

Life Lessons with a Horse Named Booger

By: Debra Gehrke--(Host of In Horse Harmony Podcasts)

When I was 10 I went on my first horse back ride. It was the summer following 4th grade. I was a Campfire Girl and we were going riding as a group event. I remember everyone getting their horses before me; I was the last to mount. When the guide called me over she introduced me to my horse...his name was Booger. "Oh boy", I thought, "a horse named Booger...this is going to be interesting. Nobody gets a name like Booger for nothing!" I was told that Booger likes to be the last in line and that he often liked to go slower than the other horses and that he liked to stop to eat a lot...but that I should try to make him keep up and not eat so much. Well, that may sound simple to me now that I have some relative experience, however at age 10 and being my first ride I must say that bit of information left me feeling a little unsettled to say the least.

Off we went into the woods through winding trails, up and down hills, over a stream and through a wide open pasture. It was there that Booger decided he had other things to do than to walk slowly behind all of his buddies. The grass was greener on the other side so to speak and Booger began trotting around all willy-nilly. As I bounced around in the saddle... I vacillated between feeling scared out of my pants to feeling a sort of exhilarating rush of freedom. Mostly I gave in to the scared out of my pants side of things not because I was worried that Booger was intentionally doing anything TO me, instead because I had a sort of knowing that I was supposed to be asking something of him and because I didn't know what to do or how to do it Booger just did his own thing. I felt sure that Booger's seemingly rebellious activity wasn't about him wanting to go against anyone's wishes...it was about him choosing to do what he wished seeing as though no one else (me) was asking him not to.

I didn't know it at the time but that was my first lesson in true partnership (or the lack thereof) with a horse. Intuitively I knew a whole lot about what was going on and even about what was needed to change the situation to one that may have been more preferred not to mention a little safer. On the cognitive, intellectual side of things however I had no idea what to do with my intuitive instinctual side. This is the part that requires some training and being that it was my first ride and my training consisted of the guide telling me my horse's name, that he can sometimes 'be a booger' and not to worry, just to do the best I could didn't really give me a whole lot to go on.

The guide came around to help; this only seemed to be a game for Booger. When ever she approached he evaded her by moving to another greener spot in the pasture. All of the other horses and riders remained motionless, seemingly suspended in time and space as Booger and I frolicked in the field. After what felt like forever but was probably no more than two minutes the guide said, "Oh well, we'll just go on ahead...don't worry Booger doesn't like to be left alone; he'll follow when he realizes everyone else is moving on. You're doing a great job!" At the time and still now I thought, "wow...that's putting a whole lot of trust and faith in me...and in Booger". I wasn't sure either one of us really

deserved all that; but a vote of confidence is a swell thing and in that moment it was exactly what Booger and I needed. As the rest of the group moved out, I think there were ten of us in all (including our trusty guide and our Campfire Girls adult leader) I wondered what would happen next. I kept my eyes on where I wanted to go and hoped that Booger would do the same. Much to my amazement Booger and I fell into line right where we belonged, at the end, and continued with the others on our journey back to the barn. Another HUGE lesson learned...ALWAYS LOOK WHERE IT IS YOU WANT TO GO! What a concept!

At 10 years old with a horse named Booger I learned some life lessons that would carry me the distance. I learned that a name can project certain qualities that may not always be the same as the being holding the name reflects. I learned that horses, like humans, like to feel connected and have a sense of belonging...preferring to be with others rather than being alone. I learned that relationships are partnerships where it takes two willing beings acting together to get things done. And I learned that confidence, faith and trust go a LONG way! I am forever grateful to my first partner, Booger. He taught me to be where I was and that being on his back was a lot better than the alternative at that moment which could have been falling off. He taught me about connection, about feeling the love that pulsed in each of our hearts for all living things and that taking time to smell the roses (or eat some luscious, green grass more specifically) was not only important, but crucial to our well-beings. He showed me the way of the horse. And I would be forever changed...not necessarily conscious of the power of our time together until much later. This one's for you Booger, where ever your shining soul may be! Love and Good Grazing...Debra

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Debra Gehrke, along with her husband, Mark create Conscious Media Podcasts--Good News Media that educates, uplifts and regenerates on many levels, in many ways. Their 'channels' include: www.inhorseharmony.com, www.earthharmonyhome.com and www.sustainableconsciousness.com...with more arriving soon!