



Horses That Heal

BY PAMELA ALLEN LEBLANC

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I AM PROBABLY ONE OF THE LEAST likely Reiki Masters. My science degree in agriculture was followed by an MBA and a successful career in business. This seems to be at odds with the life I lead now, but I wouldn't have it any other way! And neither would the animals at Hidden Brook Farm.

Things were always black and white for me and based on straightforward, cut and dried science or business principles. So if you had told me four years ago when I started this journey that I would teach animal communication, sell essential oils and have horses who give Reiki treatments to their students on our little farm in Atlantic Canada, I'd have laughed out loud. My how things change!

After a very successful career with the government and then in business, the company I helped to become the fastest growing company in Atlantic Canada lost a major contract and had to shut down. Unemployed for the first time in my life, I became a business consultant and also grew my natural horsemanship clientele. For some reason, which doctors and allergy specialists could not understand, although my work made me very happy, my health began to suffer, and I was miserable. One of my students offered Reiki in exchange for her lesson. This helped immensely and I was hooked. Then that same student introduced me to Ellen Hawkins, a talented animal communicator and my first Reiki Master, and I studied my first two levels of Reiki with her. Ellen "spoke" with my horses for me to help me gain insights into their backgrounds and any issues they were having, and with amazement, I watched the horses' body language back up what they were telling her. Occasionally I would be able to "read" the answer in my horses' body language before Ellen could tell me what was said. So in addition to learning Reiki, I determined that in order to be the best horsewoman I could be, I needed to learn to communicate with animals too. Ellen assured me that anyone could do it.

Animal Communication

My first two levels of Reiki opened my intuition, as Reiki often does. But despite this and despite the many courses and books I read about animal communication and the science-based research conducted by scientists like Dr. Jane Goodall, I could hear nothing from the animals until two and a half years ago when I attended a wonderful clinic given by Christy Clarke in St. John, New Brunswick based on Linda Kohanov's book *The Tao of Equus: A Women's Journey of Healing and Transformation through the Way of Horses*.¹

In Linda's groundbreaking book, she indicates that cultures throughout the world have legends in which horses are considered mediums between the spirit and material worlds.² Arab tales in particular talk about the horses' sixth sense.³ In fact, Linda surmises that there is evidence of horses leading people to some form of lost knowledge. This made sense to me as religions throughout the world mention horses in their spiritual texts and most humans find horses beautiful.

At the clinic we learned that horses mirror the emotions of the people they work with and enjoy healing humans emotionally and that horses attempt to communicate with us on a regular basis. Christy explained that this understanding led Linda Kohanov to develop a very effective and increasingly popular practice she calls "equine facilitated psychotherapy" in order to teach other horse handlers how to make use of the healing abilities that horses possess.

This all made sense to me, after watching my horses "work" on their humans in riding lessons. Week after week, stressed, exhausted professionals, business executives and students come down the driveway for a lesson and leave refreshed, relaxed and re-energized.

I was very nervous at the clinic though, when the first exercise was explained. We were to become silent and listen for answers from the horses to questions we posed. I anxiously explained to one of the facilitators that despite my attempts to "hear" the horses for the past few years, that beyond reading their body language, I could not hear them at all. She said, "No one can hear her own horses, Pam. Owners are too emotionally involved with them. Try listening to ours." It was like someone flipped a switch in my brain. Floored, I went outside and immediately began "hearing" the horses, allowing me to proceed through the deeply healing exercises as the weekend unfolded, the culmination of which was an emotional healing experience with the horse. Over time this ability became refined and developed further to the almost effortless practice it is today.

¹ Linda Kohanov, *The Tao of Equus: A Women's Journey of Healing and Transformation through the Way of Horses* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2001).

² Kahanov, *The Tao of Equus*, 44.

³ *Ibid.*, 45.

Reiki

At one point in our relationship, after I attended this clinic, Ellen offered to give Reiki attunements to my horses. While I loved that my horses were healing people, I also did not want them to suffer for it so it made sense that Reiki would be useful to them in their work. It never occurred to me to question whether an animal “should” have a Reiki attunement. I had learned through Linda’s work to understand that not only are horses sentient beings, but that they have wisdom and abilities that far surpass ours and that their spiritual connection is respected in many cultures throughout the world. My own experiences confirmed this so it made sense that the horses would enjoy Reiki. Ellen and I checked, and while a few horses declined politely, most of the herd agreed to give Reiki a try.

Initially, Ellen attuned four of our ten horses to Reiki Level I. The next time she came to attune horses, even those who had initially declined decided they wanted a Reiki attunement too—so my entire herd became “Reiki horses,” and my students and I observed and remarked over the tremendous difference it seemed to make in the herd. My herd had been happy—but they became happier and more peaceful. A few horses who were shy or reserved stepped forward and their personalities changed almost overnight. Some horses that were a bit grumpy with certain students seemed to relax and their grumpiness gradually receded. And the horses’ students—well, they were going away with even more peace and relaxation than before. We all noticed the feeling that came over us as we worked with the horses as they wrapped us in their auras and Reiki energy. It was incredible. And it was amusing how toward the end of each lesson, both human and horse would yawn and yawn, releasing their stress. Occasion-

ally, there were even bigger healings, which was beautiful to see. It was quite lovely working with these Reiki horses.

You might be wondering how the horses work with their human clients. The horses do not seem to have to “ask permission”; they simply envelope their students and anyone else in their general vicinity (parents, siblings, instructors) in Reiki energy as the students work to groom the horses and prepare them for their lesson. Often, the horses keep us all enveloped in the energy through the entire lesson. We all notice a lifting at some point as our energies become better aligned and any issues we have been working through leave us. Occasionally, if we have a particularly stubborn spot, the horses put their nose on the spot and breathe into it. Then we feel that same lifting. Some horses start yawning and releasing as soon as their student arrives. Others work through an entire lesson before we notice them begin to release. I laughingly tell my students that they are getting two for the price of one!—a Reiki treatment for the cost of a riding lesson! And they agree! Once, an elderly student who had been recently widowed experienced a release so powerful that she felt energy wash through her body, and she had to get off her horse, her legs shaking. She knew she had received a big healing from the horse and realized that although she thought she had worked through her grief, she had not. Her horse stood beside her and continued to give her energy, filling her body with Reiki energy, until she felt better and was ready to go home. She still rides with us, and while she has never received as big of a healing again, she is aware that the horses help her each and every week. She notices her stamina and physical health as well as her emotional, mental and spiritual health suffers when she is unable to get out for her weekly lessons.



More Reiki for me...

Over the next few years of working with my healing herd, I came to the point where I was ready to move on to “Advanced Reiki Practitioner,” but it took my horse teachers (and my human ones!) to alert me to this. Pam Nadeau, my Level III Reiki Master, agreed to attune one of my more troubled horses to Level II Reiki. This horse had shown me past emotional trauma so I felt the Mental Emotional Symbol from Reiki Level II would be helpful to her.

We ride bitless (always), bareback (most of the time) and keep our horses barefoot for their comfort at Hidden Brook Farm OR Here Storm and I are enjoying a chat and some time together on the farm.



BG Buddy, my first Reiki Master and the horse who started it all releases energy with a yawn.

England, so I did—though it was with trepidation that I went to the class. Who was I to study with such a well-known and respected Reiki Master? What would he think of my animal work? I knew after watching the positive changes in my herd that I wanted to work with animals even though I was not certain I wanted to teach people. I also knew that I did not want those animals to have to wait for my “Reiki hands” to come to the pasture or into their lives for them to experience Reiki. While this is a beautiful experience, I saw firsthand how much more effective it is for an animal to have an attunement and work with the Reiki energy itself. I would still always take my Reiki hands out—who doesn’t like a treatment from someone else? But I wanted animals to have the ability to use Reiki on their own. What would William think of this? I learned Reiki from William’s books, watched his DVDs and listened to his meditations—Reiki had changed my life—so to say I had tremendous respect for him is probably an understatement. What would I do if he said “No, I don’t think you should attune animals”? I wasn’t sure!

Animals and Reiki attunements

Fortunately though, he didn’t. After an incredible and powerful class, which exceeded my expectations, I drew up my courage and asked. “William, I loved the class but I have a question for you. I’d really like to practice Reiki with horses and other animals—not just giving them Reiki, but giving them attunements. I know that some Reiki practitioners are not on board with this—but my horses all have Reiki Level I except one who has Level II, and it’s been REALLY positive for them.” “Yes,” he said. (Phew, I

Once that horse had Level II however, the others indicated that they wanted more Reiki levels as well. I asked both of my Reiki Masters to attune my other horses for me, but both said, as if they had rehearsed together, “I see that this is for you to do...” and so on to Reiki Level III.

In my Reiki Level III class, Pam indicated that I was going to England to study with William Rand. I thought she was crazy. I was broke. We had just built a riding arena for my lessons and were struggling to make payments. The economy was such that my business clients could not afford a consultant. But I was realizing that business consulting did not inspire me as my horse and Reiki work did so I was ready to make a change. Days after my class, I received an unexpected check in the mail, which was almost the same as the cost of the Reiki Master class in Glastonbury (and Stonehenge), England. My husband agreed that I should use the check to study with William in

MurMac Farm’s Scott’s Storm Chaser, now a Reiki Master and Karuna Reiki® Master joined our herd just a year and a half ago and really seems to enjoy our work.



thought.) “Well, I’m wondering if you’re okay with this—and if so, how high of a level can you take an animal to? Level II? Level III?” William replied, “I don’t know why you wouldn’t take them to the Master Level, Pam. Animals understand energy much better than we do.” I don’t know if he noticed my jaw drop, but I stammered “Really? Reiki Masters?” “Well, yes, you can hear the animals, can’t you?” “Yes, I can.” “Then ask them if they want a Reiki attunement. And if they do, ask them which level they want and respect their decision. They do not have to progress through the levels the way humans do—they just seem to know what to do with the energy.”

I was in awe and delighted as William and I discussed how to give a Reiki attunement to an animal. There is a point in the attunement where humans put their hands over their heads. That can’t happen with four-leggeds. So what to do? Also, when humans put their palms out, this won’t work for most animals either. So we decided that the attunement should look basically the same—just without hands over the head. What a relief—I would be allowed to do this work that I believed so strongly in—and with my teacher’s blessing!

Back home to attune animals

I came back to Canada with my head spinning at the possibilities. I had been sending distant energy to a number of sick horses and pets—these could now receive an attunement if they and their owner wished. And my own horses could receive additional attunements if they wished. Three days after my return, BG Buddy (or Big Buddy), who is on the lawn in front of me as I write this article to ensure that I get it right, received my first Reiki Master attunement. I went outside that morning to do chores, and he was waiting for me in the barn. My horses have the run of 80 acres and seldom spend time in the barn. But he was there with his girlfriend, Dawn. It was clear that he was waiting for me so I asked what I could do for him. He wanted his Reiki attunement. I gulped and explained that I had not practiced since my return, could not remember my notes, did not plan to do this at this time. “No,” he said, “you said when you returned from England that if you could, you would give us Reiki attunements. I’ve waited quite a while and I’m ready today.” I asked what level of Reiki he wanted and he replied, “It should

be obvious that I would be a Reiki Master.” I laughed out loud. Bud is the male leader of my herd, my main lesson horse and the best horse I’ve ever worked with. He had been with me for my entire Reiki journey and holds a special place in my heart. Of course he was ready for a Reiki Master attunement! I had to restart three times as my memory supplied new pieces of information forgotten. But eventually, Bud became a Reiki Master. As soon as I finished, he yawned nine times, stretched, shook, said thank you and exited the barn. I asked Dawn if she wanted an attunement. She said, “Yes, Level II but not today”—and walked out behind Big Buddy.

With a sense of wonder and the grace of Reiki filling my body, I shook my head in amazement and returned to the house.

Over time, I have established an attunement process that works well for animals. I set the energy and use all of the same symbols I use when I attune humans. I place the symbols into the crown and motion them into the base of the skull. I place symbols on the tops of the hooves or paws and use my own hands in prayer position in the place of theirs. And I finish the attunement exactly as I would for a human, sealing it with hands at the base of the skull then placing the hands on the shoulders or withers in thanks, and moving in front of the animal with final thanks and blessing.

Since my initial animal attunement two years ago, most of my herd has either gradually or quickly worked their way to the Reiki Master Level, as has been right for each of them in his or her journey. Some horses went step-by-step. Some leaped right in. A few still don’t think they are ready for a Master attunement—and this is fine too; there is no pressure. My dogs all thought Level II was good for them, though two of our three dogs who normally stay outside during the day to guard the chickens once broke into



My daughter’s horse, Hidden Brook Starlight is a great lesson horse and is amazing with our autistic students.



Cats enjoy Reiki attunements too. Kringle has decided to stay at level 1 and says that is all he needs - at least for the time being.

What does it do?

Many of the animals communicate to me that it does not “fix” all their health or emotional issues, but as it does with humans, Reiki allows them to release stress and to work on their issues over time. We notice that animals often become happier immediately and then they gradually work away at their other concerns. We worked with a dog once who was becoming aggressive toward men and who seemed to be regressing in his development. After his Reiki Level I attunement, this turned around though he still does not like men as much as women. Horses often become

more relaxed. Some have worked on health issues. Most begin immediately working on their people! And it is a beautiful thing.

Occasionally the animals show us dramatic displays. One horse was not sure he wanted a Reiki attunement but his owners wanted us to try. I took him into the round pen and my herd pretty much ignored us as we did some training work. Afterward when I asked if he wanted a Reiki attunement, he was uncertain and thought perhaps he didn't. He agreed to go ahead, knowing his owners wanted it, but reluctantly. As I was beginning, my herd suddenly lifted their heads and galloped over to our ring. They came to the fence and visited with him one by one. When they were done, they galloped back to the field and to their grazing; he turned around, came to the center of the ring with me and said yes, that he was ready for a Level I attunement—this time with his full intention.

Another time a really troubled horse was reluctant to receive an attunement during a clinic, although his owner really felt he needed one. He did agree to a Level I attunement, but I sensed he had reservations. Earlier that morning, I had forgotten to close a portion of the fence. My horses completely ignored this until the attunement for the six clinic horses was about to take place. Then they marched calmly into the arena one by one and visited with this horse, then calmly came over to me to be led back to the pasture. The attunement had not yet started, so the horses' owners and clinic participants were still in the arena to witness this. They were dumbfounded, registering that something profound had taken place. The odd thing was that the grass in the pasture was gone at that time of the year. And the grass on the lawn was still green. Normally horses getting out of the pasture would go for the green grass—not march into a grassless arena to visit with one of the six visiting horses one at a time—and then

the house just as I was about to conduct an attunement during a Level III Reiki class. One dog sat on one side of the three ladies while the other sat on the other side. I looked at the ladies and said, “It looks like they would like a Level III attunement too” and all three agreed as the dogs sat motionless, wondering if we would let them stay. I asked if the ladies minded if we included them and they did not—so those two dogs went to Level III. The third dog came in with them but ran into the other room making clear his intention not to receive the attunement. My cats are all attuned to Level I except Roy. All of our cats and dogs are rescue animals and Roy was particularly troubled. He decided on Level II, came completely out of his shell and after some time at that level, Roy, who participates in almost every Reiki class or session, decided that the Master Level was right for him.

Other Reiki animals

Other folks have asked me to attune their animals, and I have been happy to do so if the animal also wants an attunement. To be certain I get it right, I normally use dowsing rods or a pendulum to help communicate with the animal and to be certain of the level attunement the animal wants. You simply ask the animal if he or she will communicate with you through the dowsing tool—and the animal is generally happy to do so.

Occasionally if an animal has not experienced Reiki, there might be some reluctance at first. In that case, we ask the animal if he or she wants a treatment. Most do. And most then decide on an attunement. Like their human counterparts, they often start at Level I or II. Animals who have more experience with Reiki—either from being here on the farm with my herd or from having Reiki owners—often jump in and decide on the Master Level.



Tiba (now a Reiki Master) and Cody (level 3 Reiki) once broke into the house during a level 3 attunement and joined in. They both enjoy the work we do here on the farm.

calmly walk out and into the pasture again. The horse in question then said he felt more ready for the attunement and this troubled, stressed-out horse was in a state of zen afterward when I invited the clinic participants back to the arena to commune with the horses and see if they noticed any difference. I've had the privilege of working with maybe a hundred animals at this point, and it is always amazing and lovely.

Do animals still enjoy a Reiki treatment after they have an attunement? Yes, they do—just as we do. Just because we have Reiki does not mean we no longer enjoy or benefit from treatments from others. Should all animals receive Reiki attunements?—no, just those who wish to and whose owners want them to. I think this is really important. But if you want to stretch your limits a bit, Reiki attunements for animals can be a beautiful thing. Animals do so much for us on a daily basis—this is something we can give back to them. 🌿

—Pamela can be contacted by email at pam@hiddenbrook.ca and through her website at www.hiddenbrook.ca