



Thanks to Gloria! My dog can walk again!

By Katya Manjossova, Powder Springs, GA

Two years ago my black Labrador retriever mix Jasmine, started showing the symptoms of discomfort in her rear end. First I thought it was a part of an old injury that was causing her to walk funny but as it progressed and grew worse, I had to take her to the vet. Jasmine was diagnosed with hip dysplasia. There are a few things you can do to help a dog to be pain free including a surgery but the results are not always guaranteed. We got some medications for Jasmine but they did not help much. The disease progressed to the point that Jasmine was not able to walk on her own without dragging her back legs. She was rarely up. She spent most of the time sleeping in her favorite chair.

I started considering my options, doing research and trying to figure out how to help Jasmine. Part of my research was learning about Hanna Somatics. We have featured Gloria Hester Yoga in a previous issue of Atlanta Horse Connections and I decided to ask Gloria for help.

We spoke on the phone and I tried to explain to her Jasmine's condition. Little words were needed for Gloria to step in offering her help and explaining that the techniques she is using are very simple but very effective. She explained in a very simple way that Hanna Somatics is a system of sensory-motor exercises developed to eliminate chronic, non-malignant musculo-skeletal and nerve pain, to improve movement, and to reverse certain effects of aging upon movement and physical comfort.

So we set up a Skype meeting so Gloria could show me some Somatic Movements for Jasmine and we would practice them together. Unfortunately the video on Skype

did not perform well so Gloria directed me with her voice. The movements she described for Jaz were indeed very simple and used without the force. After the first several moves we did with Jasmine, I noticed that she really liked it, she did not resist at all. After about 45 minutes of working with one side, we decided that we should schedule another meeting for work on the other side of my dog. After the first session, I noticed an absolutely amazing change in Jasmine, besides her being extremely happy (I evaluate her happiness by her hyper activity). She got off her chair and started to walk with very little wobble. After the second session with Gloria my dog went back to normal self and did not show any signs of pain while walking. She now is an active dog again. She goes for her walks regularly and runs around with her friend Mishka.

I am truly amazed at this technique. It really works! And Jasmine is living proof of it. Gloria said that it not only works for dogs or horses but also for humans. I am really excited to share this information knowing that so many animals need this help. If you have an animal that is showing some discomfort in its movement please contact Gloria. She can help your animal to be pain free. She also said that this technique could be used to increase performance in sport horses and help rehabilitate injuries. I have seen first hand how it can benefit so many people and animals.

For more information, please contact Gloria Hester: gloriahester@gmail.com

Here is a video of Gloria explaining how Hanna Somatic works. Take a look.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxsdraUPLVc





Gloria Hester Yoga

Yogic Wisdom for Horse and Human



Equine Hanna Somatics

Photo courtesy of Stephen Pyle

Equine Somatics is a hands-on method of assisting the horse in recognizing any forgotten patterns of movement that were previously accessible to him. We are literally re-educating his nervous system. The bones can only go where the muscles put them and the muscles do not work of their own accord. It is the nervous system that controls the muscles.

Equine Somatics is an adaptation of Hanna Somatics and was developed by Eleanor Criswell Hanna, EdD.

Horses as well as humans, over time, develop chronically contracted muscles ("sensory motor amnesia") as an adaptive process to common stressors such as flight, fright, pain, compensations

for injuries and repetitive use. This results in unconscious patterns of holding in the musculature. We are asking the horse to sense this unconscious holding pattern and release it.

It is very effective and is a lot of fun to work with a horse in this way. Some of the benefits are a more confident, athletic, happy horse, resulting in a closer connection between horse and human. EHS offers pain relief from common conditions associated with aging.

The work is very subtle and requires mindfulness.

It is my great privilege to bring this work to both horse and human.

by Gloria Hester

What if there was a natural way to help your horse to overcome chronic injuries, pain or misalignments? Suppose there was a gentle set of principles that you could utilize to help your horse regain his natural freedom of movement. Imagine that you could create a better, more trusting relationship with your horse through non-verbal communication.

These possibilities exist, all within the sensory-motor relearning program known as Equine Hanna Somatics. Hanna Somatics was originally developed in the late 1980's for humans by Thomas Hanna, the founder of the field of Somatics, and later adapted for horses by his wife, Eleanor Criswell Hanna. Somatics works by connecting the horse's mind and body to re-awaken his natural ability to self-correct. The work is beneficial for all horses, regardless of age and conditioning.

Soma is the Latin word for body. When Somatic Educators use the term, it implies more than that: we believe that the body is intel- ligent and capable of self-regulating.

Indeed, both horses and humans are born with an innate ability to self-correct through

movement. Yet we lose this ability due to injury or to movements that are made repeatedly and habitually. Often, the result is a body or "soma" that is contracted into what appears to be an aged posture – even if the person or horse isn't that old. Posture is not from aging per se, but is from unconscious reflexive responses to life's experiences, hence the need for somatic re-education.

Adaptive Tension Patterns are Common to All Vertebrate Animals. The Results are Pain, Misalignments and Loss of Functional Movement. Every vertebrate animal - that is, every animal with a spine - demonstrates the same patterns of holding in response to stress or trauma. Human, horse, dog, cat - anytime we feel apprehension for any reason, we unconsciously contract the abdominal and other muscles. This pattern will remain held in the unconscious and is cumulative with each additional experience.

Weblink to Audio Interview:

www.gloriahesteryoga.com/gloria-hester.wav





Gloria Hester Yoga

Yogic Wisdom for Horse and Human



*Gloria Hester working somatically, in partnership with an equine retreat participant.
Photo courtesy of Kathy Edds*

Over time this becomes a pattern of dysfunction, creating a vicious cycle: the body's response reinforces the feelings of fear and apprehension, feeding back to the brain which then responds by shortening the muscles even more. Shortened abdominal muscles result in an inability to breathe deeply, which in turn leads to additional carbon dioxide being stored in the bloodstream, irritating the nervous system.

In horses, shortened abdominal muscles leave the animal with a limited, altered movement pattern where he is unable to stride properly and may drag his feet rather than lift them. He will tend to stand short, close-in together and camped under. This holding pattern is just one of many that horses demonstrate in response to stress. So we see that emotional responses are held in the soft tissue. In addition, any movement that we make repetitively will leave us contracted and "on the ready" to make that movement at all times.

Performance horses, for example, are asked to repeat certain movement patterns habitually. Over time, these movements may become more difficult for the horse, even totally inaccessible. An example would be a horse who has lost his ability to disengage the hind-quarters and cross over on the hind.

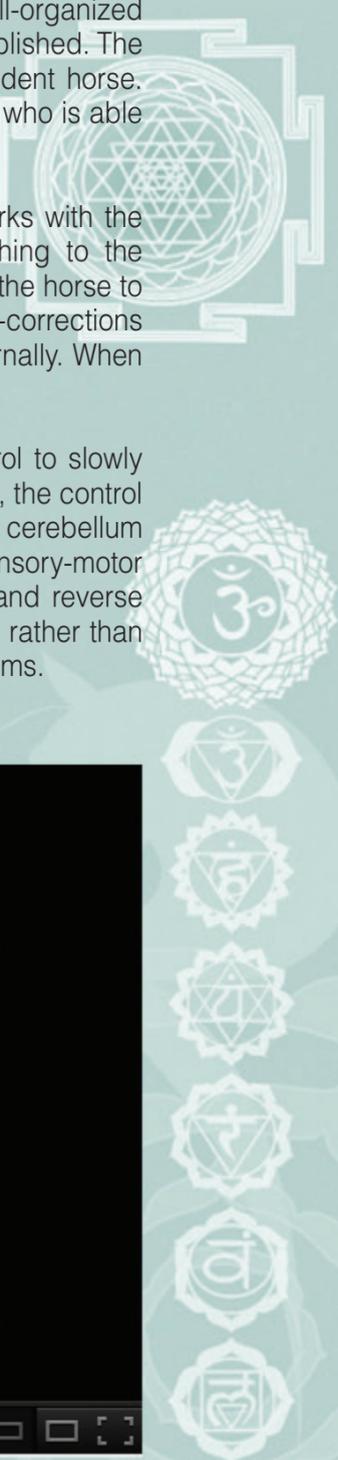
Falls or previous injuries are another common cause of misalignments. This can leave a horse holding chronic tension patterns from the fall or from adaptation to the original injury. This often results in pain. If your horse habitually holds his head or tail to one side, or has a short stride on one side, then you can be sure that the muscles on that side of his body are held tight by the unconscious as he tries to protect the injury.

Fortunately, all of these habitual responses can be addressed through somatics. Through visual assessment, gentle movement and

touch, and by utilizing the horse's sensory-motor feedback, well-organized patterns of movement are re-established. The result: a calm, relaxed and confident horse. And no wonder: a healthy animal who is able to move well has nothing to fear.

An Equine Somatic Educator works with the horse, rather than doing something to the horse. In somatic work, we invite the horse to use his brain to make his own self-corrections rather than forcing changes externally. When we ask a horse to contract

a muscle and to use good control to slowly release and lengthen that muscle, the control is taken from the brain stem and cerebellum and is given back to the sensory-motor cortex. In this way we address and reverse the chronic cause of the problem rather than temporarily alleviating the symptoms.





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We do not stretch the horse. Instead, we ask the horse to voluntarily contract first and then sense the new elongation and relief that comes from releasing the dysfunctional holding pattern. This allows the horse to re-set the resting tonus of his muscles. If we, or a horse, anticipate pain for any reason, then we will be guarded in our movements. So we want to let the horse know that he will not have to guard. In this way the horse is given the ability to re-learn.

Rapport and collaboration between human and horse are key to the success of somatics. To help humans prepare themselves to work with horses somatically, I utilize a combination of Therapeutic Yoga principles and Somatic principles. I find that this combination of modalities develops an openness and curiosity that translates from one soma to another without an agenda being present in either species. This is paramount to successful somatic rapport. We don't exert our will over horses; instead we help them find their own way through their sensory experience.

A somatic educator's role, for both species, is to re-educate the nervous system to enable the individual to self-correct and to release chronic holding patterns in the musculature. Since this work has been adapted from the tradition of Thomas Hanna's Somatic work, the brain and the body begin to have a different kind of communication with one another. This work involves alpha gamma motorneuron co-activation in the central nervous system to

allow the voluntary portions of the brain to reset what the involuntary portions of the brain have been controlling up to this point.

Somatic principles are the only principles I know of at this time that will interrupt the messages being sent from the brain and back to the brain to interrupt the patterns. Energy work and massage are great, and very relaxing, but they do not necessarily make a permanent change for the horse's nervous system the way somatic work does.

Once control of movement is restored to the sensory motor cortex, then movement will be graceful and fluid again, and your horse's natural ability, agility and expressiveness will be fully realized.

Try This:

To begin to introduce your horse to Somatic movement, slowly lift the leg as if you were going to clean the hoof. And then encourage your horse to very slowly and smoothly place the foot back down. Repeat this movement with the same limb for a total of three times. Take your time. Then do the same with each additional limb. Give your horse an opportunity to rest between each movement, without any distractions. This simple movement will help to release many of the major muscle groups in your horse.

About Gloria Hester

"Now this is a woman who is helping to change the world. In a big way." ~ Sydney Compton

Gloria Hester is the founder and director of the Yogic Wisdom for Horse and Human Training Institute. As a Certified Equine Hanna Somatic Educator and Yoga Teacher Trainer, Gloria teaches methods that re-educate a horse's nervous system which releases contracted muscles and habituated movement patterns, resulting in a more confident, relaxed, happy and athletic horse. Gloria's equine clients have better endurance, performance and improved coordination. The same holds true for her integrated riders.

When a pelvic and low back injury took her away from horses, Gloria sought out Yoga for healing. Eventually Yoga brought her back full circle to horses by introducing her to the Equine Somatic work of Eleanor Criswell Hanna.

Gloria's "Yogic Wisdom for Horse and Human" programs teach tools and techniques to release the residual effects of injury and provide owners with the tools to work with their own bodies as well as their horses, applying the same neuroscience principles. Having grown up in a multidisciplinary horse family where horses were a part of her everyday life, Gloria is passionate about connecting horses and humans in a way that benefits both.

Gloria's work has been published in Natural Horse Magazine and has been the subject of numerous radio, TV and magazine interviews. She currently travels to hold retreats, clinics and teacher trainings internationally.

WWW.GLORIAHESTERYOGA.COM

Weblink to Audio Interview:
www.gloriahesteryoga.com/gloria-hester.wav



Gloria Hester, (left) working with a pair of retreat participants.

Photo courtesy of Kathy Edds