

SPEAK TO THE HEAD

█ *Speak to the head, not to the body...*

In this short chapter I want to touch on what takes place during instruction and try to describe how I think about it, or at the very least, how I visualize an effective teaching situation.

Let me illustrate by describing two examples:

EXAMPLE 1:

The student circles around the instructor. Student and horse are not having much success. The student does not have a clear understanding of what he is trying to do, but the instructor feels that it doesn't matter because in this case, the instructor is thinking that it is his job to be in control, and that he will help the student by making decisions about how to proceed. The instructor chooses to constantly make corrections, for example, “Use more inside rein, take your inside hand over more, lean back more, give more support on the outside rein,” and on and on. He hopes that the horse will eventually go as he should.

I admit that something like this must happen sometimes, but only when the student is well informed and has a clear understanding of what is going on.

This example describes a situation where the instructor speaks to the body.

EXAMPLE 2:

The student circles around the instructor. Student and horse are not having much success. In this case the instructor thinks that *when the rider influences the horse incorrectly, he is also thinking incorrectly, since everything we do is dictated by the brain.*

Perhaps the rider is working on a task that is too difficult for him, for the horse, or for the two of them together. The instructor stops them and asks the student what he is trying to do, listening to what he has to say. The instructor decides this is an effective approach, and perhaps makes some good suggestions to the student to help him succeed. Or, perhaps the instructor decides to approach the situation in an entirely different way.

Since the student has lost his way and is probably feeling frustrated, the instructor chooses a simple task that will put the student on the right track. He then explains to the student what they are trying to accomplish, works with him to set a goal, and helps him determine what he should do to achieve

it. To state it in another way, ***the instructor helps the student to develop a philosophy that is correct, one that can guide him in the right direction in the future.***

If the instructor has not overestimated the student's ability, the student will reach his goal and feel a sense of self-accomplishment. By taking this approach, the student will develop an understanding for the task as well as the goal, and acquire a feeling for what is correct. Of course, even in this situation, the instructor needs to make corrections, but it is to ***help the student, not to dominate him.***

This example describes a situation where the instructor speaks to the head.