

## **Intelligent Horsemanship Stage 2 Horse Psychology Project**



**What is the impact of the IH Foundation Course on influencing long-lasting change in the confidence and skills of participating students and their horses.**



**Julia Duncan     July - Sept 2021**

## Contents

1. Introduction.....p3
2. Aim.....p3
3. Methodology.....p3
4. Findings.....p4
5. Conclusion.....p21
6. Appendices.....

## 1. Introduction

The idea for this project came from my own experience of the IH Foundation course (July 2020) and from discussions with tutors, Kelly and other students. Volunteering on the June 2021 Foundation course provided new insight to the journey that Foundation students are on as they try out new techniques and experience the Join up experience - and learning that whatever question they ask the horse through body language and energy control - they will always get an honest answer.

Volunteering provided a chance to hear students' thoughts and anxieties before and after each Join up and to study the transformation as the conversation with each horse became more fluent and confidence levels rose during the course of the five days.

Following this experience and tutor discussions I decided that carrying out a study to measure the impact of the foundation course would be the topic of my IH Stage 2 Horse Psychology Project.

## 2. Project Aim

My Horse Psychology Project aims to assess the impact of the IH Foundation course in influencing long-lasting change in the confidence and skills of participating students and measure subsequent behaviour changes in student and the horse(s) they care for.

## 3. Methodology

This study involved:

- a) IH Member-wider survey to measure wider impact of all Foundation course students and their horsemanship skills. This survey (10 questions) asked a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions in order to provide both statistical information (useful for reports and articles) and more descriptive answers to provide insight into the experience of students and changes to their horsemanship and the behaviour of their horse(s).
- b) Pre and post course evaluation forms to measure the journey from Day 1 to Day 5 (before and after) of the foundation courses (July and August 2021). This approach provided insight to the changes in the skills and confidence of students over the course of two Foundation courses in July and August 2021.
- c) Two-month impact - case studies x 2. During the early July 2021 Foundation course two students volunteered to be case studies to measure any changes two months after their course.
- d) Twelve-month impact - using fellow students from my own July 2020 Foundation course I was able to measure impact on the horsemanship experiences and changes of 4 case studies (12 months)
- e) My own horsemanship journey and horse behaviour change since July 2020

## 4. Findings

### **a) IH Member Survey Response summary headline findings:**

In August 2021 I posted an IH Member-wide survey on Facebook in order to measure the wider impact of the IH Foundation course on students' confidence, horsemanship skills and relationship with horse. 78 Foundation course students responded to the 10-question survey. In terms of positive impact on skills and knowledge and positive impact on relationship with their horses there was a 100% unanimous response. 97.5% felt more likely to be able to get to the bottom of behavioural problems and 90% thought their horse would have noticed a difference in them following IH training. (see Appendix A for detailed responses)

**Q1. 100% of respondents indicated the IH Foundation has had a positive impact on their horsemanship skills and knowledge.** Respondents indicated they had increased confidence (20%), a better understanding of body language (17%), better problem solving skills (6%) , increased skills (15%) and 20% reported positive changes in relationship with their horse.

"Riding instruction is (obviously) based on how to ride. There is very little or nothing which teaches you about the horse as a sentient animal in its own right. The course filled that gap ... this was a re-setting of my relationship with my own horse."

**Q2. 76/78 indicated they felt respected and supported whilst learning on the IH foundation course.**

**Q3. 95% reported that the IH Foundation had a positive impact on confidence levels in working with their horse(s).** In answer to "What can you do now that you couldn't before the Foundation?" most respondents indicated increased communication skills and understanding of body language and 11% reported success working with less easy horses. Others reported success in loading (4), Join Up (6) and groundwork (12).

Other students noted increased self-awareness and better understanding of themselves. And others had successfully carried out groundwork, longlining and Join up with own horses.

*"I was inspired to start intelligent horsemanship courses due to my horse Warrior. I was scared by his behaviour as I couldn't understand what seemed to me to be aggression. IH gave me the confidence to breathe through fear and look deeper at the reasons behind the behaviour. The courses changed my relationship with Warrior in a huge way and gave me confidence to question and try to understand"*

*"I no longer feel the need to 'win', or 'show the horse who is boss', which I had never felt comfortable with but was taught those principles from an early age by others who were supposed to know these things."*

*"Assess situations more thoughtfully, enjoy groundwork and perceive things from the horses perspective."*

**Q4. 45% (55/78) indicated that they had made big life changes following the IH foundation.**

A real mix of responses including further horse related study (5), changing jobs to work with horses (5), working with rescued/traumatised horses and ponies(4), becoming or working towards becoming an RT (8), buying a first horse(1), buying land (2) and moving on to other IH courses (5).

*"Applied for and got a job with horses"*

*"I went on to study further -equine behaviour sports massage and then a Masters degree in Veterinary Physiotherapy"*

*"Gave me the courage to fight negativity, manipulation and bullying, and continue to spread kindness. Kindness always wins, even if the intended recipient doesn't want it or know it at the time!"*

*"Addressed my work life balance. Now work part time in a new role."*

*"Became more confident and felt brave enough to follow my dreams"*

*"I was already rescuing horses. I just did a better job and was able to teach a lot more children. They watched me and wanted to achieve the same success."*

*"I feel doing the course (and other IH courses), I had the confidence to feel I could cope alone, despite being very new to horses and to remove myself from what I found to be unpleasant and unacceptable atmospheres and behaviour ( to people & horses), that I see at livery yards. We've not looked back!"*

*"I found MY voice. I stopped being a door mat. I was and still able to be both assertive and passive instead of aggressive and submissive."*

**Q5. 90% indicated they thought their horse(s) noticed a difference in them following the IH Foundation Course.** Most respondents to this question felt that their horse now felt "heard" and "part of the conversation" (14) through more consistent body language (13). 13 respondents said they were calmer and 5 said they took more time and "talk less". Other observations included being more aware of pressure and release and seeing their horse looked more relaxed. Four respondents described breathing more and being able to lower their energy with good results. Others talked about better timing and being a better leader.

*"I do things in a way that works for him, rather than expecting him to do things my way. End result is the same, but the journey there is less stressful."*

*"I distinctly remember my mare turning to look at me (in a much improved long-reining session), to almost say 'FINALLY!! NOW you're making sense!!'"*

*"They became much more relaxed, I believe because they felt more understood and I became more relaxed around them as I understood them more and how best to respond."*

*"Thanks to IH my horse went from abused and scared to interactive. Over two years these skills completely changed our relationship. Warrior trusted me enough to groom him, ride him out and even progress to do horse archery! By learning to speak his language we were given the best relationship."*

*"Hopefully I've become a better leader whose behaviour is consistent and considerate."*

*"A definite co-operation partnership and I now find my horses want to be around me eg following me about when poo picking."*

**Q6. 97.5 said they were more likely to get to the bottom of a horse's behavioural problems following the IH Foundation course.** 25% of respondents indicated that improved horse communication skills and understanding how horses communicate and signal had helped them identify causes of behaviour. Others had adopted the IH practice of breaking down problems and taking smaller steps to finding out the cause of a behavioural issue. Others felt they had a community now to call on to help solve problems and three had called on RTs assistance. Some respondents listed groundwork/Join up as being helpful. Broadly wider IH courses (eg. horse psychology) had broadened understanding of how horses communicate.

*"To observe the horse carefully, pay 100% attention to what both me and the horse are doing. To work out a solution to the problem and break it down into small easily manageable stages, be prepared to allow plenty of time for each stage and give plenty of praise for any attempt at correct response/behaviour."*

*"The scientific analytical approach to problem solving us really helped me to break down and analyse problems, before starting any retraining and to devise a plan for how to deal with issues (also knowing that there is a network of great people that I can talk to in the same "trainer language" is a great confidence boost.)"*

*"I no longer assume poor behaviour is being naughty"*

*"learning that pain, fear or misunderstanding are more common than I realised when a horse is 'playing up'."*

*"Learning that there is a reason for everything horses do, and that if what you are trying isn't working don't keep doing it. Stop, re-think and try something else."*

**Q7. 60% said IH helped them to identify health-related behavioural problems.**

Respondents recorded being more confident in spotting pain/discomfort relating to back/poor saddle fitting, head/bridle and dental issues and ulcers/girth reactions as well as spotting abscesses, kissing spine and brain inflammation.

*"My neighbour's new horse was being difficult - nappy, lots of biting, angry. I encouraged them to get her teeth checked and also veterinary chiropractic treatment. Now the horse is much easier to work with."*

*"now I would rule out any medical problems first pain, teeth back diet etc before fixing the behavioural if needed"*

*"My horse started to turn his back on me when I approached with his saddle. He hadn't done this before so I had his back checked. Turned out his pelvis was uneven."*

*"By watching my boy Warrior's behaviour change and examining him with the IH method I realised there was something deeper wrong. This led to the discovery of a brain tumour/lesion."*

*"My horse's reluctance to go uphill following a fall proved to be a back problem - sorted by the physio."*

**Q8. 65% said they felt less likely to get injured since doing IH training.**

**Q9. 100% said they had noticed positive effects on their relationship with horses following IH training.** Very positive and heart felt affirmations and happiness relating to better understanding and a closer more open relationship with their horses, 20% said they and their horses felt calmer, more relaxed and 10 respondents described horse and owner as feeling happier. They felt more "joined up" and a "mutual trust".

*"I fell over in the paddock and was winded. My horse came from the other side of the paddock and stood over me in a protective way until I could get up."*

*"I try and make sure I am totally there when with horses and not be thinking of stressful things...this was particularly helpful during the Pandemic, I work in a shop and, as a key worker it was very stressful, I made sure I left all that at the gate!.....therapy horse style!"*

*"My horse now follows me everywhere!"*

*"My vets are always amazed how well my horse stands for Xrays, dental etc. Because I have taught him to stand still he is now their favourite patient."*

**Q10. What else do you think IH could do to support you in your horsemanship journey?**

Most people were very satisfied with their IH training and journey. Six respondents suggested refresher courses for those who had done the Foundation and needed a "top up" as it can be difficult to recall detail from the courses. One person mentioned barefoot training and another mentioned follow up courses delivered locally by RTs. Another respondent suggested the option for unpaid week of work experience for those training to be RTs and another was keen on more Kelly Demos. Five people asked for more fun/interactive-based courses eg. agility and ways to engage and fun with your horse.

*"I'd be interested in following the progress over several weeks of a problem horse and the starting of a young horse using IH methods, showing what worked or didn't work for the particular horse, by regular updates/videos and, if owner willing, for us to get updates from the owner once the horse had gone back to them. Therefore, follow the horse's journey rather than just a snippet of it's behaviour at a demo or on a course."*

*It would be good if courses were held in different locations. I live in the north of England and the travelling is off-putting as well as expensive (on top of course fees and accommodation)"*

*"I would love to see the demos come back as I think watching the work with the horses is really informative. The webinars have been fantastic so more of them would be helpful for remote learning."*

*"Maybe some new different courses incorporating fun ground-based activity such as horse agility."*

*"More ridden courses"*

*"Another general interest course after the Foundation course for people who want to learn more but don't want to be RTs."*

*"Nothing, their support is constant and it's an incredible journey"*

**b) Study area: Pre and post course evaluation forms to measure the journey from Day 1 to Day 5 (before and after) of the foundation courses (July and August 2021)**

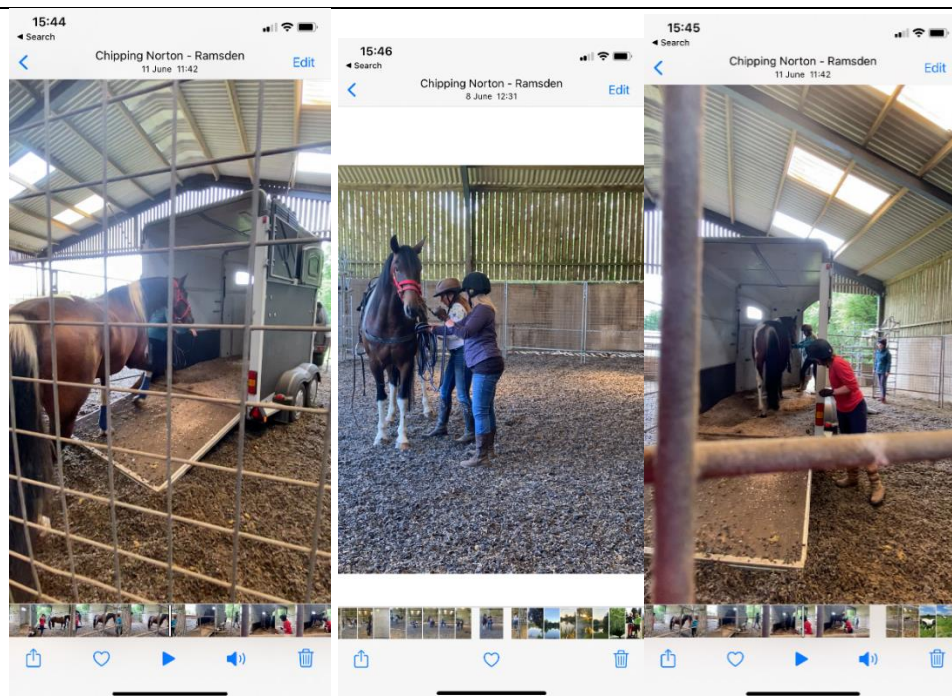
On the July and August 2021 Foundation courses students received pre-and post-course evaluation forms in order to track progress between the skills and confidence at the start and end of the course. Results below show pre course in orange and post course in green. Scale was 1 - low and 5 - high levels of confidence. All students' confidence levels increased between day 1 and day 5. Areas of most growth were in pressure and release in July students and in Join up, Long lining and loading in August students.

Pre and post Foundation Course confidence levels																	
	Jul-21									Aug-21							
	Students x 8									Students x 8							
Horse communication	4	4	3	4	5	3	1	2	Horse communication	2	3	2	3	4	4	1	4
	4	5	4	5	4	4	2	3		3	3	5	5	4	4	4	4
Dually	3	3	3	4	4	2	5	2	Dually	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	5
	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	3		4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4
Pressure and release	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	Pressure and release	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	5
	4	5	5	5	3	4	4	4		4	3	4	5	5	3	4	4
Groundwork	4	1	2	2	4	1	2	1	Groundwork	2	3	4	4	3	3	4	5
	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	2		4	4	5	5	5	4	4	5
Leg handling	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	Leg handling	3	3	3	4	4	2	3	5
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5		4	4	4	5	4	3	4	5
Join Up	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	Join Up	2	2	1	1	2	3	2	4
	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4		3	3	4	5	4	4	4	4
Long lining	4	2	3	4	3	2	2	1	Long lining	1	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3		3	3	4	4	3	4	3	3
Loading	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	Loading	2	3	1	1	3	2	1	3
	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5		3	1	3	4	5	4	3	4



<b>Qualitative data July and August (16 Students)</b>
The biggest learning for students on both courses was Join UP and the 12 out of 16 recorded increased confidence as their biggest change of the week.
<b>What are the things you wished you'd known years ago</b>
Pressure and release - 5 Nonviolence - 1 Groundwork - 3 Dually 1 Breaking down problems - 3 Walking stick for leg work - 1 How horses communicate - 2 Body language - 2 Trusting your own instincts - 1 How to join up - 1 Emotions and breathing affect your horse - 1 Correct rider position 1
<b>What can you do that you couldn't at the start of the course?</b>
Join up with Tack - 3 Join up - 11 Longlining - 7 Feel on the line - 1 Dually - 1 Energy level/eye contact and shoulders - 1
<b>How have you changed?</b>
Increased confidence - 12 Calmer - 1 How to change my energy levels - 1 Not to be so hard on myself - 1 It's ok to be nervous -1
c). Two-month impact - case studies x 2. During the early July 2021 Foundation course two students volunteered to be case studies to measure any changes two months after their course.
Case study 1: Deanna/Tara - See Appendix B for detailed interview.





Deanna was on the June 2021 Foundation course with her 4-year-old SaddlebredXFriesian mare Tara. Deanna found the groundwork, Joinup, long line and loading very useful and post course went on to build a round pen at her farm and purchase a Dually. Tara returned to Hartsop for the July Leading and Loading course. Tara attended the Foal Handling course with Ian.

### **Confidence levels in undertaking the horsemanship skills below after 2 months:**

Horse communication : 4

Fitting dually : 5

Pressure and release : 3

Groundwork : 4

Leg handling : 4

Join up : 3

Long lining : 3

Loading : 4

### **Key learning and behaviour changes since attending both courses include:**

More confidence in identifying pain related behaviours:

Honey - quiet mare - behaviour suddenly changed. Equine dentist - found tooth and behaviour improved and became quiet again.

Tara - rearing when backed - equine dentist - wolf teeth - had them removed an huge improvement.

Mother's mare - fine in trot. Wolf teeth - terrible in canter and bucking.

Tara - much better in leading and better with backing and boundaries and calmer. Better at reading her.

Youngsters and foal - have moved 2-year-old who was getting too familiar to herd and more socialised now. Away from familiar humans. Needed some horse discipline and after two weeks is now able to play with other foal. He had been wary of other horses and overly handled. So better now.

Tara - Loading - longer smoother journey - not sweaty. I am a much better driver with trailer - smoother - more aware of speed and from horse perspective. Tara much calmer.

### **Recommendations and plans:**

Psychology course first.

Weekend courses would be good for those who work.

I recommend going with friend or family member - so you remind each other of things.

“Bring a young brain with you as they are good at remembering.”

Visual learning and filming was great way to capture the learning.



### **Case Study 2**

**Name: Richard Young**

Horse: we have a stud farm so they come and go

Date : 21.8.21

Key learning from Foundation:

1. Body positioning
2. If you don't get the join up straight away go side to side
3. Use pressure and release

I still use today all of the above and has helped a lot as I can see where I was struggling.

Horse communications : 4

Fitting dually : 3

Pressure and release : 4

Groundwork : 4

Leg handling : 3

Join up : 4

Long lining : 2

Loading : 2-3

I have forgotten a few bits but when I look back in my book I usually remember; I think I refresher every year or 2 would be good.

My confidence levels have definitely come on after taking the course and I think it shows when working on customers' horses.

I don't think many people understand it but when they see it and I talk to them, they then seem very interested as they can see it works and the horse is happy.

I have got a lot more people I can talk to if I get stuck with something I don't know after being on the course.

Thank you very much for all your help and support on the course as you helped me a lot.



d). Twelve-month impact - using fellow students and their horses July 2020 Foundation course I was able to measure impact on horsemanship experiences and behaviour changes of 3 case studies (12 months on) and decided to record some of my own learning/journey post IH training.

### Case study 1: Ruth Dodd and horse Perdie



Before

Course Attended: July 2020 5 day Foundation			Interview date: 9.8.21		
Name: Ruth Dodd					
Horse:- Perdie - Thoroughbred. Owner for 6 years. Age 18.					
What session(s) you felt were the most useful to you from the five days					
Everything - practised with every horse - such a difference					
Confidence levels in undertaking the horsemanship skills after 12 months (5= high 1=low)					
Horses communication /body language	1	2	3	4	5 x
Fitting the dually - only use rope halter - found had prob with teeth	1	2	3	4	5
Use of pressure and release in training	1	2	3	4	5 x
Groundwork eg. leading, back up etc	1	2	3	4 x	5
Leg handling (lan)	1	2 x	3	4	5
Join up - Yes - straight after course and worked well. Done on cob. And about to do ex-racehorse.	1	2	3	4	5
Long lining - done some - when first got back - went fine.	1	2	3 x	4	5
Loading - yes 2 weeks after course - was great	1	2	3	4	5
Anything else you are using from foundation?					

**Pre Foundation** - Perdie used to spin, rear and go backwards if rode her. Had vet out. Had vet dentist. Vet physio. She continued to shake her head and would rear. I had to get off. Nothing would work if stayed on. Went to a public clinic with Jeff Billington and his advice after seeing Perdie was “lead behind the ears”. One vet diagnosed Cushings. Most vets said there was nothing wrong with her.

**Post Foundation**

I persevered! Going against peer advice that Perdie was playing up, I found Bruce Hewitt - Equine Osteopath - he identified that Perdie had an S shape back - twisted and out of line. He worked on her hips and spine. Big improvement. She became much more comfortable. Bruce Hewitt - had done some IH courses himself. Perdie loved him. Bruce recommended a Natural Equine Dentist. He discovered Perdie’s very back bottom teeth were sharp and growing into cheek. Called - The Equine Dentist and on Facebook. He rasped the back lower teeth and this cured the problem.

Ruth said If she hadn’t done the Foundation and horse psychology courses, she would have listened to everyone else (“she’s being naughty - just hit her”) and not done anything. But the Foundation and horse psychology courses influenced her to persevere and to try to get to the bottom of what she believed to be a pain issue. “I spent hundreds when I could have just spent £105 which was Bruce and equine dentist combined. “

**Ruth - what’s changed?**

Confidence has gone up 100%. I had lost confidence due to horse behaviour and I suffer from anxiety and PTSD. And then my Dad died -last year. I felt very unsure and scared. I was so worried about Perdie but felt like there was something wrong with me. In order to find support, I put a video on Equine Biomechanics FB groups of me riding Perdie and her reaction. The wave of abuse and criticism of me completely knocked my confidence. So many people said was my fault and slated my horsemanship. It was the worse thing I ever did.

Doing IH courses helped me to manage my own emotions. After the Foundation course, I did loads of groundwork with Perdie which was so rewarding as she didn’t find this painful. It helped build our relationship and trust. After our first join up I was buzzing! Now she follows me everywhere!

**Believing in my gut was right - never tried a whip - so glad I stuck with it. IH Courses convinced me.**



After treatment by equine dentist and physio.

**Case Study 2 - Ella - despite the sad ending Ella was keen for me to include her story here.**

**Course Attended: IH Foundation July 2020**

**Name: Ella**

**Horse: Warrior**

**1. Did the IH Foundation Have a positive impact on your horsemanship skills and knowledge?**

I was inspired to start intelligent horsemanship courses due to my horse Warrior. I was scared by his behaviour as I couldn't understand what seemed to me to be aggression

IH gave me the confidence to breathe through fear and look deeper at the reasons behind the behaviour. The courses changed my relationship with Warrior and horses in a huge way and gave me confidence to question and try to understand

**2. Did the IF Foundation have a positive impact on your confidence levels in working with your horse or the horses you care for?**

IH gave me skills to handle horses more confidently and read their behaviour differently. Teaching me to check in with myself and breath had a huge long-lasting impact.

**Do you think your horse (or horses you care for) noticed a difference in you following the IH Foundation Course?**

Thanks to IH my horse went from abused and scared to interactive and confident. Over two years IH skills completely changed our relationship. Warrior trusted me enough to groom him, ride him out and even progress to do horse archery! By learning to speak his language we were given the best relationship.

**Do you think you are more likely to get to the bottom of a horse's behavioural problems following the IH Foundation course?**

Learning to breath, take a moment and watch, don't immediately react I fear, think why and break things down to understand the issue

**Has IH helped you to identify health related behavioural problems?**

By watching my boy Warrior's behaviour change and examining him with the IH method I realised there was something deeper wrong. This led to the discovery of a brain tumour/lesion. So very very sadly Warrior passed away at the start of June 2021.

**Have you noticed positive effects on your relationships with horses following IH training?**

Being calm. Every horse owner I've worked with has commented on how calming I am around horses and how low my energy is. This enables me to connect better with horses.



Ella and Warrior



<b>Case Study 3 Gaille and Warbreck</b>					
<b>Course Attended: IH Foundation July 2020</b>					
<b>Name: Gaille Mackinnon</b>					
November 2020 - Gaille bought a horse as a result of the foundation course. Name: Warbreck - ex race horse, age 20 now and retired from racing at three and taken by Polo person as hacking horse and hunted for last 5 years. Stabled during day. Out at night on own. Some health issues.					
<b>Your learning on the 5 day Foundation course - WHAT YOU SAID</b>					
1. entire experience immersive - not been near horses for 30 years					
<b>Confidence levels in horsemanship skills below after 12 months (5= high and 1=low)</b>					
Horses communication /body language	1	2	3	4	5 x
Fitting the dually and usage	1	2	3	4	5 x
Use of pressure and release in training	1	2	3	4	5 x
Groundwork eg. leading, back up etc	1	2	3	4	5 x
Leg handling (ian)	1	2	3	4	5
Join up - no round pen where Gaille is	1 x	2	3	4	5
Long lining - not yet	1	2	3	4	5
Loading - August	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Anything else you are using from foundation?</b> Contacted Nicole and Adam Golding for lessons post foundation - helping with Warbreck. Well supported. Started by taking him for walks. Do massage - cranial sacro, carrot stretches Used to terrain now - looking fit now and barefoot. With herd from January including rescues x2 from gypsy travellers abandoned. Been quite a journey - with nervous horses and a young stallion 2 and half. Foundation course was a great starter - All questions answered with in an hour by trainers. Would like to do Perfect Manners course Would really like to come on a course - bring Warbreck along					
<b>Gaille: what's changed</b>					
Stars aligned - horse was given - landed in lap. Getting saddle made for him and Gaille.					
<b>Your horse/ behaviours/problems - has anything improved?</b>					
Doesn't like leaving herd now as was in stable /separate field. So behaving more of a horse now. Living out. But easy to catch.					



**f) Foundation July 2020 - My own horsemanship journey and horse behaviour changes.**

Indie - Dutch warmblood. 16.2 chestnut mare. With me for 6 years (2015 - 2021). Came to yard with four other abandoned ponies after two years left in small field with poor grazing. Indie had low weight, abscesses, and was in very poor condition. One pony died two days after arrival and then we discovered one of the Shetlands had brought strangles which spread to all Yard horses. (I'm sorry I don't have pics from this time).

Indie's behaviour before I decided to take her on included biting, rearing, bucking and generally being very nervous around people and nerve wracking to be around. Her future looked bleak as no one wanted her and it looked to me like she would be pillar to post given her behaviour and condition. So I decided to take her on and introduce her to my cob Tilly. This coincided with the start of my IH journey as I attended three Monty-Kelly demos in Scotland and started saving for the courses that I have subsequently attended. This took a few years so I also attended workshops and clinics by Richard Maxwell, Perry Wood and..... I took Natural horsemanship lessons from Jane Bury at Celtic horse.

**Our journey headlines:**

**Condition improvements - mental and physical**

Herd introductions, worming and good regular winter feeding.

Farrier started to work on feet

Vet/ dentist to check and file teeth.

Positive human interactions (no riding) just feeding and grooming at gate. Building familiarity and trust.

**Pain indicators and trouble shooting.** Biting and sensitivity around girth - possible worm problem and ulcers. Rearing and head shy - head tossing and shaking in ridden work. Discovered ridden in gag previously and in too small saddle by 17 stone male. Changed bit and removed martingale and noseband.

Started cow kicking and planting in ridden work. Started again with Physio for three months followed by saddle fitting and purchase of new saddle. She had come barefoot but hooves not in great shape so farrier put shoes on front only.

2017-2019 - Following saddle fitting and physio Indie proved to be very forward going, so much more comfortable so we spent the next year hacking out and doing groundwork to improve bond, flexibility and general training. Generally a complete transformation and a very chilled horse.

2020 - The Foundation and horse psychology courses reinforced what I had been doing and gave me confidence to continue my “journey” with Indie. At the start everyone advised against taking her on as she was pretty scary to be around. However gradually identifying some of her pain and previous training problems, Indie evolved into a trusting partner who loved nothing better than to get out and down to the beach for a gallop. After the Foundation course I decided to try Join up with her and increase groundwork. This progressed to longlining which we both loved and which really helped with ridden work and bond.

Then Indie became intermittently lame August 2020 and I was back to IH detective work to solve the problem of sound and then very unsound horse! Working with vet, Xrays revealed that Indie had a fractured side bone so riding stopped for 6 months and the farrier put on bar shoes. These worked really well and after Xmas 2020 ridden work started incrementally.

More recently I have been working on my own rider position and had saddle refitted to reflect changes in weight in order to try and keep Indie as comfortable in ridden work as possible.

An interesting dimension to our journey is my cancer diagnosis in 2017 which was after most of Indie’s pain issues had been resolved. We started groundwork “lessons” with Celtichorse on the day of my diagnosis which turned out to be a wonderful diversion to the subsequent chemotherapy treatment which happened in 3 week cycles for the next 6 months. I mention this here as I rode Indie for three days after each chemo treatment while the steroids made it possible and she seemed to sense my failing health over the next 6 months as my immune system took a beating and was steady and kept me safe and mentally well. SO this was a two way street in horse human helping each other out and building a bond and familiarity that I would never have thought possible at the start.

#### **Post IH and other horses:**

Started working with 4-year-old warmblood gelding Legend after IH course and supporting owner with issues such as standing still to mount, ground work, spooking and accepting the bit. Also with injury recovery.

Also backed 12-year-old Clydesdale mare and working on ground and ridden work.

Groundwork with miniature Shetland Jake to prepare for working with children at farm petting area.

De-spoking /sensitising with Hero, very sensitive Andalusian.

Post loading course have successfully resolved a two year non loading issue with my cob mare Tilly.

Like other IH students above I also decided to support a small Scottish equine rescue charity and have been working with them to bring in money and grow their business for the past 12 months.





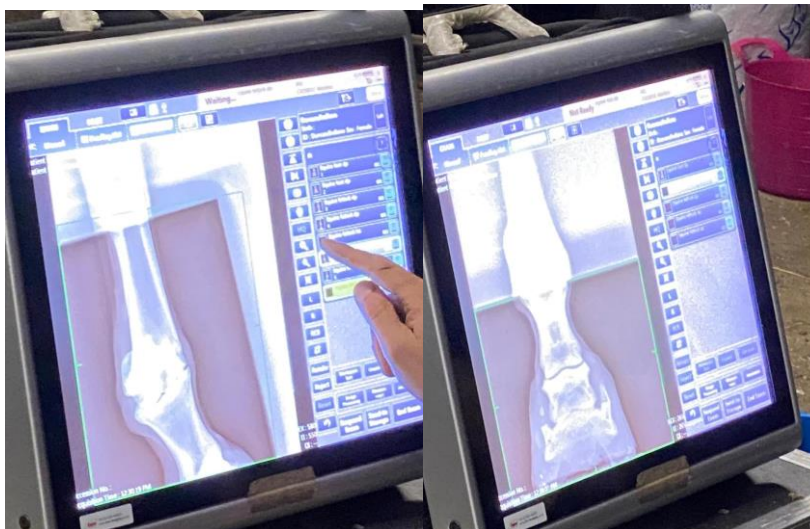
Before/at start



ongoing dental work



Ongoing hanging out, massage and getting to know you stuff



Fractured Side bone and further dentistry





Saddle refitting and rider positioning



Join up practice



Plastic with legend and loading with Tilly



## 5. Conclusion

**What is the impact of the IH Foundation Course on influencing long-lasting change in the confidence and skills of participating students and their horses.**

At the start of this project I was keen to find out about what kind of changes the IH Foundation Course led to in terms of behaviour (horse and human), confidence and skills levels and personal/life changes. What do people do differently, how has their relationship changed with their horse(s) and what are they doing now - two months and 12 months on? I was particularly keen to understand the “lasting” effect of IH training and find out how much people had remembered/continued to use or whether they had forgotten everything.

This was all fascinating for me to find out and I hope the qualitative and statistical data produced will prove useful in the strategic development of Intelligent Horsemanship. But to get a feel for student needs beyond the Foundation it was also important to find out what else would be useful to participating students and gather ideas on how IH can further support the Learning of IH member students.

**So what did I Learn?**

**Students** - 100% of the 78 students who completed the online survey said the IH Foundation had had a positive impact on their skills/knowledge and 100% noticed positive effects on their relationships with horses following IH training. 95% reported an increase in confidence levels and 97.5% said they were more likely to get to the bottom of a horse’s behavioural problems following the IH Foundation course.

The high impact recorded around increased skills and learning was, I noticed, intricately connected to the increase in confidence levels and, in some cases, self-esteem of participating students. Observing the students closely as a volunteer on the Foundation course enabled me to monitor increased confidence as the week progressed and understand how this was aided by the non-judgemental and supportive course environment set up by the tutors. And 90% of Survey respondents said they felt respected and supported whilst learning on the IH foundation course. My observations of increased skills and confidence was backed up by the pre and post-course study in which all participants recorded increased confidence. And both Deana and Richard, two months after their Foundation course, were able to report how they were actively practising many of the tools and techniques from the course. Deanna felt better able to read Tara and was able to identify a range of pain-related behaviours.

Of the 13 students that attended the July 2020 Foundation that Ruth, Ella and Gaille attended, 4 are working to stage 2, another purchased a round pen, and another went on to train a young horse.

In summary, respondents felt they were able to read horses better: “Behaviour is communication!!!” and better able to problem solve and break things down to get to the bottom of a behavioural issue. Many reported ways in which they had been able to identify pain-related issues and resolve them.

One student summed up her learning experience as having “A deeper understanding of how to approach things from the horse’s perspective, the importance of incremental training; reading and communicating with your horse; the value of a true two-way conversation with the horse; increased self-awareness and how I can behave to influence the situation, how much more there was for me to learn and discover!”

Which leads me to report on the impact of “increased appetite to learn more” that I noticed in terms of the qualitative feedback. The Foundation course was the springboard and inspiration for further learning and many people embraced Kelly’s philosophy to keep learning and find tools from many sources: “Opened up a whole list of options to explore”. Some people recorded learning on the IH Facebook and feeling more connected, whilst other contacted RT’s for further support and several Survey respondents recorded that they were keen to continue to Stage Two and/or become RT’s themselves.

**Life changes** -55% of those surveyed said they made life changes after the foundation course. Some people bought a horse, two people bought land, others changed job or retrained completely and one person left her husband. 10% of survey respondents became IH Recommended Trainers (9) and 4 respondents are working towards their Stage 2/Diploma. Many people talked about finding

themselves, their own voice and believing in themselves. ” Gave me the courage to fight negativity, manipulation and bullying, and continue to spread kindness”.

**Horse** - 90% of the 78 people completing the online survey said they felt that their horse noticed a difference in them following the Foundation course and 60% felt better able to identify health-related behavioural problems. One student described the Foundation as “a re-setting of my relationship with my own horse”. The post Foundation stories that Ruth and Ella told (12 months on) demonstrated a high impact and were particularly moving accounts of their improved understanding and communication with their horses leading to identifying underlying pain. Ruth sunk to a very low point in the face of criticism and inability of local vets to help her horse but persistence and believing her gut instincts, put there by the IH Foundation, kept her going until she finally found the right practitioners who were able to resolve the problem. So, sadly for Ella her new abilities and knowledge helped her to identify an incurable tumour and her horse had to be put down.

Generally people described a reduction in talking and “chatter” around their horses replaced by silent body language and connection. One student said she thought her horse might notice that she was “Calmer, slower, more emphatic, more considerate, more open, nicer to be around and living in the moment.” And another described how her horses “became much more relaxed...and I became more relaxed around them as I understood.. how best to respond.”

From my own perspective I was able to return from the Foundation and subsequently spot and resolve side bone fracture in my own horse, Join up successfully with yard horses, provide positive support, post-backing training with a youngster/owner and felt confident to back a Clydesdale and retrain Shetland and miniature ponies. I am interested in IH’s future plans of working with and influencing young people to choose and enjoy the IH approach.

**So what?** For this study I wanted also to find out what else might support IH Students beyond the Foundation and where the gaps might be in their ongoing journey with their horse(s). For those that had completed the Foundation course over 3 years ago there were several suggestions of a shorter refresher course to “top them up”. Some people asked for more localised training opportunities by RTs and others enquired about the possibility of the IH Team providing charged/uncharged shadowing and work experience. Another person suggested more weekend/evening courses for those that work in the week. I thought it interesting that some people asked for training and ideas on “how to engage and have fun with your horse” and one person suggested an IH online filmed “journey” tracking the “changes to horse and owner behaviour”. One respondent did suggest that IH tutors should try not to speak negatively about other, more traditional approaches eg. BHS: “it would be more professional not to criticise the BHS which is very committed to horse welfare and to helping people get into horses and get on well with riding or owning etc. It has scale and it matters a lot.”

From those interested in becoming RT’s or already training or supporting horses with behaviour issues, there was a question of whether IH could provide “People training” in order to furnish students with communication skills and tools to help them develop non-judgemental, empathetic language and approaches where a horse had been inadvertently trained to behave in a certain (unwanted) way. And how to encourage the owner to adopt and practice any specific (IH) handling approaches to ensure better communication and improved behaviour going forward. “People training” might also highlight ways to establish boundaries and manage expectations through experience sharing and RT’s.

Three students suggested more IH ridden courses and another encouraged more magazine and webinar training topics for those further away geographically and those who can’t afford to attend as regularly as they would like. Short one topic online courses were also suggested to home in on particular areas that are touched on briefly in the Foundation or other courses. One person asked if the more theoretical courses could go online.

Broadly all respondents followed up by saying that IH was doing a tremendous job and to grow and develop their work to reach, influence and support more people to learn effective horse communication. So I’ll finish this study with this lovely quote which I believe sums up the feelings of many:



"I had been knocking on the door searching for a different approach... IH and the foundation course opened the door and welcomed me in, like a weary traveller finally finding shelter."



#### Appendix A - IH Members Survey responses - 78

##### Quantitative responses:

1. Did the IH Foundation have a positive impact on your horsemanship skills and knowledge?  
Yes - 78/78 (100%)
2. Did you feel respected and supported whilst learning on the IH foundation course?

Yes - 76 (89.7%) no - 2 (2.6%)

**3. Did the IF Foundation have a positive impact on your confidence levels in working with your horse or the horses you care for?**

Yes - 74 (95%) no - 4 (5%)

**4. Did you make any big life changes following the IH foundation (horsey or otherwise)?**

Yes - 45 (55%) No - 37 (47%)

**5. Do you think your horse (or horses you care for) noticed a difference in you following the IH Foundation Course?**

Yes - 70 (90%) no - 8 (10%)

**6. Do you think you are more likely to get to the bottom of a horse's behavioural problems following the IH Foundation course?**

Yes - 76 (97.5%) no - 2 (2.5%)

**7. Has IH helped you to identify health related behavioural problems?**

Yes - 48 (60%) No - 31 (40%)

**8. Do you feel you are less likely to get injured since doing IH training?**

Yes - 65% no - 14%

**9. Have you noticed positive effects on your relationships with horses following IH training?**

Yes - 78 (100%) no - 0%

**10. What else do you think IH could do to support you in your horsemanship journey?**

See below

**Qualitative Responses:**

**1. Did the IH Foundation have a positive impact on your horsemanship skills and knowledge? Yes - 78/78 (100%)**

- Riding instruction is (obviously) based on how to ride. There is very little or nothing which teaches you about the horse as a sentient animal in its own right. The course filled that gap and for me, with non-horsey parents, this was a re-setting of my relationship with my own horse.
- It gave me a road map to work out how to approach a lot of problems in a systematic way.
- made me realise that most horse problems are people problems and taught me more about myself than the horses
- The foundation course opened the door and welcomed me in, like a weary traveller finally finding shelter.
- That I had to be the leader of the herd (not the boss) I had to make him safe and want to be with me and want to do stuff. If things went wrong that it was me not him.
- It was the beginning of my journey from horse owner to horse trainer.
- to stop blaming the horse or trying to humanise their behaviours

**2. Did you feel respected and supported whilst learning on the IH foundation course?**

Yes - 76 (89.7%) no - 2 (2.6%)

**3. Did the IF Foundation have a positive impact on your confidence levels in working with your horse or the horses you care for? Yes - 74 (95%) no - 4 (5%)**

- I was inspired to start intelligent horsemanship courses due to my horse Warrior. I was scared by his behaviour as I couldn't understand what seemed to me to be aggression. IH gave me the confidence to breathe through fear and look deeper at the reasons behind the behaviour. The courses changed my relationship with warrior and horses in a huge way and gave me confidence to question and try to understand
- this was a re-setting of my relationship with my own horse.
- I no longer feel the need to 'win', or 'show the horse who is boss', which I had never felt comfortable with but was taught those principles from an early age by others who were supposed to know these things.
- Retrained an ex racer. Started a youngster under saddle, bred 2 foals, and started helping other people with their horse problems. Confidence basically!
- Assess situations more thoughtfully, enjoy groundwork and perceive things from the horses perspective.

**4. Did you make any big life changes following the IH foundation (horsey or otherwise)?**

Yes - 45 (55%) No - 37 (47%)

- Applied for and got a job with horses

- I went on to study further -equine behaviour sports massage and then a Masters degree in Veterinary Physiotherapy
- Gave me the courage to fight negativity, manipulation and bullying, and continue to spread kindness. Kindness always wins, even if the intended recipient doesn't want it or know it at the time!
- Addressed my work life balance. Now work part time in a new role.
- Now attempting to buy a youngster to bring on
- Became more confident and felt brave enough to follow my dreams
- I was already rescuing horses. I just did a better job and was able to teach a lot more children. They watched me and wanted to achieve the same success.
- Got involved with rescue ponies with asstd issues and was able to help them regain trust with people
- I feel doing the course (and other IH courses), I had the confidence to feel I could cope alone, despite being very new to horses and to remove myself from what I found to be unpleasant and unacceptable atmospheres and behaviour ( to people & horses), that I see at livery yards. We've not looked back!
- I found MY voice. I stopped being a door mat. I was and still able to be both assertive and passive instead of aggressive and submissive.

**5. Do you think your horse (or horses you care for) noticed a difference in you following the IH Foundation Course? Yes - 70 (90%) no - 8 (10%)**

- aware of what I was asking of them and how they felt about that and reacting to their responses differently. Being more fair to them and ruling out pain and discomfort as a cause before anything else wherever possible.
- I do things in a way that works for him, rather than expecting him to do things my way. End result is the same, but the journey there is less stressful.
- I distinctly remember my mare turning to look at me (in a much improved long-reining session), to almost say 'FINALLY!! NOW you're making sense!!'
- They became much more relaxed, I believe because they felt more understood and I became more relaxed around them as I understood them more and how best to respond.
- Thanks to IH my horse went from abused and scared to interactive, over two years these skills completely changed our relationship. Warrior trusted me enough to groom him, ride him out and even progress to do horse archery. By learning to speak his language we were given the best relationship.
- Hopefully I've become a better leader whose behaviour is consistent and considerate.
- A definite co-operation partnership and I now find my horses want to be around me eg following me about when poo picking.

**6. Do you think you are more likely to get to the bottom of a horse's behavioural problems following the IH Foundation course? Yes - 76 (97.5%) no - 2 (2.5%)**

- To observe the horse carefully, pay 100% attention to what both me and the horse are doing. To work out a solution to the problem and break it down into small easily manageable stages, be prepared to allow plenty of time for each stage and give plenty of praise for any attempt at correct response/behaviour.
- Stepping back and listening, not rushing. Removing ego and judgement.
- Knowing a horse does something for a reason. Being able to listen to the horse.
- The scientific analytical approach to problem solving us really helped my to break down and analyse problems, before starting any retraining and to devise a plan for how to deal with issues (also knowing that there is a network of great people that I can talk to in the same "trainer language" is a great confidence boost.)
- I no longer assume poor behaviour is being naughty
- learning that pain, fear or misunderstanding are more common than I realised when a horse is 'playing up'.
- Learning that there is a reason for everything horses do, and that if what you are trying isn't working don't keep doing it. Stop, re-think and try something else.

**7. Has IH helped you to identify health related behavioural problems? Yes - 48 (60%) No - 31 (40%)**

- Ridden issues from back pain, saddle fit, ulcers.
- One of my own mares had ulcers - decided to scope when gradual desensitisation to a rider/saddle helped slightly but then stopped making progress, making me suspect a physical issue.
- My husband's driving pony was not his normal self. Couldn't put my finger on why not but I recognised it. I asked an equine therapist to take a look at him and she diagnosed that he did have a physical problem with his back and hind quarters. Now fixed.
- Helped me to look beyond the usually more common causes of pain i.e. ulcers, kissing spine, ill-fitting tack, to harder to spot health issues such as poor diet, vit/min deficiency, musculoskeletal pain etc
- My neighbour's new horse was being difficult - nappy, lots of biting, angry. I encouraged them to get her teeth checked and also veterinary chiropractic treatment. Now the horse is much easier to work with.
- now I would rule out any medical problems first pain, teeth back diet etc before fixing the behavioural if needed
- My horse started to turn his back on me when I approached with his saddle. He hadn't done this before so I had his back checked. Turned out his pelvis was uneven.
- By watching my boy Warrior's behaviour change and examining him with the IH method I realised there was something deeper wrong. This led to the discovery of a brain tumour/lesion.
- My horse's reluctance to go uphill following a fall proved to be a back problem - sorted by the physio.
- My current horse out of the blue moved away from the mounting block one day. I rested him but he was the same the next day. On viewing our CCTV, I saw he had been kicked, although no surface wounds. I gave him a week or so off for bruising to recover and the next time I went to ride, he was back to normal. Without IH training, it would be easy to adopt the popular view of "he's being stupid, making a fool of you, get on and force him to work". The same horse had a similar issue with overnight refusing to be bridled. Again I rested him, had the vet who said he was very sensitive over his poll, but nothing specific. More rest, and then discovered damage above his stable door. Suggesting he had gone up (probably arguing with my cob next door!) and really hit his head. We had several weeks of rest but he would not allow the bridle near or over his ears. Despite being told to force it on and make him get on with it, I gradually, using very gentle techniques and a lot of patience and daily practice, retrained him to let me drop the bridle on top with no browband and then sling the bit through his mouth. We now do this all the time & have a browband with Velcro which I do up once the bridle is on. It is so quick & easy, I cannot understand why anyone squashes ears and forces a bit in to get the bridle on. Tizer very soon started dropping his head to the ground through his own initiative, for me just to drop the bridle on top! IH gave me the knowledge to work through the problem and come up with our own solution.
- We bought a horse that was difficult to saddle up and discovered that he had kissing spine. I would have previously thought him 'naughty' but the IH course taught me to see that he was trying to tell me something.

**8. Do you feel you are less likely to get injured since doing IH training? Yes -65% no - 14%**

**9. Have you noticed positive effects on your relationships with horses following IH training? Yes - 78 (100%) no - 0%**

**Please give one positive effect on your relationship with horses following IH training:**

- I fell over in the paddock and was winded. My horse came from the other side of the paddock and stood over me in a protective way until I could get up.
- Every horse owner I've worked with has commented on how calming I am around horses and how low my energy is. This enables me to connect better with horses.
- IH models a way to respect them no matter what, to think well of them while trying to solve problems. That is a very pleasant way to live with horses. I find it more relaxing, and more fulfilling, than other orientations so I get more out of my relationships with horses now than I did before I was so involved in IH.
- I try and make sure I am totally there when with horses and not be thinking of stressful things...this was particularly helpful during the Pandemic, I work in a shop and, as a key worker it was very stressful, I made sure I left all that at the gate!.....therapy horse style!

- My horse now follows me everywhere!
- My vets are always amazed how well my horse stands for Xrays, dental etc. Because I have taught him to stand still he is now their favourite patient.
- Knowing when I am putting too much pressure on so stop and take a step back - ie the incremental learning. Breaking things down into bite size chunks to prevent too much pressure.
- I have learned that some owners often describe their horse's behaviour and attitudes in very unfair and anthropomorphic ways, which in turn may affect how they and others act around the horse. This in a lot of cases can cause the very behaviour they then criticise. I now prefer to take the horse at face value in the moment and let them have their say first, without giving much weight to emotional descriptions, nicknames or expectations.

**10. What else do you think IH could do to support you in your horsemanship journey?**

- I'd be interested in following the progress over several weeks of a problem horse and the starting of a young horse using IH methods, showing what worked or didn't work for the particular horse, by regular updates/videos and, if owner willing, for us to get updates from the owner once the horse had gone back to them. Therefore, follow the horse's journey rather than just a snippet of it's behaviour at a demo or on a course.
- It would be good if courses were held in different locations. I live in the north of England and the travelling is off-putting as well as expensive (on top of course fees and accommodation)
- I would love to see the demos come back as I think watching the work with the horses is really informative. The webinars have been fantastic so more of them would be helpful for remote learning.
- Maybe some new different courses incorporating fun ground-based activity such as horse agility.
- More ridden courses
- Another general interest course after the Foundation course for people who want to learn more but don't want to be RTs.
- Nothing, their support is constant and it's an incredible journey

**Appendix B**

**Name DEANNA**

**Horse - Tara - was on Foundation. 4 years old and bred herself. Friesian X American Saddlebred**

**Interview date: 11.8.21**

**What session(s) you felt were the most useful to you from the five days**

- 1.- Dually - and groundwork
2. - loading on foundation and on later LL course
3. - Join up
4. - long lining

**Which of these are you using 2 months on?**

Tara has Dually now and using daily.  
Also did Foal handling - so now don't handle our foals too much - so learnt and sent to herd and has transformed behaviour. Were getting too familiar.

Bought panels for Round Pen so have one now. For turn out and join up.

**Please answer by circling the number that rates your confidence levels in undertaking the horsemanship skills below after 12 months (5 being high and 1 being low)**

Horses communication /body language - with nobody around/ was slightly naïve and am much more aware now	1	2	3	4x	5
Fitting the dually and usage - yes on Tara everyday	1	2	3	4	5x
Use of pressure and release in training - I use on my quarter horse	1	2	3x	4	5
Groundwork eg. leading, back up etc - in familiar surroundings I'm more confident, I'm a 5	1	2	3	4x	5
Leg handling (lan) - has really helped with foals and 2 year olds - has helped with confidence. And Tara with farrier.	1	2	3	4X	5

<b>Join up</b> - - did loads on Tara on foundation so not doing so much now. Confident to try but don't want to overdo.	1	2	3x	4	5
<b>Long lining</b> Need more practice - need someone at head to get going. Tried in field so need	1	2	3X	4	5
<b>Loading</b> - ongoing. Tara was demo horse on LL course.	1	2	3	4x	5
<b>Anything else you are using from foundation?</b> Round pen Done join up with quarter horses. Reading the horses - improved. Trust self, Safety issues. Risk assess constantly.					
<b>Would refresher be useful? Other recommendations?</b> In the future it would be useful - would like to learn more. Psychology course first. Weekend courses would be good for those who work. I recommend going with friend or family member - so you remind each other of things. "Bring a young brain with you as they are good at remembering." Visual learning and filming was great way to capture the learning.					
<b>Booked on anything else?</b> Would love to do the psychology course next.					
<b>Your horse/ behaviours/problems - has anything improved?    Yes</b>					
If yes - what? More able to identify pain related behaviours: Honey - quiet mare - behaviour suddenly changed. Equine dentist - found tooth and behaviour improved and became quiet again.  Tara - rearing when backed - equine dentist - wolf teeth - had them removed an huge improvement.  Mother's mare - fine in trot. Wolf teeth - terrible in canter and bucking.  Tara - much better in leading and better with backing and boundaries and calmer. Better at reading her.  Youngsters and foal - have moved him to herd and more socialised now. Away from familiar humans. Needed some discipline Two weeks to be able to play with other foal. Wary of other horses and overly handled. So better now.  Loading - longer smoother journey - not sweaty. Much better driver with trailer - smoother - more aware of speed and from horse perspective. Tara much calmer.  Teaches you to plan ahead.					