

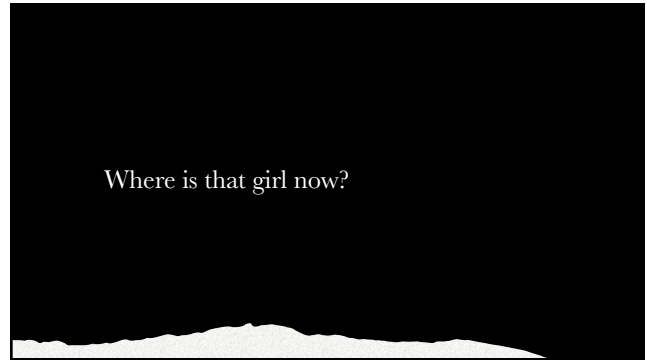
Let me begin with a story...

- Neurodivergent girl with SPD
- Turned weakness (school, relationships, work) into a superpower of sensitivity
- Grew to understand and handle sensory input through animals
- Release her own and others' "mobile tension," beginning with horses through massage
- Now is trying to share her insight with other humans and horses just like her...



1

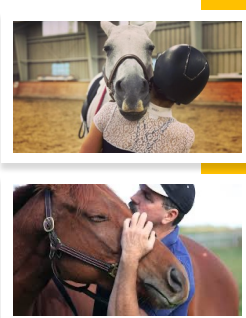
Where is that girl now?



2

Finding the Masterson Method...

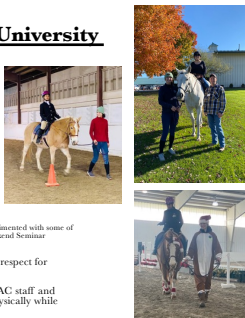
- Developing a passion for equine massage over the years
- Connections between human and equine sensory systems and light or flight responses
- **The Masterson Method** - Founded by **Jim Masterson**
 - Works WITH the horse
 - Stays under the sympathetic NS
 - Connects horses to their parasympathetic NS
- Benefits my own sensory system as well as the horses on which I have worked with
- Betterment of both parties participating -
 - "Difficultly regulating responses to sensory stimulation and three subtypes are proposed":
 - Sensory over-responsive
 - Sensory under-responsive
 - Sensory seeking/craving
 - "impaired responses to, processing of, and/or organization of sensory information that effects participation in functional daily life routines and activities" (Miller et al., 2009)



3

Therapeutic Riding at Centenary University (TRAC)

- Centenary University's Equestrian Center
- Director - **Karen Brittle**
- Provides equine-assisted services to adults and children with mental and physical disabilities
- Therapeutic riding instructors certified by PATH Intl. provide riding lessons to participants that encourage "personal development" and overall education and body awareness (2022)
- Volunteering with TRAC for over two years as a horse leader while also having the honor to exercise the horses during their off days.
 - Always very in tune to the horse's mental state and energy while grooming. I had experimented with some of the release techniques I have been taught in my **Masterson Method** education (Workshop Seminar previously attended)
- Perfect opportunity to combine my passion for equine massage with my respect for TRAC to give back to the horses that do so much for the participants
- Introduce the **Masterson Method** into the program and educate TRAC staff and volunteers on how they can use it to support the horses mentally and physically while forming a deeper connection with them



4

Give a gift to the horse...
Through the Masterson Method



5

Do you notice these behaviors?

- bite and kick at touch or tacking
- avoid interaction with handlers
- disconnected attention
- swishing tail
- grimacing face

• Goal = more comfort = do job better!



6

Fight, Flight, Freeze!

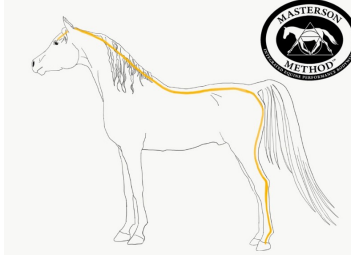
- Natural prey animals = hide pain/discomfort
 - Accumulate tension during job, age, asymmetry
- gentle enough to not trigger that response
- Help the horse become aware of tension
- Bladder Meridian
 - Sympathetic and parasympathetic NS
 - Search, Response, Stay Release
 - Work WITH the horse



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The Bladder Meridian

- It runs basically through the three key junctions in the horse:
 - tail
 - neck/shoulder withers
 - hind end.
- Major meridian; all of the other meridians connect or are associated with it.
- Easy to reach.
- The main reason:** This simple yet powerful technique establishes the basis of communication between you and the horse through touch and response.



<https://youtu.be/m7L6EOKBnkU?t=275>

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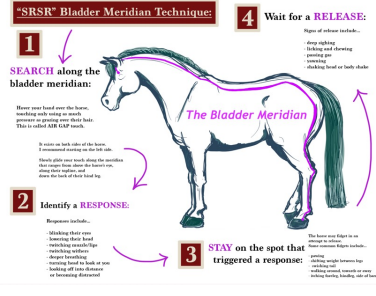
Levels of touch:



- Airgap
- Egg yolk
- Step back to give horse time to process
- Fidgeting... when to stop and when to just remove some pressure

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-SRSR- Bladder Meridian Technique:




- Explore!
- SRSR
- 10-20 minutes a day...or you might spend 30-40 minutes once a week.
- "Do whatever works for you and your horse"
- Awareness to sensations = may cause fidgeting
 - moving away
 - pawing
 - distacting themselves
 - frustrating typically precedes a release
 - "Less is more."
- PATTERN
 - Notice while grooming as well

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Positive effects of the Masterson Method on an array of different horses with vices and lameness issues...


- Quantitative evidence that the Masterson Method is the best method for the horses at TRAC
- Carla Bea, of Western Kentucky University, published thesis, studied specific responses
- 7 horses, all with very different vices including:
 - cribbing (horse uses teeth to grab onto objects and suck in air to receive a high in response to stress)
 - aggressive behavior
 - chronic lameness issues
- Current horses in TRAC all have past lameness or soreness issues, one with some aggressive behavior, and all with other health issues.
- "The owner questionnaire data support that the owners saw an improvement in horse comfort levels (appendix 33-36). Horse 1's aggression decreased, her balance improved, and she could un-weight her left hind leg" states Bea in their conclusion.
- 5/7 total horses showed improvements either mentally and/or physically




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Human-animal connections practiced during the Masterson Method:

- Effectively explains to staff and volunteers
- Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*
 - investigates the light-light-serve responses in animals versus humans
 - breast response less commonly studied
 - body going into **defence mode** when in a stressful situation
 - learned versus instinctual reaction to stimulus (Rockley)
- Frontiers In Veterinary Science*
 - devising research on the equine sensory system
 - In addition to their intense nervous system reactivity to the outside environment, their highly sensitive hearing and smelling abilities connect very strongly to human symptoms in those who suffer from SPD
- These overly exaggerated senses, taking in too much stimuli at once, is seen as normal in horses but socially unacceptable in humans. By making this connection in reactivity between different species, humans may be able to care for and understand themselves better under the impression that what they go through is normal to them. *Roussigne*.



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Possible differences in EAAT horses...

- These studies investigated horses in regular riding programs
- **Rutgers** examined horses in EAAT programs and how they are mentally affected (Mikloski and Teolis, 2018)
- EAAT program working with veterans who experience PTSD
- "The study showed a reduction in heart rate in the horses and no changes in the levels of cortisol or oxytocin, suggesting the animals suffered less from the therapeutic interaction with the veterans" (Hartman, 2018)
- Oxytocin and cortisol measure happiness and stress respectively
- Important to prioritize the **mental and physical well-being** of these horses through manage or releases to allow them to keep working in this mentally and physically challenging field of work

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The Team:

- I have the honor to consult with **Dr. Jessyla Bryk-Lucy** while working on this project
- Recently "has been named Veterinarian of the Year for Region II by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship" (Edwards 2021)
- PATH Intl's overall Veterinarian of the Year award (2021)
- "This is an absolutely amazing outlet for so many people of all ages to use horses to find strength and independence while working through physical, cognitive, and emotional challenges" (Edwards 2021).
- I also had the honor of having the support and mentorship of the Director of TRAC - **Karen Brittle**
 - Incredible EAAT expertise
 - Sharing her personal experiences, and problem-solving skills, providing funding for my continued education
 - An integral member of Contrary equine staff. Karen brings fresh training ideas for staff, volunteers, and horses
 - She has created a close community of incredible horsemen and horsewomen
- **TRAC horses**
 - Oreo, Dranie, Harriet, Olaf, Petey, Vegas, Sadie, Aspen, and Barchie



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3-day Masterson **Method Equine Specialist (MMES)** Course:

- **From the Ground Up**
 - Gentle Hill Farm - Tully, NY
 - Bladder Meridian group work
 - Full horse DEMO by MMCP Meghan Duchin
 - HW Assignment -> Presentations
 - Applications in EAAT -> Group Role-Play in EAS Settings
- **Fieldwork**
 - gain insight into the differences and similarities of physical and mental responses based on a horse's discipline
 - 2 horses not used in EAS program
 - 3 horses currently working in EAS program
 - Ending exam

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From the Ground Up Gentle Hill Farm - Tully, NY

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Benefits for participants, volunteers, and staff performing this method:

- Focus on giving gift of release of tension to the horse
- Sensory input and connection between horse and human
- See how your touch affects the horse's responses
 - **Recognizing social patterns**
- Practice verbal and/or nonverbal communication with the horse without social pressure



17

Fieldwork!

- **Fieldwork Objectives**
- The Masterson Method Equine Specialist Level I Fieldwork activities are designed to provide you (the student) with opportunities to:
 - 1. Perform the Bladder Meridian** on regular working horses (lesson, boarding, pleasure, sport, etc.) and horses that work in equine-assisted activity and/or therapy (EAAT) programs, incorporating feedback provided by your Mentor.
 - 2. Write up and reflect upon your experiences** working with a variety of horses, including identifying their different responses (internal and/or external bracing, being present, being evasive, or distracting behaviors that may occur during a session) and modifying your activity, level of touch and/or timing based on these responses in the horse.
 - 3. Facilitate a Masterson Method session** and summarize that experience.


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Thank you to my mentor - Lise Lunde

For All Fieldwork:

1. Select horses that do not have a current illness or injury.
2. Interview the horse owner or program professional to gain information about the horse's history, current responsibilities and any physical issues.
3. You can document your findings on the **MMES Equine Profile Form** to help you determine their suitability for MM sessions once certified (do not submit this to your Mentor - keep on file for future reference when selecting horses).
4. Document information about your observations and experience during each bodywork session on the **Case Study Form** and submit to your Mentor (note the specific case study sequence below). Your Mentor will answer questions and provide feedback and/or guidance for subsequent sessions within 7 days of receiving your case study.
5. Document information about the one teaching session on the **Teaching Reflection Summary** and submit to your Mentor.

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Masterson Method Equine Specialist Case Study Form
Please use the Tab key to move from field to field to answer the questions on this form.

Student: Sophie Waynes Case Study #: 3 Date: 8/23/23

Horse Name: Discar Sex: Gelding Age: 15 Breed: Quarter horse

Non-Therapy Horse' Job: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

Non-Therapy Horse Session (check one): 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

Therapy Horse's Job: EQS therapy horse used in walk/trot lessons on and off lead with side walkers at Centenary University's Equestrian Center

Therapy Horse Session (check one): 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

Days/Week Horse Works: 3 Session Duration (in minutes): 60 min

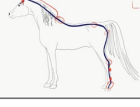
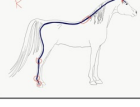
Horse's Pertinent Life History:

Discar has a history of bilateral lameness of his hind end. He is constantly monitored by the therapy program at Centenary and by our vet Dr. Jesslyn Bryk-Lucy. He is somewhat new to the program but I do know he has a more western background as well. He is usually very reluctant to pick up his feet for bandages and tends to stomp his feet down. He acts a


chance.

- Candidate to demonstrate the Bladder Meridian for volunteers and participants
- Releases clear to observe
- Visual edginess and bracing
- Became more engaged with me as a session continued
- "Keep him in the neighborhood"
- Adjusted your level touch and gave him space

"This Bladder Meridian experience is based on a focus on what they need to feel safe, process what they are feeling, and then show some visual releases of tension in the body. We are not working with an expectation of what we need from them but rather what we can do for them. It can take some time for a horse to figure this out and feel safe and trust us enough to let go of some tension." (Lise)

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Masterson Method Equine Specialist Case Study Form
Please use the Tab key to move from field to field to answer the questions on this form.

Student: Sophie Waynes Case Study #: 5 Date: 8/25/23

Horse Name: Hazel Sex: Mare Age: 20c Breed: Shetland

Non-Therapy Horse' Job: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

Non-Therapy Horse Session (check one): 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

Therapy Horse's Job: EQS and off lead therapy horse in EAS lessons at Centenary University's Equestrian Center with sometimes sidegaiting

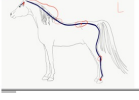
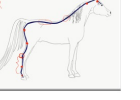
Therapy Horse Session (check one): 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

Days/Week Horse Works: 3 Session Duration (in minutes): 60 min

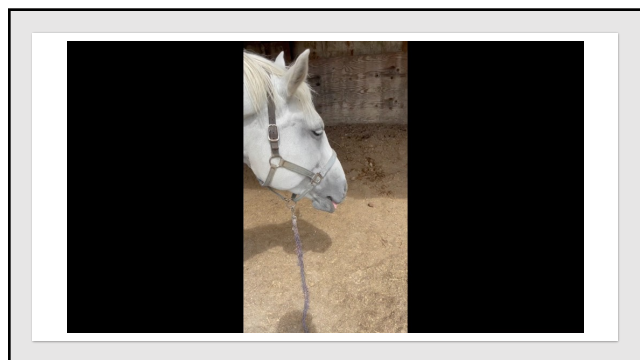
Horse's Pertinent Life History:

Ex fox hunter. Has been a therapy horse at Centenary for many years and is always monitored for weight gain as she has a history of being overweight. Both of her front hooves have been routinely evaluated for chronic soreness. She has a very compact oval conformation of her front hooves. In 2019, Hazel was evaluated for soreness observed in her gut during a lesson and seemed to be sore all over while stagnant and in motion. She received band shoes after this session. She also has a history of abrasions on her head received during turnout. In 2021 Hazel was evaluated for a reactive job in behavior towards leaders during lessons. She was found to have a negative palmar angle of the left front coffin bone in 2021 and was supported through proper shoeing. She unfortunately has a consistent history of pulling shoes and pads. She receives chiropractic and acupuncture treatment at Centenary when needed.


- clear communication
- Walked away and came back to me
- Needed to give her time and space to process
- More bracing and fidgeting in the hind end
- Itching front leg, shifting weight on hind legs, scratching barrel
- Communication with EARS
- Walked away to drink water => large yawning
- Large horse

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Masterson Method Equine Specialist Case Study Form
Please use the Tab key to move from field to field to answer the questions on this form.

Student: Sophie Waynes Case Study #: 7 Date: 8/29/23

Horse Name: Aspen Sex: Gelding Age: teens/aged Breed: unknown

Non-Therapy Horse' Job: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

Non-Therapy Horse Session (check one): 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

Therapy Horse's Job: Has been a walk/trot center therapy horse at Centenary University for many years and works with participants of all ages and abilities. He has also participated in hunter, jumper and dressage lessons at the university's equestrian center.

Therapy Horse Session (check one): 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

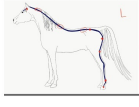
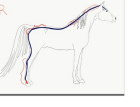
Days/Week Horse Works: 3 Session Duration (in minutes): 60 min

Horse's Pertinent Life History:


Aspen has a long history of loose manure and suffered a colic episode December of 2021. Diet change and monitoring has seen on and off improvement of manure consistency. He has been checked for back soreness in the past and can be quite sensitive to firm touch in specific areas of his body.

History of bilateral soreness of front limbs during summer of 2024. Increased digital pulse in both limbs and soreness when stepping on ground. He has also been monitored by the vet for a clicking noise being made by his hind end during lessons. Slight effusion present in tendon sheath and fetlock of his right hind.

- Gradual build up of releases
- More stoc
- Yawns and eye rolls at end of session
- Adjusting level of touch, giving him some space and time to move around if I felt he was bracing
- Talking to the horse
- Mindful grooming along the Bladder Meridian
 - students familiar with grooming
 - connect with the horse before riding
 - body language

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Masterson Method Equine Specialist Case Study Form
Please use the Tab key to move from field to field to answer the questions on this form.

Student: Sophie Waynes Case Study #: 8 Date: 8/29/23

Horse Name: Pinky Sex: Gelding Age: 20 Breed: unknown

Non-Therapy Horse' Job: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

Non-Therapy Horse Session (check one): 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

Therapy Horse's Job: Has been a walk/trot therapy horse at Centenary University for many years and works with participants of all ages and abilities.

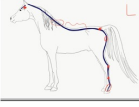
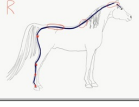
Therapy Horse Session (check one): 1st 2nd 3rd 4th (if assigned)

Days/Week Horse Works: 3 Session Duration (in minutes): 60 min

Horse's Pertinent Life History:

History of ringbone in his right front limb and has received Osphos and injections in the right front pastern. He has PPID, commonly known as Cushing's and has a history of an asthma related illness. Pinky is monitored for weight loss regularly due to history of not being able to keep on weight in the past.

- Checked out/frozen
- "walk in a circle to see if that brings them into the present moment" or "gently put your finger on the lower bar of the mouth to get them to chew and this will usually bring them back" (Lise)
- Muscle responses, itching front legs
- Air gap to several inches off body
- change in demeanor to being more engaged towards end of session

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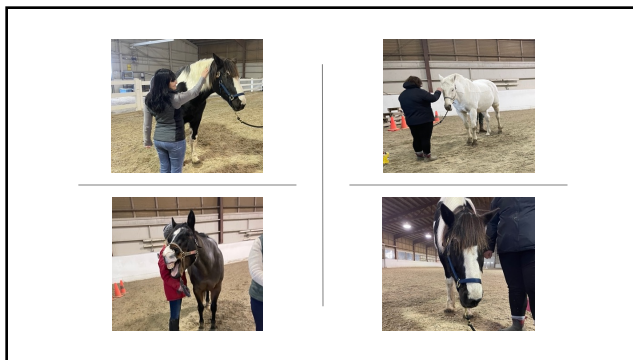
Teaching/facilitating the Bladder Meridian:

- Your Mentor will notify you when you can teach the Bladder Meridian (this can be to a family member, friend, or colleague with or without horse experience).
- After completion of the teaching session, complete a write-up of the experience using the **Teaching Session Summary** form provided and submit it to your Mentor for review.
- Teaching **Karen Brittle** with a horse I have worked on before (Deanie) to introduce concepts, insights, and takeaways from my fieldwork.

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Acknowledgments

This project was reviewed by the **Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)** of Centenary University.

Thank you to the Masterson Method founder, **Jim Masterson, MMCPs** for sharing their expertise with me and support throughout the process, and **Lise Lunde** for being my mentor.

Thank you to **TRAC** for sponsoring my attendance of the MMES 3-day seminar.

Thank you to the Director of TRAC, **Karen Brittle**, for being so open, flexible, and supportive throughout this process, sharing your expertise and encouraging attitude throughout this journey.

Thank you to **Dr. Jesslyn Bryk-Lucy** for being an integral advisor when applying for the IACUC and throughout my education.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to my **mom** who has dedicated her entire life to understanding my Autism and inspiring me to find superpower in my sensitivity.

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mastersonmethod.com/equinespecialist

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