



Your Troubleshooter's Handbook to Overcoming Horse Problems

Table of Contents

How Do I Keep My Lazy Horse Cantering Without Using Leg All The Time?	Page 2
Straightness, Yielding and Half Halts	Page 4
New Riding Exercises, Less Circles	Page 6
How to Ride a Perfect, Straight, Centre Line	Page 8
How to Slow Down The Fast Horse In Trot	Page 9
How To Get The Correct Canter Lead From Sitting Trot	Page 11
Is Your Horse Stiff On One Side?	Page 12
My Horse Bends Left and Quarters Go Right - How Do I Fix This?	Page 14
How Do I Bend My Horse?	Page 16
How Do I Keep My Horse Straight?	Page 19
What To Do When Your Horse Is Not Listening	Page 20
How To Train Your Horse When Things Don't Go To Plan	Page 21
How To Stop A Strong Horse Without Pulling The Reins	Page 22
How To Have Fun With Your Training	Page 23
How Do I Stay Straight In Canter?	Page 24

HOW DO I KEEP MY LAZY HORSE CANTERING WITHOUT USING LEG ALL THE TIME?

I have had a number of people ask me how to keep a lazy horse moving - which is a perfect question, since most of my horses are lazy and would prefer to stop rather than going forward!!

So what should you do when the horse is doing a very lazy canter, and falling out of the canter every now and then? What should you do with your legs?

In the canter your horse has to go alone. You want to ask with your legs and get a more active, forward canter. You need to expect and demand that the horse stays in this active forward canter, without kicking the horse. You can use your leg and a bit of spur to get this canter but now the horse has to go alone, they have to canter without kicking every stride.

If the horse sucks back, your legs come on to push the horse back forward. You don't wait for the horse to drop into trot or suck back too much. The minute you feel the canter drop off a degree you put the legs on to say "hey remember you've got to go forward" but then take the legs off, train your horse to go alone.

The theory is once you have put the horse in a movement - whether it's half pass or canter, the horse has to do the movement until it dies or until you tell it to do something else!!

The biggest thing is get your horse honestly off the leg, and don't use the leg. Many riders go "I have to keep kicking every stride, because if I don't kick every stride the horse won't canter. The horse will drop into trot." Let the horse drop into trot, dare the horse to drop into trot, I dare you, because if you do Armageddon will come.

I will come at you with the leg, I will kick, I might even use my whip. I will come at you with everything I've got like a hurricane that is me when I don't get the things that I want and get you back into canter and then I will leave you alone again. I will leave you completely alone and I will ride happily and softly as long as you keep doing what I want!!

You've got to have these clean rules for you and your horse. You do what I want. When you don't do what I want I come at you with my legs and my seat and my whip if I need to, but when you do what I want life is easy.

I can sit there and do nothing and the horse isn't bothered, the horse isn't kicked. People sometimes see me use my whip and go "You're so cruel. That's so not fair" and I go "Really? It's cruel to use my whip once, as opposed to you that is kicking your horse in the guts every stride." I know what I would prefer if I was a horse. I would prefer my rider to keep her legs away. I would prefer my rider to tickle me with the whip and insist that I go alone rather than badgered every stride. It's kind of the same as if you had someone going "Are you happy? Are you happy? Are you happy? Are you happy? Are you happy? Are you happy?" You're just going to ignore that person and think that person is an idiot and not want to answer their question.

Whereas if once in an hour that person says “Hey, are you happy?” you feel compelled to answer and compelled to get on with that person because they haven't bothered you.

Stop bothering your horse, leave your horse alone to do its job and teach them the rules. If they don't do their job and they don't listen to you and what you want, that there is a consequence for that!!

STRAIGHTNESS, YIELDING AND HALF HALTS

I have developed my own Rider Success Scale to complement and show you as the rider what to do with the steps of the German Training Scale.

The first three steps of the rider success scale are seat: you've got to have an independent seat; mindset: you've got to have the correct mindset, with no emotions and patience and there's 10 criteria that you need to be able to train your horse correctly with the right mindset. And thirdly contact: you've got to be able to keep your hands still, you've got to be able to keep an even steady contact without that changing.

Step 4 of the Rider Success Scale is to be able to ride really good transitions.

So this is partnered with the German Training Scale step of impulsion. To create impulsion in a horse it's very cool to be able to ride a lot of transitions.

Now a lot of riders don't ride transitions correctly, for instance if they're walking and they're going to trot they think it's ok to kick, and kick, and eventually get a trot. That's not how you do a transition. To do a transition you set it up, you tell the horse something's about to happen and then you use your seat and off you go into trot.

Same with the canter, the canter simply must come off the seat, 3, 2, 1 and pop, and that's from your seat nothing to do with your legs. And then same for the trot, I'm going to half halt, tell the horse something's about to happen, use my seat, catch it, half halt, half halt and do my transition into trot, and again into walk.

We also do transitions within the gait, so big trot and collected trot and big trot and collected trot. And you need to be able to move within those transitions very easily, so you're ability to do that as a rider and to raise your standards, have a high standard of transitions is really important.

Step 5 of the Rider Success Scale is yielding, which goes hand in hand with the German Training Scale of being able to ride a horse straight. A lot of horses have a tendency to like going left or like going right.

Now you as a rider will also have a preference depending on whether you're left or right handed or just depending on how you're made. Normally what happens is the rider influences the horse and then the rider gets a stiff side and a soft side.

It's really important that you ride your horses on both sides that their supple on both side and that you can ride a horse straight, and your ability to ride a horse straight funnily enough is based on your ability to be able to move the horse.

If you can ride good leg yields, if you can ride a good shoulder in or a shoulder fore, just your ability to put your horse... so I'm putting my horse's shoulder in and now I'm straightening up his shoulders and I'm going to put his hind legs in. Your ability to do that

means you're going to be able to straighten any part of the horse at any given time. Which is really really important obviously when you're riding dressage.

You need as a rider need to be able to ride straight to be able to put the outside shoulder, inside shoulder, outside hind, inside hind, wherever I'm going, whatever leg. Any part of the horse's body is mine. I can put it where ever I need to, for as long as I need to, for whenever I need to obviously and that what make a good Grand Prix horse.

Now you as a rider need to develop those skills. You can get on a Grand Prix horse and go ok well he's been trained I can do that, but he won't know how to get that, so you as a rider need to know how to do all those movements.

Step 6 of the Rider Success Scale is that the rider needs to be able to do effectively is half halt. Now if you're like most riders in the world and like me, what the hell is a half halt?

When I was learning my coach was like "HALF HALT HALF HALT" I didn't quite know what she meant. That's why I've dedicated a whole month to half halts in my Dressage Mastery program, because I realised I was coaching Prix St George riders who didn't know what a half halt was.

It's really, really important that you as a rider know how to deliver half halts, when to use half halts, how to use half halts, how long to use half halts for, what time to use half halts, and all those things so you can create collection ultimately (the last step in the German Training Scale), but use half halts for everything, use halts for transitions, use half halts for rhythm, use half halts for everything, you're constantly using them.

You simply must be able to know how when and what to use your half halts, so you can start to develop collection and ultimately a better look in your dressage horse.

NEW RIDING EXERCISES, LESS CIRCLES

How can you keep your work more interesting, so rather than just doing circles all the time, how can you keep the workout interesting?

If you're not sure about your training objective, if you're not sure about your training goal, you're not sure what you should be working on... you will tend to go in circles.

You should always have an objective as to why you're doing a circle. When I first start riding one of my horses, I do walk - I walk around the arena, I do a bit of shoulder in, I do a bit of leg yielding, and then I start the trot.

So even on a basic horse I understand my work can be a bit more exciting because there's a lot more fun things to practice, but even if you're on a basic horse I would say that I don't do many circles.

If I was riding a 3 year old, I would do 1 circle in trot, and I'm asking the horse to step into the contact to take my outside rein then to the inside, I'm working on what am I thinking, what's my seat doing, how am I influencing the horse?

It's just how do I get my horse more through. So rather than thinking what kind of exercises can I do, you've got to think about the goals for the session. The goal for the session is to work your horse and you through the German Training Scale and the Rider Success Scale.

Looking at the German Training Scale - the first step is rhythm. You want the horse more in front of the rhythm and a bit more forward, so I'm going to work on that.

Whether I go across the diagonal or up the long side or do a circle or do a serpentine is irrelevant because I'm working on rhythm.

Once you are happy with the rhythm, you can then move onto the next step which is losgelassenheit. If I was on a young horse I might need to trot circle, go straight. Circle go straight, circle go straight, to get the horse accepting me and listening to me.

And while I'm working on losgelassenheit I'll be working on contact. Getting the horse into the outside rein, getting him moving his head down. And I can again work on contact whatever school figure I'm doing, if I'm doing a circle or if I'm doing a straight line, or if I'm doing a figure of 8.

I find the contact harder to change, like a serpentine is an exercise to test how well your horse accepts the new outside rein, how quickly and how well your horse bends to the new way you're going. Does the horse lose rhythm? Does the horse lose contact? Does the horse throw its head in the air? All these kinds of things, that's why you do a serpentine.

But if you're working on contact, I prefer working on contact on a circle because that's the easier way. Then working on it on a straight line, and then working on it back in a serpentine.

You've got to think about what you're working on and then when I've got the first 3 steps, rhythm, losgelassenheit and contact and I'm happy and I can do that around the arena, then that's my warm up kind of finish, that's what I'm focussing on.

Then I'll bring the horses head up, work on a different contact and then I start transitions. So you simply can't be bored in a training session - there are myriad of transitions you can practise, even on a really young horse. Trot canter, canter trot, walk trot, trot walk, halt walk, walk halt and all these different things, all the transitions within the gait.

Big forward trot, bit back trot, forward canter, back canter, it doesn't have to be collected canter, extended canter, on a young horse it's just go and come back, go and come back.

There are so many things you can do, and then when that's all sorted on a 3 year old I do baby, baby shoulder in. Can I move the shoulder a millimetre off the track, can I move the hind legs a millimetre off the track, maybe I'll go a walk with a bit of a pirouette.

So you can see there are plenty of things you can do, without getting bored or the horse getting bored with just going around in circles!!

HOW TO RIDE A PERFECT, STRAIGHT CENTRE LINE

How do I make my centre lines are dead straight and how do I ride a centre line?

In most dressage tests, you tend to cut the corner as you come around, thinking oh god oh god CENTRE LINE and they use their hands and they start looking now and they start turning down the centre line, and then they're kinda drifting either way. So probably not the best way to ride a centre line.

I always say the best way to do anything is preparation, preparation, preparation. So the first thing is use your corner, this gives you more strides and more time to get prepared.

By now I am staring down my judges as you come into the corner, I know exactly where I'm going to make this turn. Then all I'm thinking is 2 hands, 2 legs, straight as an arrow. 2 hands, 2 legs, straight as an arrow. It's really important that you look.

So many riders are like staring down at the horse here and thinking centre line but staring down. You can't do a straight line and you can't do a good turn when you're looking down. The biggest thing also when you're doing a centre line is to make sure that you don't wait until you get to the centre to turn. Your horse can't turn in 1 meter, so you need to look before the centre line see I'm turning now, I'm off the track now, inside leg outside rein. Nail that centre line and then just hunt it forward.

The biggest thing is also make sure you're going forward, the slower the horse is the harder it is, because the slower your horse is the more crooked it is, you've got to ride that horse forward.

All I'm thinking when I'm coming down the centre line for my Grand Prix is 2 hands, 2 legs, straight as an arrow. Now I've got to collect, collect prepare, prepare, half halt, keep it straight, keep my legs on... and halt. Now it's really important in the moving off that I keep my legs, sometimes the horse might want to fall one way left or right so you've got to make sure that you keep that horse straight, feel if things are going to dip left or dip right and fix that up before it happens, and then you wait right until the end and you do your turn.

To get a square halt you've got to make sure that you prepare the horse, that you have him sitting on his bum, so that when you have that halt to do you're ok.

HOW TO SLOW DOWN THE FAST HORSE IN TROT

What do you do when you are trotting and the horse is running away from you?

If your horse is trotting, whatever trot you feel, whatever trot the horse gives you, you have to absolutely say "I am God and the horse is my world." Now, please don't think I'm egotistical like that - I don't think I'm God at all, but when I ride horses I don't accept what the horse wants to give me.

I go how I want to go, not how the horse goes.

If you get on a horse and the horse is running off, you slow her down. If the horse is running, walk. And then trot. And then if the horse runs, you walk. And then you trot, and if the horse runs, you walk. You keep doing that until the horse goes well there's no point running off because she's just going to tell me to walk.

I always do the opposite of my horses - if the horse wants to go fast I make it go slow. If the horse wants to go slow, I make it go fast. So if you have a horse that's running, the trot-walk transitions can be a really good idea.

You might have a horse that's just getting more and more tense when you're telling it to walk and that's not working either. If it's not working, you still need to get the horse to listen to your half halt.

Your half halt is a squeeze with the outside hand saying "hey, I want this pace" so here's a half-halt and straight away she becomes slower. If the horse ignores that then you've got a problem. Halt. Even if you halt ugly with your hands. I don't care how ugly it looks to start with. The horse absolutely has to listen to what you say.

The biggest thing is when you're riding any horse, if your horse is running off with you that you create the world underneath you and you create the horse that you want to ride. The horse must listen to your half halts. Same as the horse must listen to your leg. The other biggest thing I see when horses are running off with their riders is that their riders are going up down, up down, up down, up down, up down, and riding with the horse.

Slow.

Your.

Rise.

Down.

You need to influence the horse with your seat - slow your rise and so the horse has to slow. Now if you speed up your rise the horse has to quicken.

Slowing down your rise means just at the top you tighten my abs you are going to come down softer and slower than what the horse wants you to!

You can really use your body to influence the horse. Do that - don't just go along with what the horse is doing. If the horse is going ten hundred miles an hour don't rise ten hundred miles an hour. Slow you rise, half halt, if the horse isn't listening to your half halts, do full halt transitions or full walk transitions and start getting the horse listening to you.

HOW TO GET THE CORRECT CANTER LEAD FROM SITTING TROT

How do you make sure you get the right canter lead every time, and get the right leg, because I know sometimes when I was learning very early on I would just ask for canter, I wouldn't know how to make sure the horse struck off in the right canter lead, and would often get it wrong, and then you don't score that well in a competition!

The first thing you need to remember is, that in sitting trot you can feel the horse's back more than you can in rising trot. You absolutely must ask for canter from sitting trot, even if it's 2 steps (even if you are doing rising trot the rest of the time).

Even on young horses I don't really do any sitting trot, but I will always sit for 2 beats before I ask for canter to make sure that I feel the right moment to ask for the canter, the right time to ask for the canter.

To ask for canter on the right leg you need to be aware that the very first step of canter is your outside hind, so the foot falls of canter are the outside hind (1st beat), inside hind and the outside front leg together (2nd beat), inside shoulder coming forward (3rd beat). To tell if your horse is on the right canter lead you glance down and you can see that inside shoulder coming forward. If you look down and you see the outside shoulder coming more forward then you're on the wrong leg.

Knowing that's what you want to create you have to ask for the canter at the right time, otherwise you'll ask for the canter the wrong leg will not be in the air, and they'll strike off on the wrong canter lead.

The other reason horses go onto the wrong leg is they have too much weight loaded up onto the inside shoulder, which can happen when the horse is flexed to the outside, falling in on the circle. You want all the weight when you're circling the horse to be on the outside shoulder, so that the inside shoulder is free to come through and forward.

I trust that helps - definitely ask from sitting trot and feel the right moment in the horse's back, don't try and analyse it too much just practise how it feels and you will get better at it! Make sure your horse is flexed to the inside and is loaded up on the outside shoulder, so you feel weight on this outside shoulder and this outside rein. And then you'll be good to go! If your horse is falling in and looking to the outside I guarantee you you'll get the wrong leg, so make sure you fix that up!

IS YOUR HORSE STIFF ON ONE SIDE?

I don't know if you've ever had this problem? On one rein, the horse is fantastic! Takes the outside rein contact, bends really well to the right and everything is fabulous and everything is good, but then when you got to the left, it's like a completely different horse, it's a Jekyll and Hyde situation and the horse is just horrible to the left.

If you've got that situation with your horse, the first thing I do is if your horse feels really, really good on one side, is I just always take a moment to close my eyes and I just feel is there an even weight between my 2 seat bones or do I feel like I'm only sitting on one seat bone?

Then I analyse that's my seat, and then I close my eyes again, and I analyse my hands and I go well, how does the horse feel on the outside rein? How does the horse feel on the inside rein? I get a sense of where I feel that the horse is and do I feel that he is falling in or is he falling out?

Then the last thing that I do is look at how are my legs? Are my legs hanging down by his side and just doing nothing hopefully, or do I feel like I'm always putting an inside leg on or always putting an outside leg on because I feel that the horse is always drifting?

You want to see how many of the issues the horse has are your issue - normally it's always us. All my horses are stiff to the right - but that would be me. So I've really got to make sure that I fix up my imbalances.

If you've got a horse say on this rein, that doesn't take the right rein connection, just doesn't accept the outside rein contact. What happens if you've got a horse that is not bending when you ask him to bend?

I just use my inside rein and inside leg, and he quite happily then puts his inside nose to the inside and I can see the inside corner of his eye. And that's the correct bend and flexion, not with the nose, you want the nose in the middle of the chest, but you want that inside corner of his eye.

Now on a horse that doesn't bend well and doesn't accept the outside rein you have the horse slightly flexed to the outside and the quarters come in the horse isn't straight and there is an empty feeling in this outside rein and what happens is there is more of a connection and more of a feeling in this inside rein.

What's happened is your inside rein has now become your outside rein and your outside rein has now become your inside rein, confusing I know, but what you have to do is simply get a connection with this rein.

You take it back just that little bit, you can open up your inside rein if you have to, and just ask the horse to step into this right rein outside rein connection, just by opening up the inside bend, supporting with the inside leg, and softening the inside rein, and see if you can feel him just for a millisecond go into the outside rein.

Now when they're not strong you won't feel 100% connection you'll feel 1% more connection to the outside rein and then it will go away again, and that's when you bend again a little bit, don't move, don't put the horses head to the inside, that will never get you outside rein connection. If I put his nose all the way to the inside, I'll never get my outside rein. So I need to take my outside rein and then I can bend the horse to the inside.

I know it can get confusing and I know...contact was one of the things that frustrated the hell out of me, so if that's you, no stress. What you need to do is keep practising, keep playing with it.

MY HORSE BENDS LEFT AND QUARTERS GO RIGHT - HOW DO I FIX THIS?

This is a challenge that I think most riders have - the horse bends left and goes to the right, So the horse bending left and quarters going right, and when the horse is on the other side I'm guessing the horse still likes to bend to the outside, and likes to go with its hind legs in on the track.

If you have this problem - that is absolutely great and amazing and wonderful that you can feel that, so many riders have their horse going crooked and they can't feel it, therefore they can't fix that. So if this is how your horse is going, bends to the left quarters to the right, you have to do the opposite.

If I have a horse that wants to go around like that, I now put her head to the inside and quarters to the outside. And if that's the opposite of where she wants to go then she's not going to be happy and she's going to find it difficult. That's fine it doesn't mean that you stop doing it.

My philosophy is you just do the opposite, if the horse wants to go left then put it right, if the horse wants to go fast make it go slow, if the horse wants to go slow make it go fast, If the horse wants to put the right shoulder out, put the right shoulder in, if it wants to put the left hind in then put the left hind out, and you're horse tells you how it needs to be trained.

You might be ok in walk and the minute you trot, your horse bends to the left and goes around with its quarters like this, no problem, you just change it head to the inside quarters to the outside. And you supple and train your horse that way. So your horse learns ok ... so once you feel the horse is supple to this side, what you might do is straighten the horse up again, and ask him travel straight.

Now, if the minute you ask your horse to travel straight, it goes like this, then no problem, you put it to the opposite way again, for half a circle, a circle, you'll feel in the mouth that they suddenly soften and then you can ride forward and straight. You might ride forward and straight for 2 strides, you might ride forward and straight for 10 strides, before your horse naturally goes into his preferred position again, no problem, you just fix it again.

I used to think when I was riding horses if I fixed it once it was fixed - it was like a computer, press the delete button, therefore that shouldn't happen again. Riding horses is not like that. If your horse has this problem, just because you're going around in a circle doesn't mean that you can't flex the horse to the outside and ask the horse to bring its hind legs in, this is good suppling for a horse.

They are not going to like it all the time. But it's important that your horse is supple to the left and supple to the right. You can do the same thing in canter, bending to the inside, so if your horse is going around like this naturally, put it to where it's not natural.

And make sure you keep your legs on to keep canter it's hard for the horse to go the opposite way.

It's not rocket science guys you can do this!!

HOW DO I BEND MY HORSE?

How do I bend my horse? Hands up who doesn't get bend, who doesn't get flexion, who doesn't get it? That was me.

Firstly you have to say what is the difference between bend and flexion and if you read the books, bend is through the whole body, so bend is the horse bending all the way through her back, through her rib cage, through her legs, everything up to the poll, bending through the neck.

Flexion comes from the poll down. The poll is just between her two ears and flexion is basically her head. Now horses are like us, left hand or right handed and they bend and flex one way better than the other. That's just how they are born. The same as us.

If you ever go to a gym you'll be able to bicep curl with your right arm, if you're right handed normally, a little more than on your left. We're all born uneven, horses are no exception. What makes it really fun is if you are stronger on one side and the horse is naturally stronger on that side, the horse develops even stronger on one side and a lot weaker on the other side. Because obviously both of you are attuned to that side.

So, our job as a dressage rider is to make a dressage horse and make a Grand Prix horse, is to make the horse straight. Straightness is part of the German Training Scale and straightness is super, super important.

What people don't understand is to get straightness you have to get suppleness and suppleness means that the horse keeps its bend left and right really happily without resistance, then your horse is really supple. I always think of suppleness as like if I ask you to do the splits. Can you do the splits? And if you can do the splits, good for you, but most people can't, same as a horse.

If I get on Gretchen, she's young and I say 'hey, I need you to bend and flex in your half pass like a Grand Prix horse can' she's like "ohhh, that's like asking me to do the splits. I can't do it. My muscles won't go that way." So, every single day we ride them we need to make them just that little bit more supple.

If I asked you to go into as much splits as you can do and let's say that was as far as you could go and then the next day we just moved it a centimetre, but the end of the year you could probably do the splits. It's the same as the horse. We just ask for little amounts until the horse gets marginally more supple and marginally more stronger every time, we ride them until we have Grand Prix horse.

Pretty easy isn't it? That is a joke for anyone that thinks I'm being serious. But literally that is the logic behind what we do.

So, how do we get the horse to bend? If you have been riding dressage you would have heard the term inside leg to outside rein, inside leg to outside rein – what the hell is that? What that means is you want to be able to push your inside leg on and as you do that the horse... same as if I push you in your flank. Then you've moved your body to the outside and you've developed a softening through this part of your stomach. So, that is what the inside leg is meant to do and as the inside leg pushes you catch with the outside rein, because you don't want your horse to actually throw itself outside... so you catch that suppleness and bend with your outside rein so then the horse can travel straight and forward.

In an ideal world, you're on a Grand Prix horse that is listening and wanting to work for you. That is how when the horse gets a little bit stiff all you do is inside leg and half halt on the outside rein and the horse is back there again.

But on a young horse they don't know that and you can use your inside leg and sometimes the horse can go, like if I poke you in the stomach you might do that and push against me and go "yeah, yeah, I'll push against you" which the horse does a lot.

Sometimes when you ask the horse to bend and supple they get stiffer and they push more. That is where your inside rein comes in. Your inside rein is your back up to your inside leg, so if you ask the horse with an inside leg and the horse doesn't understand you'll just go like this and bend, bend, bend, bend, and then you'll soften.

I always think it's harder to create suppleness and bend in the walk because there's no moment of suspension and you don't have that beautiful forward tendency to get the horse to travel forward into the bit.

Any time I use my inside rein my inside leg is on. There is never a time when I would just use my inside rein. When I was learning, I loved my inside rein – that's pretty much everyone. So I pretended my inside rein was in a fire glass – you know the ones that's say only open in case of emergencies. I was like OK, I will only use my inside rein if I have to. I will have developed my outside rein. I didn't have contact with it, it kept flopping. So I held my fire blanket with my outside rein so I had a strong outside rein connection and then I can give my inside rein.

If I do anything with my reins, I do more with my legs. I'm packaging her into package. I'm putting her into the bit, so I have to ask the hind legs to be active and then allow. Bend, bend, allow. Your horse will be stiffer to a side.

I found when I was learning that the hardest thing about getting bend and flexion was feeling when the horse needed bend and flexion, so I really encourage you to develop your feel. Even close your eyes if you're on a safe horse. I remember learning from a mentor, if you want to go forward, if you want to progress faster take a backwards step. I remember going that makes no sense at all, you're fired, you don't speak English.

But it makes perfect sense – if you want to progress forward and you want to progress faster take a backwards step. Forget about where the horse's head is, forget about what the horse is doing for a second and say today I'm going to focus on feeling bend and flexion, or today I'm going to focus on feeling what the hind legs are doing. You've heard the term that you ride a horse back to front but no one does it.

I'm focused on the basics, I focus on the hind legs, I focus on what the horse's body is doing and fix that. Don't focus on what the head is doing.

HOW DO I KEEP MY HORSE STRAIGHT?

How do you keep your horse straight?

Anthony Robbins says the quality of our life is determined by the quality of the questions we ask ourselves. Rather than asking why doesn't my horse feel good, or why doesn't my horse win competitions?

How do I keep my horse straight is a better quality question. Because obviously when you can ride your horse straight you're going to do better in competition, your horse is going to feel better and all those things will come as a result of that. so cool question.

Georgia is saying that when she goes off the wall and goes towards the mirror she can see and she can feel that the horse is putting its quarters in. Which is really, really normal if you watch any horse go up the long side in canter especially in the early levels, if the rider's not on it, every horse will put their hind legs in, do you know why?

He has to be like that because then this back leg is behind his front leg, his front leg is narrower so therefore that hind leg comes out. So if that isn't fixed and the horse goes riding for the next year it gets very, very weak in a sense on this inside hind leg because it hasn't had to step under the body, so then when you ask the horse to do shoulder fore or shoulder in, which is how you get the horse straight and how you get the horse stronger, you then ask this inside shoulder that was here to come over here and this inside hind to come under the body because you've moved the shoulders.

Shoulder fore is a little version of shoulder in, and you obviously don't want to bring the horses shoulders all the way in because that just looks crooked and the judge will go what are doing? But you've got to ride a little touch of shoulder fore all the time to make sure that horse stays straight.

The question was how do you keep your horse straight, the answer is, ride shoulder in.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR HORSE IS NOT LISTENING

Half halt and turn his bum to the problem, and now I just want to ask for shoulder in around the circle to keep him concentrated on me.

If a horse wants to look at something, it has to look at it, it has to put weight on its inside shoulder, look to the outside and therefore be able to jump into the arena and sideways when it sees something, your job is to be able to control where your horse puts its weight.

If you have your horse with its weight on its outside shoulder, if it then gets a fright it can then only jump where the weight is, and it's not going to jump into a wall, and if it's got its weight on what it's afraid of and it's not seen what it's afraid of because it has its heads more to the inside and you've got its hind legs going to what it's afraid of, you've got a much better chance of being successful in controlling the horse and keeping his attention.

Horses don't really shy on me because I've got a really good outside rein and I can control where that horse's weight is.

Now, with horses that are really hot and tense, they blow your legs off and they don't really want you to put your legs on them, which becomes a problem, so if you start doing lateral work you can get them using their energy sideways, even if he wants to trot, let him trot sideways, it's a really hard exercise to do for the horse so if the horse has all this energy and the horse is all upset, beautiful I like energy, and I just direct their energy in a way that's going to make them work really hard, and me not work very much at all.

The horse will do 3 circles of this and go hey guess what I'm more than happy to play your game!

I'm always telling the horse, when he does play my game, when he does put his weight where I want him to, where he does go where I want him to and relax that's he's the best horse in the world.

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR HORSE WHEN THINGS DON'T GO TO PLAN

In the walk he's kind of allowed to do whatever he wants to do within reason, he's not allowed to bolt off, he's not allowed to go look at stuff, but I want him to stretch, I want him to get used to having me on his back. He's just come cold out of the stable so it's all about just getting his legs moving and him going where he wants to go.

Remember every time you thinking what is the purpose of this, so what is the purpose of this right now is it's just not fair to bring him out of the stable and go OK pick up your reins trot canter! Same as we wouldn't just start running a marathon out of bed. So he can just do whatever he wants but obviously I'm not going to waste time.

If I can make sure he's marching in his walk, and make sure he's doing what he should be doing, that'll save time later. If you are trying to warm up your horse in walk and all he wants to do is trot, just start warming up in trot, there's no use in trying to force your horse to walk when it's too tense to walk, you're going to wreck the walk you're going to upset the horse, it's just not going to end well so if they're tense and running, then they're tense and running.

He needs to stretch, he needs to lift his back, he doesn't come out of the stable wanting to do that, they want to be short in the neck, so my job is basically to have loops in the reins and to push him out to the bit. Push him out. So he can really lift his back and lower his neck.

On a young horse, it's really hard for them, so you might spend a lot more time getting this, you can see now he's a little bit consistent stretching, but he's still falling in, falling out and anytime he loses his straightness which he's trying to do pretty much the whole time, and every time I have to fix it by moving my hand, obviously then the connection changes and the head changes. So the biggest problem why he doesn't consistently stretch is because he consistently doesn't stay straight. The straightness is a huge issue. So I know if I get this straight I get the stretch.

HOW TO STOP A STRONG HORSE WITHOUT PULLING THE REINS

How do you stop a horse or slow a horse without pulling back on the reins? And I think that's a really high level question to ask, because you obviously know you shouldn't be doing this and pulling back on the reins, but you feel there's nothing else you can do - you feel like your horse is going forward and what should you do.

And I have that a lot.

I remember I knew I wasn't meant to pull back on the reins and literally I remember cantering around and my coach saying "you can't pull back on the reins". So my horse is galloping off and I'm going, I can't stop, I can't stop, I can't stop, I can't stop... because I'm going I can't pull back on my reins! So if I can't pull back on my reins what can I do?

Glad you asked.

Your hands should be in a box, which means you don't want to pull back because that means you've moved out of your box, you obviously don't want to give forward like you're going over a show jump either because then they're out of their box, this is for dressage. So they're in this box.

If I move my lower finger, I have changed contact in his mouth and with his bit, which means he feels it. If you've got something metal in your mouth and someone vibrates it you're going to feel it. You don't need to do these massive pulls for the horse to feel it.

So I can just do little touches and say hey hey something's going to happen, and then I can use my seat and say trot or walk or halt or whatever it is that you want to do, and you don't need to move your hands from a pulling back position it's more from lower finger vibrations.

In the trot if he speeds up, I'm just going to slow my seat, but if I tell him to go and then I just tighten my stomach he comes back and slows down, If he didn't slow down I would use just a little bit more of a rein, a little bit more of a half halt and say HEY you need to listen to my baby aids.

Now if you're on a strong horse, an un-educated horse, a baby horse, you might need to move your hand position a bit more, because I'm trying to tell the horse what it is that I want it to do and where I want it to go.

So if you're on a young horse or a strong horse, you want to get them to start listening to your vibrations, and that might mean you have to do some bigger pulls to start with and say HEY listen to me, and then you can do the little ones. It's the same as you might occasionally need to use your whip to say HEY listen to my leg, and then you can just use light leg. So you want your dressage horse to go off your light aids.

HOW TO HAVE FUN WITH YOUR TRAINING

How you can have fun with your training.?

Dressage is sooooo serious it really is seriooooous and you gotta take it serioooooously.

But I find when you take it seriously, there's a lot more pressure, frustrated a lot quicker, and it's all just not as fun and easy as it should be.

So every now and then it's just kind of cool to go for a bit of a ride... I mean who doesn't like a tu-tu?

We have tu-tu days at work!! It's a great time to hang out and reconnect with the 3 year old in you!

So I just thought it might help you and you're training to inject a little colour and a little life and have a bit of fun with it, because really it's fun. have fun with it and enjoy your training this week!

HOW DO I STAY STRAIGHT IN THE CANTER?

How do you keep the horse straight in the canter? When you go down a long side in canter, you want it to appear straight, the judge wants it straight, you want it straight, we all want it straight.

Now if you look at the horse's anatomy the horse's shoulders are narrower than its hind legs, or its pelvis.

So either the outside shoulder is against the wall, that then has to mean that the inside hind leg is in off the track, because the shoulders are smaller than the hind legs.

We need to make sure that we ride the shoulders ever so slightly off the wall which keeps the hind legs on the wall which keeps that inside hind leg tucked. Now horses also, because of the way the canter movement is a 3 beat movement, don't want their inside leg tucked underneath them, because if their inside hind leg is tucked underneath them, that one leg has to take all the weight of the horse and you if it really stays tucked and under its body.

The horse goes oh my god that's really hard, I'm going to keep it outside my body therefore I don't need to carry all that extra weight and my life will be easy, kind of like me at the gym, look for any way out.

Now you need to be the personal trainer at the gym that's say no I'm not going to let you do that, I'm here to make you work and we're going to make that inside leg strong. The stronger you can make the horse's inside hind leg the better the horse is going to be and obviously it needs a very strong inside hind leg when you get up to Grand Prix and it needs to start canter pirouetting and doing all these really cool things with the inside hind leg.

Getting a horse straight down a long side in canter is something I do straight away because I know it's such a good exercise. So the trick to do it is start off in walk, because walk is the easy level, and just start with a slight shoulder fore, just bringing that shoulder ever so slightly in, it's so subtle, maybe 5 cm inside. My inside leg is on, tucking that inside hind, pretty much every single time. And then that's making sure the horse stays straight.

So into canter, you do the same thing, shoulder fore, inside leg, outside rein, inside leg, outside rein, inside leg, outside rein, inside leg, outside rein, inside leg, outside rein, inside leg, outside rein.

Now if canter gets all too quick and it's all too hard like I said practice and walk. To get a horse straight in the canter you do need to have skills of being able to ride a shoulder fore which means you probably want to have some skills about riding a shoulder in so you can vary the degree of how much angle and how much bend and how much control of the shoulders you want to have.