

EQUINE FASCIAL REBALANCING (EFR)

Structural Integration for Horses

Joseph leans his body into his arms, smoothly lengthening tissue along the client's hip to the thigh to the stifle and gaskin. Stifle and gaskin?

Joseph Freeman works on horses.

A 1993 graduate of the Hellerwork SI training, Joseph spent the first few years of his career working on people. He found it rewarding, but had a feeling Hellerwork was a stepping stone. To what, he didn't know, but he knew another future awaited him.

A Turning Point

Joseph took a course in Animal Communication given by Jeri Ryan, Ph.D. Dr. Ryan teaches people the internal visual and kinesthetic language of animals. The course changed Joseph's relationship with animals. He felt the stirrings of a "calling" but didn't know where to go with that feeling.



story by Jacqueline Freeman

Later he attended a class given by Linda Tellington-Jones, the well-known Feldenkrais practitioner who pioneered perceptive somatic work with animals. Again he felt excitement about adapting his Structural Integration knowledge to work with animals.

As an experiment, he started combining Structural Integration, animal communication, energetics and movement with cats and dogs. They responded positively to his touch which encouraged him to move on to larger animals, horses. Hellerworker Mike McFarland had worked with race horses so Joseph contacted him for guidance and ideas. Mike was generous in his support.

A former SI client, Cara Landwehr, does holistic rehabilitative training with horses who have been emotionally and physically damaged. These horses have very special problems and Cara had been looking for a precise kind of help to treat them. She needed a sensitive person with animal rapport skills who understood equine movement and structural integration with horses -- certainly a tall order!

Cara asked Joseph if he'd try his hand with her horses. From the first moment he worked on a horse, he knew he'd found his calling.

Creating a Body of Work

Joseph helped Cara achieve the changes she needed with the horses and Cara encouraged him to pursue the work. He studied equine anatomy while Cara taught him equine movement.

In 1995 Joseph came up with the five basic SI sessions that sequentially unravel a horse's fascial structure. This structural series brings the horse's suspensory system of bones, muscle and connective tissue back into balance and alignment. He says ...

I work systematically with the fascial system, moving through the outer layers of superficial muscles, then down to the deeper layers of fascia and intrinsic muscles, freeing up the planes throughout the horse's structure," Joseph says. "This allows a freedom of movement to emerge as the different layers begin to glide effortlessly over one another, bringing more potential energy and power to the muscles and rhythmic grace and smoothness to the horse's gaits.

"Curiously, horses are not as invested in their body image as people," Joseph observes. "When horses feel freer movement, they readily adopt it. Even though horses are larger, the work seems to progress at a faster rate than human sessions. Coupled with an exercise program to support the structural changes, horses have steady improvement that lasts."