

WORKING WITH HORSES AND DOGS by Angel Di Benedetto

After my 2nd year in Amherst (1982), I was invited by Linda Tellington Jones to come and work at her new ranch and research center in Pasa Robles, Ca. I would help her begin the starting up of her new place in trade for teaching ATM classes and learning some of her TTouch with the horses that were housed there.

As I look back, I realize that I was so fortunate to have had this experience. This in my estimation was the most significant education I could have ever provided for myself during the interim of my training. It prepared me well for FI & ATM. By working one on one with the horses, it taught me how to gain more sensitivity, how to listen for the signals an animal conveys non-verbally. Listening to the breath, watching eye/ear movements, glistening or dulling of the coat, nostrils flaring, noticing how the peripheral lines of the back & stomach of the animal alter, and mainly how to back off, try something else, when what I am doing isn't agreeable to the horse. A horse doesn't grin and bare it, if he or she doesn't like what you are doing; they will communicate this immediately by displaying various body messages. You don't want to piss off a horse, and because of their size, you are highly motivated to remain within their range of comfort. By doing so, the rewards are tremendous for you and your horse.

Having my Tibetan Terrier, Shadow with me, I began to enroll her in courses Linda provided for people and their pet companions. It was an experience I'll hold valuable for the rest of my life. I came out of this time, with a broader compassion for all living things.

You'd think that going back to Amherst and learning FI would seem much easier with a human beings, it wasn't. It was more difficult. I had to learn that human beings are not so aware of their own sensations. Its not built into our mentality to function in a range of comfort. If something is uncomfortable, they often keep it to themselves, not wanting to complain or seem fussy.

I remember asking, "does this feel uncomfortable", *this is what you usually wonder when you are just a beginner*. Often the answer would be, "yes a little, but go ahead, I don't mind". Not so with a horse, not so with any animal. Therefore I had to reevaluate my thinking, take responsibility for my actions, become even more sensitive, listen even more to the subtle signals that I perceived were not as obvious with people. But I was incorrect, they were obvious if I knew what to look for, and thru my frustration I discovered that the gap between man and animal was not so great. When giving a lesson I observed the changes in people's eyes, ears and breathing. There were changes in the peripheral lines of their form, and although their coat doesn't shine or dull like a horse, their skin tone and color changes all the time depending on the input. Their nostrils even close and flare. Its amazing to see the similarities. I would have never noticed all of this if I hadn't worked with animals.

Nonetheless, being at Linda's ranch gave me a huge advantage and I sincerely believe that this was the foundation of my work. I highly recommend giving lessons to your pets, your friend's pets or enrolling in a TTouch workshop. It's a priceless experience for both you, the animal and the people that will have the advantage of working with you.

Angel Di Benedetto