

# HORSES FOR COURSES

Kate and her therapist



**When Kate La Tour was asked to attend a course as part of her job, she did not expect to get much out of it personally**

As part as my marketing work for Dare to Live, the Founding Director insisted I attended to gain a better understanding of the integral role horses play in their courses. I had no clue how much I would gain personally, as it gave me clarity on my values and I found myself ignited by a new long-lasting zest for life.

As the owner of a 17-year-old warmblood schoolmaster eventer, pictured above, referred to as my 'therapist', I already had a huge respect and appreciation for horses and their

calming influence, and I had a vague sense that these beautiful sentient beings can teach us about ourselves, but with no tangible grasp as to how or why.

During the first morning of the programme, my head was racing with deadlines and development plans and I was very distracted. The moment we ventured outside to the paddocks to work with the herd of six horses on the farm and started the series of safe, unridden exercises, I started to feel dramatically different, more 'in-tune' with myself and others around me.

I experienced for myself how horses are highly sensitive to subtle energetic signals in our body language as they only interacted willingly with us when our actions were in tune with what we were feeling. The horse I was working with in the paddock only started to approach and connect with me when I was in a truly relaxed 'feeling' state and my intentions were clear and honest.

How can horses connect to humans like this, let alone help to heal soldiers with trauma? There is neuroscience behind it all. The key seems to lie in the limbic system in the brain of a horse, which is connected to his gut. The emotions generated by the limbic system provide the horse with the ability to sense the inner states and motives of other mammals, including us humans! In the field of equine assisted learning it is often explained how the horse will mirror back to the person whatever the person presents to the horse. As participants explore positive ways of interacting with the horses they attain real-time feedback which is easily translated to gain important insights for their human interactions.

My last exercise involved trotting round a pen with one of the horses with no physical aids, no voice and no handling of the horse. I just had to picture what I wanted to achieve in simple terms; just me and the horse, running and trotting around side-by-side in unison. It was a stunning experience in itself. A key learning for me is that we are feeling machines that think, not thinking machines that feel.



Dare to Live programme  
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