

“YOGIC WISDOM FOR HORSE AND HUMAN”

**Article written by Kathy Edds as seen in the April, 2010 issue of the
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In our lives we use repetitive movement daily, holding the phone to a particular ear, looking over the same shoulder to back the car up, walking a certain way because of an injury; this is the same for horses. Since we (both horses and humans) are usually multi-tasking, there is a part of our body that takes on a lot of this work so we don't have to think about it. That way we can focus on the important part of the tasks, our phone conversation, if there are cars coming and for the horse, how close is the calf, who is entering the arena, etc. Once we are through with

these particular tasks or events, we go on to other things, but our body has that “kicked-in-to-help-us-out” action and our muscles forget what the “normal” position should be (sensory motor amnesia). Through Hanna Somatic Movement techniques, expertly taught by Gloria Hester, we wake up our muscles and show them how to get back to normal.

By example, Max, a Rio Rico gelding, does not know his aching front leg is a result of sensory motor amnesia. What Max does know is that when Gloria comes to his corral and practices Equine Hanna Somatics with him, he will have less pain, more motion and a return to muscle awareness that had been missing. Max lives at Rancho la Reforma in Rio Rico with his owners Alonzo and Irene Ortiz. Gloria Hester is a teacher and practitioner of Hanna Somatics. She uses the somatic techniques, her knowledge of Therapeutic Yoga and other movements to guide and re-educate humans and horses to become more conscious of their body and how to feel better.

By contraction, extension, and thorough and slow methodical movement Gloria makes us aware of muscle groups we have not paid attention to in a long time, maybe never! This new awareness feels great and allows our relearning to release muscle groups tensed from habitual overuse. New awareness of muscles can erase the amnesia. The movement is taught so we can be in our own body and physically sense how to return to proper muscle alignment and awareness. The human class creates a better understanding of how it works for the horses.

In the arena, Gloria explains how you can guide the horse to release unconscious holding patterns that have developed in his body due to riding habits, fight or flight responses, repetitive patterns of movement and/or any injuries. The slow and loving actions begin to not only re-educate a horse’s motor nervous system, but develop a connection between you and the horse. This mindful activity engages your own sensory motor movements as well. The deeper the horse

relaxes, the more the release of tension for both the horse and you. When you see any horse begin to sigh, lick and chew and snort, you know the work is having a good effect. Not only does the horse's eyes become bright and relaxed, you begin to feel a calmness that is reciprocal to the horse.

Gloria is extremely intuitive when it comes to her communication with the animals. She knows that the horses have as much to teach her as she them. They respond to the quality of her actions and breath in the same respectful way that she responds to them. Watching the interaction between Gloria and Max is serenity in itself. When Gloria comes to Rancho la Reforma and the horses know she is there, they often all stand in their corral and look toward the house patiently waiting for Gloria to come out and rejuvenate them.

Irene Ortiz says she has noticed a great trust develop between herself and her horses because of the somatics. She has learned that her efforts to heal them have made them less edgy when she approaches. Irene says the horses know she is not always there to just saddle them up and ride somewhere, but that she can and will make them feel better. Irene also said she has more confidence around the horses and is more comfortable than she ever was with grooming and care for them.

Hanna Somatics was developed by the late Thomas Hanna and further developed for horses by Gloria Hester's mentor and teacher Eleanor Ciswell Hanna, Ed.D. Gloria has not only had a life-long passion and interaction with horses, she has certifications in yoga and an extensive background in Therapeutic Yoga. She has broad knowledge of human and equine anatomy and is an ERYT and Hanna Somatic Educator. When she comes to Rancho la Reforma, she offers workshops in Human and Equine Somatics, holds restorative yoga classes, and is available for private sessions with you or you and your horse.

Gloria Hester will return to Rancho la Reforma April 24 and will be there through May 3, 2010. She will also be there June 2 through 11, 2010. She usually does one and two day workshops with the horses/humans, one or two separate evenings of restorative yoga, and can schedule private sessions. If you would like to find out for yourself about somatic work or restorative yoga, please consider a day with Gloria, it is a gift you will not regret. If you are interested in bringing your own horse to a workshop, great! But, you can always work with the Rancho la Reforma horses (they are extremely receptive and love it).

For more information and the specific dates and times for the workshops, human somatic classes or restorative yoga, please contact Irene Ortiz at 520-377-0774 or visit her website at www.rancholareforma.com For more on Hanna Somatics and Gloria Hester you can go to www.gloriahesteryoga.com

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