



### Clanking Chains: Comparison of Equine & Doctrinal Forms of Discipline; Illustration of Severity: Monty Roberts's "Growing Up with Horses"

- 15) Roberts's observation of the mustang's system of group discipline introduced him to a method of controlling the animals without violence. It later enabled him to develop a similar system for managing people, especially children.
- 16) Let's take a look at what we have observed so far and see how the mustang system of benevolence and severity lines up with biblical principles:
  1. The dominant mare is at first passive toward the unruly colt allowing him to express his youthful spizzerinktum. His victims are expected initially to manage the situation on their own.
  2. The dun mare however, observes the colt's behavior but does nothing in order to decide if it was an aberration or a behavior pattern. This is a display of benevolence and patience.
  3. With each successive display of aggression, she moves closer to the colt. If the colt was not so self-centered he would recognize this as warning discipline: "I'm watching you. Correct your ways or I will be forced to become severe."
  4. After three or four episodes of aggressive arrogance toward fellow mustangs, the dun mare takes decisive action. She charges the colt with what is equivalent to the severity of corporal discipline.
  5. This is followed by the execution of that phase of the penalty clause having to do with restitution toward his victims: exile from the herd.
  6. At this point the dun mare goes through a series of body motions that begins dialogue with the colt on the conditions required to earn a reprieve. Eye-on-eye with a rigid, straight-on posture she tells the colt his attitude will not be welcomed back into the herd.
  7. The colt, who desires to return, is being told he is free to remain hostile but not among the mustangs of the herd. He is being told to make a choice, "Repent, confess, and cooperate or get gone."
  8. If he remains adamant then he is in jeopardy of a "death sentence." In effect, if the colt doesn't admit he is wrong and receive forgiveness he will remain "frozen out" and become vulnerable to the equine equivalent of the sin unto death.
  9. The colt's admission of wrongdoing is displayed by a series of body-language messages: (1) licking and chewing motions with his mouth, (2) turning the long axis of his body toward the mare, (3) bowing his head, and (4) moving his head close to the ground.
  10. The mare is not so easily convinced. She allows her eye to move off his a short distance down his side. This means she is considering forgiveness.
  11. Forgiveness is communicated by the mare turning the long axis of her body toward the colt. When he reenters the herd he is greeted by the mare with affectionate grooming. This communicates that all is forgiven and forgotten and benevolence is resumed.
  12. It is typical for the colt to soon try his hand at obnoxiousness afresh and the very same disciplinary system resumes immediately and the mare carries out the entire process all over again.



13. The mare is relentless and persistent in the execution of this disciplinary system. Ultimately the colt gets the message and becomes a cooperative and supportive member of the herd.
14. In the world of mustangs the colt's newly developed *esoterike harmonia* now contributes to the ongoing *exoterike harmonia* of the herd.
- 17) Monty Roberts's discovery of mustang communication enabled him to classify it into an equine language he named Equus. Through trial and error he was eventually able to communicate with horses through benevolence.
- 18) His ability to "speak" Equus allowed him make the traditional methods of breaking horses obsolete. His father was a practitioner of the traditional or "conventional method" and was adamant that Monty's system was not only naive but also dangerous.
- 19) The traditional system used severity without the balance of benevolence. It was violent, abusive, cruel, and psychologically damaging to the horse. The result was a horse that was tamed through fear rather than through willing conversion.
- 20) The contrast between severity and benevolence is illustrated dramatically by these two systems of "breaking" horses.
- 21) Monty Roberts's system invited the horse to join-up with him. Roberts refers to his process as "starting" the horse. The traditional system refers to it as "breaking" the horse.
- 22) In order to illustrate the difference we will first observe the traditional method of "breaking" the horse from:

**Roberts, "Growing Up with Horses," Chap. 2 in *The Man Who Listens to Horses*, 42, 44-48:**

My childhood was unique: few people can say they were born and raised on a rodeo competition grounds. The grounds came to exist when Eugene Sherwood died and willed to the city of Salinas 2,300 acres to be used solely for horse-related activities.

When the estate and the city called on my father to manage the land, he agreed, and shortly thereafter construction began on more than 800 box stalls and a competition arena with a 20,000-seat grandstand. At the time it was the largest equestrian facility in North America.

In addition to managing the facility, my father, Marvin, also operated his own riding school on the grounds. Marvin Earl Roberts also trained and boarded horses for private clients, and leased the facilities to various horse trainers, as stipulated by Eugene Sherwood in his will. (p. 42)

My father was an important figure, both in my personal life and in my working life with horses. Everything I achieved came to me because of the early and concentrated exposure to horses that he gave me. But if my professional life can be described as having a direction, it is one that runs absolutely counter to my father and his thinking.

Eventually my stance against him and his methods amounted to outright rebellion, for which I paid dearly. My father died in 1986, but calling him up even now, all these years later, is a bitterly hard thing to do. To understand *who* I am and *how* I am with horses, you must understand who my father was and how he was with horses. (p. 44)

My father's methods of dealing with horses were what I would describe as conventional—but that is to say, cruel. (pp. 44-45)



The standard way of breaking horses in those days remains popular even today. My father had a special corral built, with six solid posts fixed at equal distances around its perimeter. This way he could break half a dozen horses simultaneously. First he put halters on them. This might involve running horses through a squeeze chute to gain close enough access. Next, he attached strong ropes to their halters and tied each horse to a post, wrapping the rope around the post about six feet off the ground and tying off the end on the rails. Imagine, then, six animals tied thirty feet apart around the edge of the corral. The horses were already terrified and the process had only just begun.

Next, my father stood in the middle of the corral with a heavy tarpaulin or weighted sack attached to the end of a rope. He threw the sack over the horses' backs and around their legs, moving from one horse to the next. When the sack dropped on their hips and around their rear legs, the horses panicked. They rolled their eyes and kicked, reared, and pulled back against the ropes as though their lives depended on it. (p. 45)

Who could tell them that this was not some awful precursor to death? What primordial fears of attacks by predators were provoked? Fear is in the horse's nature, and they were driven wild with it. They plunged back and forth and sideways on the ends of the ropes. Their necks and heads swelled up and frequently they injured themselves. It was, and remains, a desperately cruel act. (p. 45-46)

This process is called "sacking out." It continued for perhaps four days, its purpose to break the horses' will-power and thwart their capacity for resistance. In the next stage, a leg—usually the near hind—was tied up. A rope would be caught under their rear pastern and pulled tight to a collar placed around their necks. With the horses now disabled, a second period of sacking out further reduced their ability to resist. They struggled valiantly, heaving their weight pitifully on three legs and groaning in pain at the pressure on their halters. Each leg in turn was tied up; sacking out now took less and less time to sap their spirit. Then, with the hind leg again tied off, a saddle was fixed on. The horses renewed their resistance, fighting the girth. More sacking out wore them down. Some fought for many hours; others gave up more quickly and descended into confusion, waiting for more pain.

By now, eight to ten days had passed. The horses had blood tracks on their pasterns where the friction of the ropes had worn through the skin. Bruising and more serious leg injuries were common. The horses' relationship with their human masters was now defined: they would work out of fear, not willingness.

To destroy the willingness in a horse is a crazy, unfortunate act. Inherent generosity is among the dominant characteristics of the horse, and if nurtured can grow into the most rewarding aspect of their working lives. Of the horses I have been close to in my life, I have marveled most at their willingness to try for me, over and over again. (p. 46)

At this stage in the sacking out process, the six horses were untied one by one and fitted with a hackamore—a rawhide noseband without a bit. For a further week, the horses were long-lined. Essentially, lines are attached through the stirrups to the horse to get him used to the bit. The aim is to introduce the horse to the notion of brakes and gas pedal, ideas that do not come naturally to him. The rider to come will need the horse to know about stop and go. (pp. 46-47)

I have a dramatic black-and-white photograph of my father long-lining a horse in the corral. He is bent low, hinged forward at the waist, his whole body tensed and focused on the poor horse at the end of the two lines. The horse kicks up great clouds of dust and reels off the corral fence. The whites in his eyes showing, the horse desperately tries to escape my father, and one eye looks back at him in fear and dread.

When my father came to ride these horses for the first time, their rear legs would be tied up again to prevent bucking. He mounted and dismounted, kicked them in the belly, tried any way he could to provoke some fight in them. If they moved, they were whipped.



If convinced they were “broken,” he would untie them and ride them in the round pen. Those not yet ready to ride spent part of the day with their legs tied up, groaning in pain and despair. The whole process took a minimum of three weeks. (p. 47)

Given those same six horses today, I would have them ready to ride without tethering and whips, and without inflicting a moment's discomfort. I would communicate almost entirely with my body language, using my voice in only a minor way, and the result would be a willing partner that would try hard throughout his working life. All this and all six horses in just three hours, not three weeks. (pp. 47-48)

- 23) What I have just read is what is known as the “conventional method” of “breaking” a horse. Roberts’s father, Marvin Roberts, not only broke horses using this system, he also used many of its methods in rearing his son, Monty.
- 24) Monty was submissive to his father’s methods of disciplining him but he rebelled against his use of them with horses. As noted this earned for him intense and severe levels of corporal punishment.
- 25) Nevertheless, from what he had learned from the mustangs, Monty knew by personal experience that not only was his system more efficient and effectual, it was also more humane, kind, and benevolent.
- 26) Monty knew he was right but he did not personally challenge his father’s methods of disciplining him but he continued to challenge his father’s methods of “breaking” horses.
- 27) Monty understood a biblical principle: personal integrity always trumps loyalty to people.
- 28) This is a principle that I did not fully understand in my early days of teaching doctrine. During the mid-seventies I was often asked to speak before civic clubs, college students, and school groups.

Quite often I would include among my comments principles of establishment viewpoint which would consist of the four divine institutions. On one particular occasion I had stressed the importance of children submitting to the authority of their parents. Afterward I was asked whether a child should submit to his parents’ orders if their demands were unethical, sinful, or criminal in nature?

I don’t remember how I responded but whatever I said did not satisfy my inquisitor. Perhaps had I known the biblical principle that Monty Roberts applied as a youth to his cruel father my answer would have had more impact.

Principle: Personal integrity trumps loyalty to people.

However, Monty knew that when he bucked his father he had to pay the price. He submitted to the beatings and suffered the indignation on behalf of the horses.