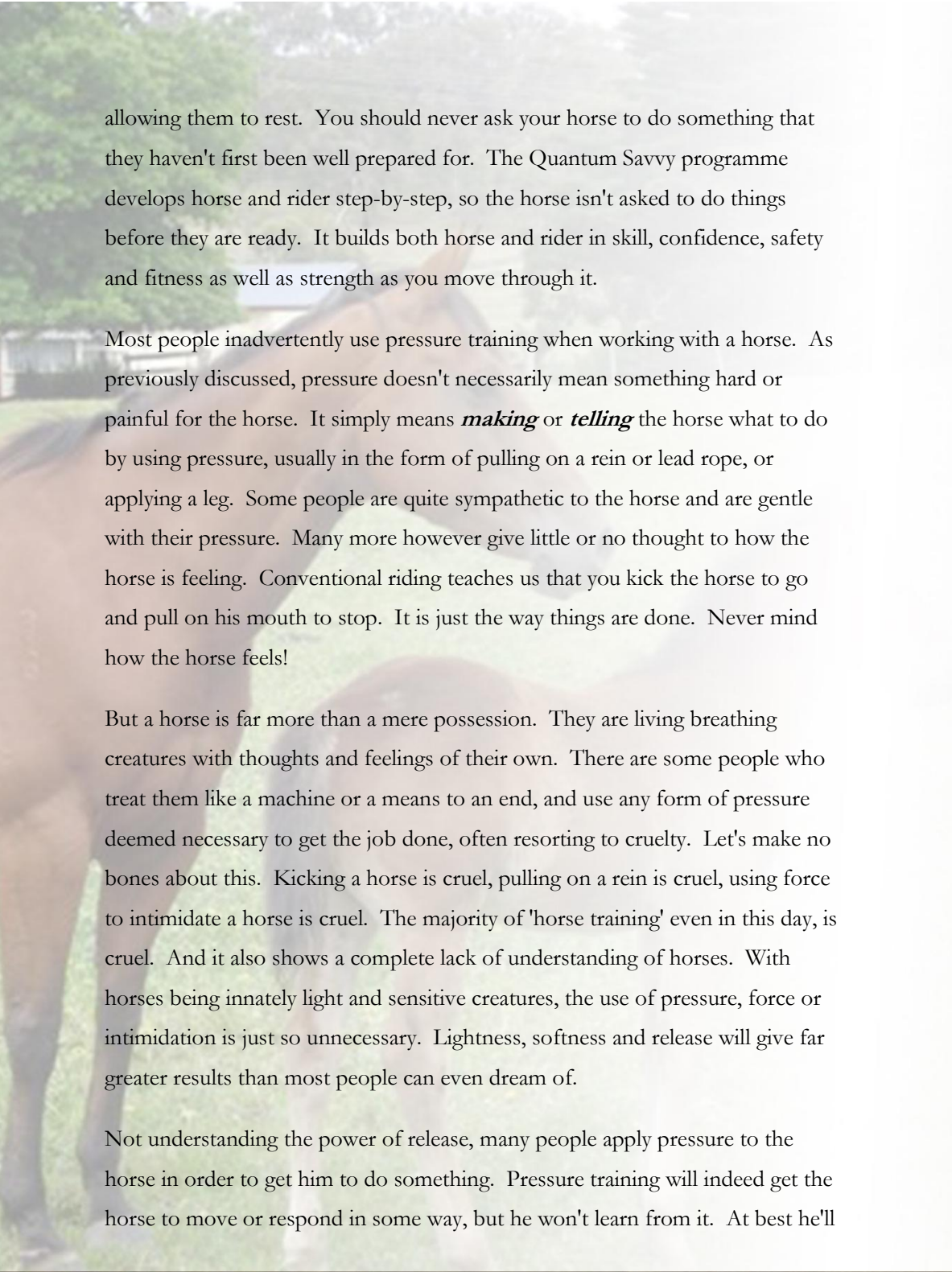
We need to help our horses use and strengthen their left brain - the logic side of their brain - which isn't initially as developed as their right brain. The only way to do this is by giving them to chance to use it. By giving them tasks to do that cause them to think, just the same as with us. To truly develop a connection and a strong bond with our horses, we need to develop our communication with them and our understanding of each other. Not just teach them to do tricks. Many people with performance horses confuse tricks with training. The performance becomes a series of tricks that are asked for with cues, that need to be practised over and over in order for the horse to learn them. But if the horse gets one wrong, or one is missed, he quickly loses confidence because the sequence is broken. For example, it should be possible to change a dressage or reining pattern, without confusing or unsettling the horse or without missing a beat. If the pattern is not variable, it is most likely just a series of cues or tricks.

A person is riding a horse in a field. The horse is dark-colored and the rider is wearing a light-colored shirt. The background shows a grassy field with trees in the distance.

Tricks are done for the entertainment and pleasure of others, not for any real benefit to the creature performing them.

Repetition training is very commonly used with horses, particularly those who compete or do a sport of some kind. Repetition training is where a horse does the same manoeuvres over and over, day in day out, to try to teach him to perform a series of tasks in a certain manner. The trouble with repetition training is that is unbelievably boring for the horse - doing the same thing repeatedly. Many really good horses become sour and disinterested through repetition training and will actually become worse, heavier and more dull as time progresses. Or, they will develop some negative habits to try to avoid doing the tasks asked of them, especially if there is constant pain involved such as being forced into a set position for the duration of the session. Imagine how you would feel if you were strapped in place with no relief for perhaps hours on end! Quite simply this is a cruel practise. It always amazes me that horses put up with it as much as they do, and that the people doing it think that it is acceptable to treat any creature this way, let alone a horse. And while repetition training does build a horse physically, it doesn't do much for them mentally or emotionally. Horses soon become very bored with this kind of training. Because they are not required to think very much, mostly just to endure the physical strain involved, they effectively mentally shut off. So they get stronger but not necessarily smarter.

However, building muscle is important, as some of the tasks we ask of our horses are physically difficult. Even the act of carrying a rider requires a horse to develop a strong back. Exercise is good for them. Life is a lot easier when they are strong and fit, but as with any new exercise for horse or human, it may be hard work at first. We need to reward the actual physical effort of the horse as well as the mental and emotional effort. We do this by offering release as often as possible. By taking the pressure off the horse, giving them a loose rein,


A person is riding a horse in a field. The horse is dark-colored and the rider is wearing a light-colored shirt. The background shows a grassy field with trees and a building in the distance. The image is slightly faded to allow text to be overlaid.

allowing them to rest. You should never ask your horse to do something that they haven't first been well prepared for. The Quantum Savvy programme develops horse and rider step-by-step, so the horse isn't asked to do things before they are ready. It builds both horse and rider in skill, confidence, safety and fitness as well as strength as you move through it.

Most people inadvertently use pressure training when working with a horse. As previously discussed, pressure doesn't necessarily mean something hard or painful for the horse. It simply means *making* or *telling* the horse what to do by using pressure, usually in the form of pulling on a rein or lead rope, or applying a leg. Some people are quite sympathetic to the horse and are gentle with their pressure. Many more however give little or no thought to how the horse is feeling. Conventional riding teaches us that you kick the horse to go and pull on his mouth to stop. It is just the way things are done. Never mind how the horse feels!

But a horse is far more than a mere possession. They are living breathing creatures with thoughts and feelings of their own. There are some people who treat them like a machine or a means to an end, and use any form of pressure deemed necessary to get the job done, often resorting to cruelty. Let's make no bones about this. Kicking a horse is cruel, pulling on a rein is cruel, using force to intimidate a horse is cruel. The majority of 'horse training' even in this day, is cruel. And it also shows a complete lack of understanding of horses. With horses being innately light and sensitive creatures, the use of pressure, force or intimidation is just so unnecessary. Lightness, softness and release will give far greater results than most people can even dream of.

Not understanding the power of release, many people apply pressure to the horse in order to get him to do something. Pressure training will indeed get the horse to move or respond in some way, but he won't learn from it. At best he'll



do the task because of the repetition involved. At worst he'll become anxious and flighty and develop some serious behaviour problems. Generally though, he'll simply get more heavy and dull and worse still, remote in his soul. He'll lose first his interest, then his enthusiasm and finally his spirit until he becomes an automaton. He will develop opposition reflex, brace through his body and become heavy on his feet. He will lose his elevation and lift so he'll need to be forced unnaturally into position, which will cause him more pain and more negative thoughts and eventually he will begin to break down physically. And the irony is that most riders won't even recognise the problem. They think that the way the horse travels and feels is normal. It is a sad way to work with a horse and will sour any relationship. Which is a shame, as a horse who enjoys his time with his human will put in all of his effort, his heart and desire which will ultimately mean more fun and greater success for horse and rider. What then can help us to achieve this kind of relationship with our horse? Building Rapport can.

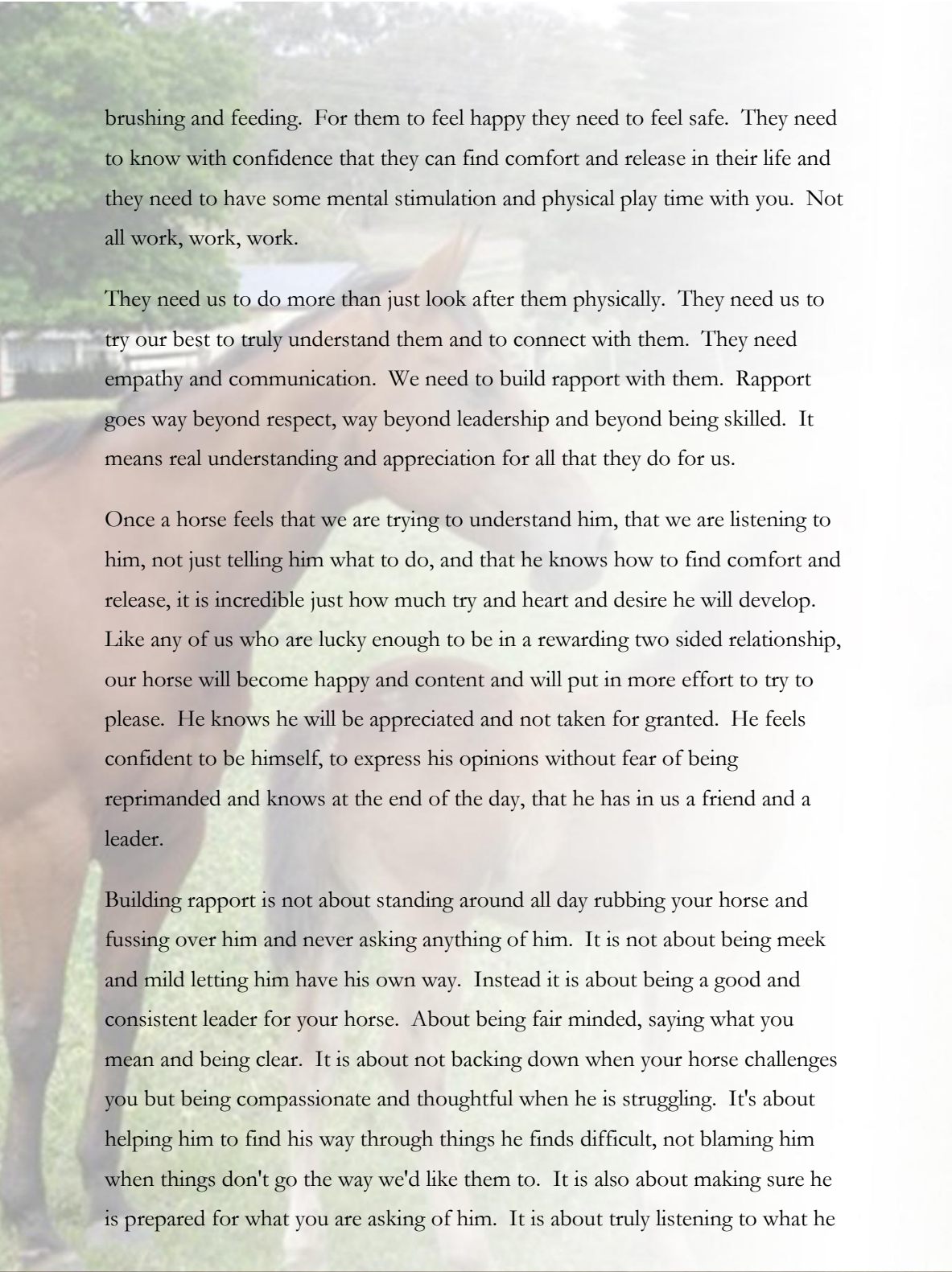


Chapter Nine - Building Rapport

Take a moment to imagine what a horse would be like, if it truly wanted to be with its human and looked forward to their time together. If, no matter what was asked of it, it put in its very best effort and was happy and relaxed and enjoying itself. I guess the first thing that springs to mind as a horse lover, is how wonderful it would be for both horse and human, to have a happy horse that actually liked us.

If you are lucky enough, like me, to have your horse living where you live, look out your window right now and take a look at him or her. Or else imagine your horse out there even if he is not. See him peacefully grazing in his paddock, swathed in sunshine, doing his thing. You can probably even smell his sweet smell! I bet you can't help yourself, you're feeling pretty happy and at peace yourself right now aren't you? Just watching your horse makes you feel good. The thought of spending time with him on the weekend, hanging out together, going for a ride or having a play just fills your heart with joy. You can't wait. So surely, if your horse can give this much joy to you just by being him or herself, he deserves nothing less than your very best, so he can enjoy your time together also.

And we do try don't we? We feed them, look after them, brush them, provide them with the best care we can. But is that what our horses really want or need? For our horses to truly be happy we need to understand a few things about them. And then we need to go about making them so. Horses need more than

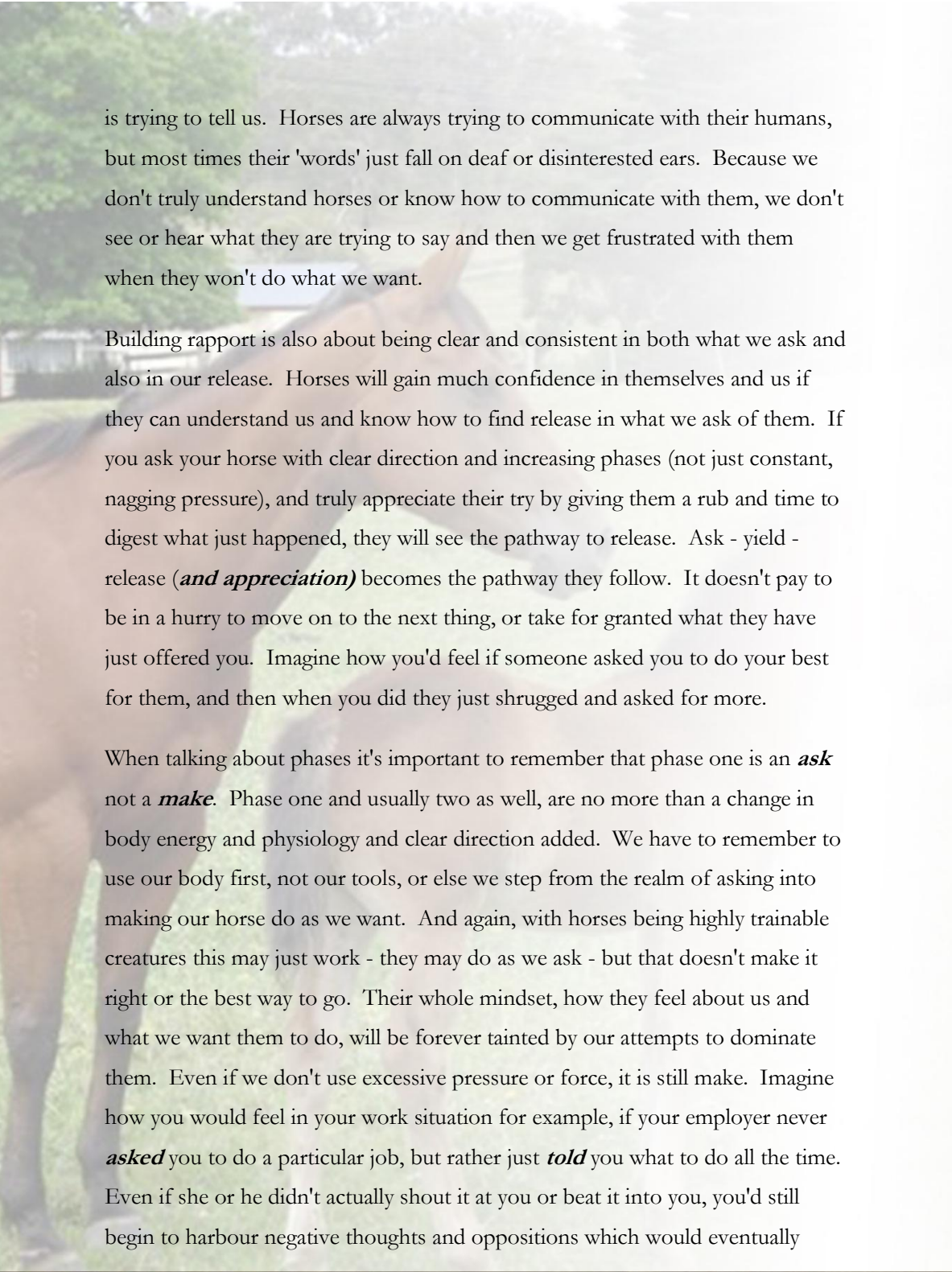


brushing and feeding. For them to feel happy they need to feel safe. They need to know with confidence that they can find comfort and release in their life and they need to have some mental stimulation and physical play time with you. Not all work, work, work.

They need us to do more than just look after them physically. They need us to try our best to truly understand them and to connect with them. They need empathy and communication. We need to build rapport with them. Rapport goes way beyond respect, way beyond leadership and beyond being skilled. It means real understanding and appreciation for all that they do for us.

Once a horse feels that we are trying to understand him, that we are listening to him, not just telling him what to do, and that he knows how to find comfort and release, it is incredible just how much try and heart and desire he will develop. Like any of us who are lucky enough to be in a rewarding two sided relationship, our horse will become happy and content and will put in more effort to try to please. He knows he will be appreciated and not taken for granted. He feels confident to be himself, to express his opinions without fear of being reprimanded and knows at the end of the day, that he has in us a friend and a leader.

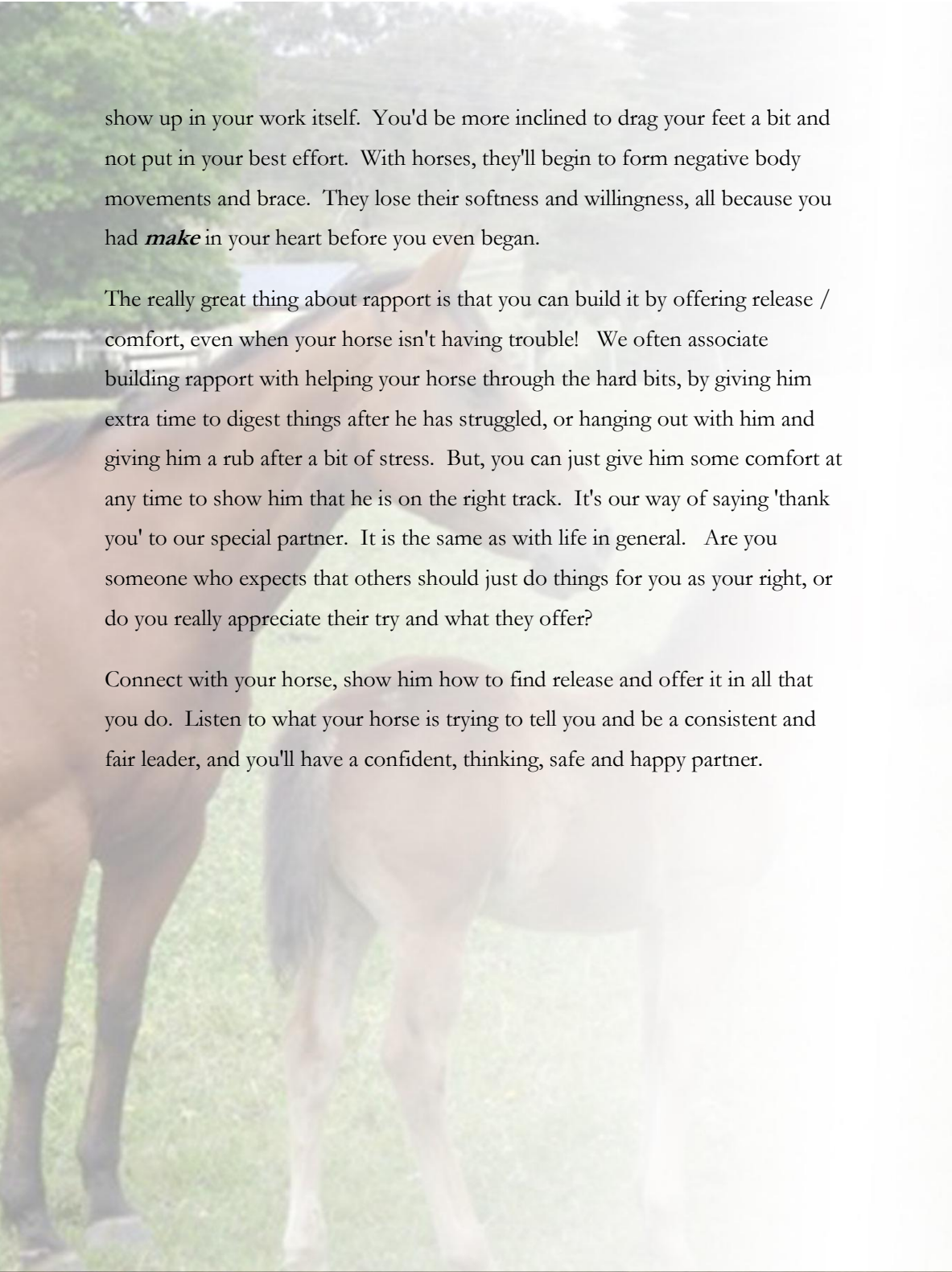
Building rapport is not about standing around all day rubbing your horse and fussing over him and never asking anything of him. It is not about being meek and mild letting him have his own way. Instead it is about being a good and consistent leader for your horse. About being fair minded, saying what you mean and being clear. It is about not backing down when your horse challenges you but being compassionate and thoughtful when he is struggling. It's about helping him to find his way through things he finds difficult, not blaming him when things don't go the way we'd like them to. It is also about making sure he is prepared for what you are asking of him. It is about truly listening to what he

A person wearing a green shirt is leading a brown horse in a grassy field. The person is holding the lead rope and the horse is walking towards the left. The background shows trees and a fence.

is trying to tell us. Horses are always trying to communicate with their humans, but most times their 'words' just fall on deaf or disinterested ears. Because we don't truly understand horses or know how to communicate with them, we don't see or hear what they are trying to say and then we get frustrated with them when they won't do what we want.

Building rapport is also about being clear and consistent in both what we ask and also in our release. Horses will gain much confidence in themselves and us if they can understand us and know how to find release in what we ask of them. If you ask your horse with clear direction and increasing phases (not just constant, nagging pressure), and truly appreciate their try by giving them a rub and time to digest what just happened, they will see the pathway to release. Ask - yield - release (**and appreciation**) becomes the pathway they follow. It doesn't pay to be in a hurry to move on to the next thing, or take for granted what they have just offered you. Imagine how you'd feel if someone asked you to do your best for them, and then when you did they just shrugged and asked for more.

When talking about phases it's important to remember that phase one is an **ask** not a **make**. Phase one and usually two as well, are no more than a change in body energy and physiology and clear direction added. We have to remember to use our body first, not our tools, or else we step from the realm of asking into making our horse do as we want. And again, with horses being highly trainable creatures this may just work - they may do as we ask - but that doesn't make it right or the best way to go. Their whole mindset, how they feel about us and what we want them to do, will be forever tainted by our attempts to dominate them. Even if we don't use excessive pressure or force, it is still make. Imagine how you would feel in your work situation for example, if your employer never **asked** you to do a particular job, but rather just **told** you what to do all the time. Even if she or he didn't actually shout it at you or beat it into you, you'd still begin to harbour negative thoughts and oppositions which would eventually



show up in your work itself. You'd be more inclined to drag your feet a bit and not put in your best effort. With horses, they'll begin to form negative body movements and brace. They lose their softness and willingness, all because you had *make* in your heart before you even began.

The really great thing about rapport is that you can build it by offering release / comfort, even when your horse isn't having trouble! We often associate building rapport with helping your horse through the hard bits, by giving him extra time to digest things after he has struggled, or hanging out with him and giving him a rub after a bit of stress. But, you can just give him some comfort at any time to show him that he is on the right track. It's our way of saying 'thank you' to our special partner. It is the same as with life in general. Are you someone who expects that others should just do things for you as your right, or do you really appreciate their try and what they offer?

Connect with your horse, show him how to find release and offer it in all that you do. Listen to what your horse is trying to tell you and be a consistent and fair leader, and you'll have a confident, thinking, safe and happy partner.



Summary

Over the last two weeks, I've had the great privilege of spending time with a group of Level 4 QS students who are here at Quantum Savvy Study Centre, studying with us as part of our annual Quantum Savvy Experience camps. I've watched them each day as they've played with their horses on 50' lead ropes, at liberty, riding bareback and bridle less as well as in contact saddled and bridled. At liberty and online they've jumped their horses over upright barrels, laid their horses down, done Spanish walk, half pass, flying changes and so much more, often from 30 - 40 feet away from their horses. As a group they've ridden in wide open spaces with nothing on their horses except maybe a bareback pad, and again done some amazing things. With total connection, safety and control, they've done lead changes, jumped and galloped and much more. And with a saddle and bridle they've ridden in total harmony with their horses doing some of the most beautiful collected, elevated riding you could ever see, holding the reins lightly between just finger and thumb.

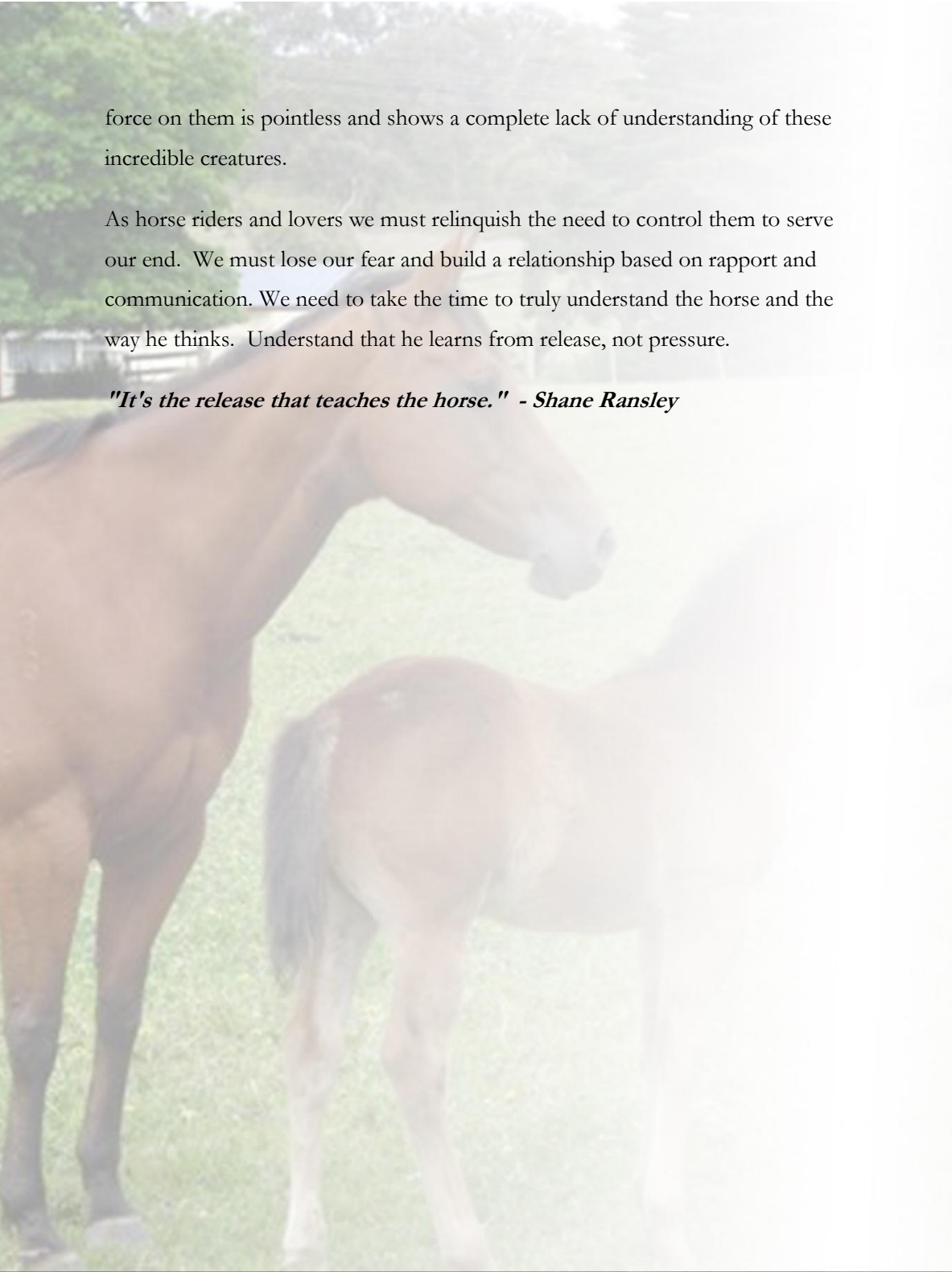
All this has been done with total softness, lightness and harmony - the horses just as happy and willing as their human partners. No pressure, no force, no need for tools, gadgets or intimidation. Just a picture of calmness and serenity.

This is the way life should be with horses. These are the kinds of things all horses owners should be able to do with their horses and the way of being that all horses deserve. And it is within easy reach of everyone if they are willing to let go of old habits and beliefs and instead understand that release, not pressure is where true communication and results come from.

Release Focused Training is the methodology on which everything we do at Quantum Savvy is based. While some riders and trainers do use the principle of release with their horses, there are many, many more who do not. For the most part, horses are subjected to constant pressure and restraint - which is at best desensitising and at worst downright cruel. And just as commonly, repetition - which is boring and mind numbing for horses and doesn't do anything to stimulate their mind or soul.



If a horse has no way to find release, if he his tied in and down or forced into a position, then it is mentally and physically cruel. There is no other way to put it. It makes me wonder if someone who does this to a horse, even likes horses. It shows no compassion for a fellow living creature and serves no real purpose other than to break the will of the horse. He deserves far better. Plus it is totally unnecessary. Horses are amazingly light, responsive and quick to learn, so using



force on them is pointless and shows a complete lack of understanding of these incredible creatures.

As horse riders and lovers we must relinquish the need to control them to serve our end. We must lose our fear and build a relationship based on rapport and communication. We need to take the time to truly understand the horse and the way he thinks. Understand that he learns from release, not pressure.

"It's the release that teaches the horse." - Shane Ransley

How do horses really think and what motivates them to learn?

This book looks at the methodology behind the Quantum Savvy Horsemanship programme and how it consistently helps people the world over to achieve amazing results with horses. Simply by changing our mindset, our heart set and how we approach horses, we learn what really motivates them, the way they learn and think and ultimately how to connect and communicate with them.

Even after thousands of years of close association, we still don't truly comprehend horses. For the most part, they are fundamentally misunderstood, mistreated and underestimated. And yet these amazing creatures can offer us a true partnership and connection in moments, if only we really knew how to stimulate their minds.



If you want to develop a true partnership with your horse - one that he enjoys as much as you and that affords you success in whatever discipline you follow, this book will show you a clear pathway to follow to your dreams.

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