

Travelling towards TTouch

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My TTouch Story is a journey with one special horse. There's always that one animal that refuses to fit into the boxes in our mind, boxes created by our past training and perceptions. That one horse, who opens the doors to new experiences and insights. I never expected it to be this horse though; Mira was a gentle Haflinger mare, furry and slightly fat, who I had bought with my young family in mind and who worked in my small riding school teaching young children the basics of horsemanship. Her very name means peace.

It's become a standing joke that I need several attempts to recognise wonderful opportunities staring at me and Tellington TTouch® was no exception. I'd once seen a video of Linda, working with a young horse. Blinded by my early British Horse Society Training - (always teach with riding boots, breeches and hard hat - PLEASE!) - my main thought was – what is this woman doing with FLOWERS in her hair? Nevertheless I did successfully incorporate some ideas into my work.

Years later, thanks to the power of Internet I had rediscovered Centered Riding. By chance Anke Recktenwald was teaching a course nearby, and I saw among her many qualifications, she was a Centered Riding Instructor too. So off I went with my Haflinger; a calm horse always being an advantage when one wants to work on one's self. And it rained and rained – and did I mention it rained? In the mornings we rode and dripped and in the afternoons we did Feldenkrais and some TTouches. I didn't take in anything at all. All I could think about was that Anke's riding lessons were so good, that I would have preferred to ride, despite the deluge.

Luckily the universe doesn't give up that easily. I went on to organise a further course with Anke at the stables where I kept my horses. Mira had been lame on and off for

several months beforehand. Three different vets, including two chiropractors had been consulted, but she was still occasionally uneven behind. I rode her on the first day of the course and she was lame. Between riding lessons Anke showed us various TTouches. Of course I practised on Mira. At the end of the last day I rode her again. She was sound - and I was hooked.

I organised several courses with Anke and read and read. Each time Anke came I bombarded her with requests - I want to ride with a balance rein, how do you put on this bandage? – show me the Octopus TTouch. Between courses fate struck; Mira had an accident and lost the sight in one eye, which eventually had to be removed. While she was in the clinic I was able to visit her regularly and ttouch her, which benefitted me as much as her.

By now I had started my training to be a practitioner and what better way is there to perfect leading positions then practising with a half blind horse. Riding Mira after her accident had never been a problem but any groundwork was a different story. I could no longer rely on body language but had to be very clear with my signals and my intention. Having followed Linda's logical training steps, I can now work her from both sides without onlookers noticing her handicap.

At the moment Mira and I are travelling down a new road. After nine years we have recently had to move to a different yard. The accident has left Mira with a fear of strange horses on her blind side and unfortunately during the first few days at her new stables she was chased through a fence. Physically she was fine, but emotionally it took its toll and her anxiety is manifesting itself in the form of a "scary corner" in the arena. Nothing has ever actually happened there, it's a great example of how an overall increase in tension affects behaviour. My mild-mannered children's pony turned into a bucking bronco. Thanks to all my teachers, including Anke, Bibi,

Lily, Martina and of course Linda, I have many tools now to help reduce her tension. Inspired by Sarah Fisher's Advanced Training last year, I am busy paying positive experiences into her bank account. We haven't arrived at a good place yet and although I still have lots to learn, I am confident we will reach it soon.