

TTouch Overall Goals for Horses: A Process for “Just Do The Work” The Five Questions

By Debby Potts, Tellington TTouch Instructor



Whenever you are working with a horse, consider the following points. Remember that we aren't working to stop what we don't want, we are helping the horse to be the best he can be and when we do that, all sorts of problems can be resolved. Considering these points will be helpful in determining what Tellington TTouch® techniques to choose. I am describing horses in this example but the same points can be adapted for any animal.

Is the horse in the best physical, mental and emotional balance?

Overall balance is a very important consideration for humans and animals. Physical, mental and emotional balance are all connected and influence each other. If a horse is high-headed and tight backed, he is out of balance physically and as a result we may find that he is also more likely to be reactive and over-emotional. Being able to address behavior from all of these perspectives is one of the reasons we can often help horses that may not have been helped with other approaches. There are many TTouch techniques to improve balance.

Is the horse as comfortable in his body as possible?

Can you remember a time when you had a stiff neck or your back was sore? It probably made you less patient and more reactive to people around you. Perhaps it was difficult to think or to do things, even things you otherwise enjoyed doing. Like us, many horses have tension patterns that influence their health, behavior and performance. Pain, fear, or the even the anticipation of pain can be powerful influences in our horses' lives. Our goal is not about relaxing, though that can be helpful. It's really about releasing tension. TTouch can alleviate pain and tension which helps our horses think and act rather than react instinctively.

Does the horse have self-control?

Having self-control helps our horses to be safer, calmer, and easier to work with. As children we all had to learn to be still and listen - even when we didn't want to. Our horses have to learn self control in order for us to work with them in a safe and successful way. Many TTouch techniques, especially the ground work, helps horses to develop the self-control to overcome resistance and reactivity. Adding TTouch techniques to training helps the horse to learn more quickly and develop the confidence that makes them an enjoyable equine partner.

Are you communicating clearly?

Sometimes we think we are communicating clearly when we are not. Communicating can be difficult even when we speak the same language. Clear communication comes from having a clear picture of what we *want* from the horse (not what we don't want) and using tools and

techniques that communicate that intent clearly. It's amazing how smart our horses get when we are more clear! It is also about understanding the communication you are receiving from your horse. Rather than deciding the horse is stubborn or trying to get away with something, look at where the behavior is coming from and what skills you have to create what you want. Keep your mind open rather than being attached to your opinion.

Are you building a relationship of trust?

All of the above points exist under the umbrella of developing a trusting relationship. It is the most important part of the TTouch philosophy. You can't MAKE a horse trust you; it has to come as a result of what you DO. We are working *with* the horse, not doing things *to* him. Break things down, and think about what is reasonable. Work to understand his point of view and consider the actions that you take as a consequence. TTouch creates a relationship of trust and respect that not only helps you to work with the horse in a way that is safer and easier, it also opens up the possibility of creating results and developing a relationship beyond what you might have thought possible.



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