

Equine Gestalt Wellness

written by Carolyne Stolzenfels

Picture this...A leisurely drive two miles outside of the lakeside town of Charlevoix, Michigan. The roads are wide, farms and wineries sprinkled about. The air is pure, crisp, and there seems to always be a breeze. Turning down a quiet country road, you feel as though you left the business of the town, the traffic, and you're on your own little adventure. The road is quiet. Just about a mile east, the road opens up to fields of meadow grass, reaching a grove of birch trees. The meadows spread across the landscape with black fence posts dotting the border of the property. Three or four horses are grazing happily and sometimes there is a young colt napping in the afternoon sun. You might miss it if you're driving fast, but most people remember the barn. It rests on the east side of the driveway, tucked in a small valley, after the long row of pines. All of a sudden, there it is, a cream colored pole barn with maroon and black trim. It has flower gardens around it and a chicken house with fat hens and a protective rooster who takes his job very seriously. There are fruit trees and raised garden beds that overflow with food. The entire scene looks like you stepped into a story book where everything is living in harmony with each other. Right away, you feel at peace.

When clients arrive for an Equine Gestalt Coaching session at our stable, most are a little apprehensive about what they signed up for. This is not your usual office or retreat where you might find yourself after making an appointment with a life coach. It is a holistic form of coaching. Most of my clients have tried other forms of therapy and doctor's appointments only to arrive at the barn door.

Yesterday afternoon I had an adult client come to the barn who is working through issues with her mother. Her story is not like other clients that struggle with the complex relationships they have with their family. They want to do the right thing and yet they are being manipulated, pulled in different directions to the point that it is affecting their health. They have been caring for their





parents for years, and possibly have been dealing with emotional turmoil because of it. As their coach, I completely understand. I, too, had a lot of trauma surrounding my relationship with my parents. I also didn't know how to speak about any of it. I couldn't tell my mom because I was too afraid of hurting her feelings. I didn't want her to be mad or hurt by how I really felt. I love my mom. I also didn't want to be judged for feeling the way I truly felt. So, I allowed the situation to eat at me.

It's so easy to do, right? You keep going through life and suck it up. That's what I was taught to do; however, my mother coped with alcohol. So what was she actually modeling? Suck it up or drink to escape? I knew I didn't want to do either.

I want to thrive in life and not have to medicate myself with alcohol or any drug to enjoy life. I also think when stress and pain (no matter if it's emotional or physical) gets too much, it's time to make a change. Our one precious life demands

that we STOP and look at our habits, our motives, our values. Our normal may not be normal.

As an Equine Gestaltist®, we work with our clients to uncover these things. It is a co-active coaching model and there is nothing like it in the world. Everyone on the planet deserves to have a coach that truly listens, gives a person the opportunity to think things through, and come away with a new found awareness of themselves. The added benefit of partnering with horses is that the horse is a natural Gestaltist®. It does not matter how many times I watch a client with a horse, I am in awe of what the horse shows the client. We do not force our horses to work with people. They are completely at liberty. They choose to help the person in need. They choose to make a connection with the person. It's a beautiful thing to observe. They know how to move the person's energy into an equilibrium that only a horse can feel. For some mysterious reason, horses see us as part of their herd. My horses approach peo-

ple and instantly take a reading of their energy. A horse's energy field is twice as large as a humans and their heart beat can actually change our heart rhythms just by standing next to us.

The founder of this amazing type of coaching is Melisa Pearce. She has been seeing clients for over 30 years. Melissa is a psychotherapist who noticed many years ago that her horses were "volunteering" their own healing while her clients were visiting her home office for sessions.

There is nothing more empowering than to have a 1,000 pound animal validating exactly how you are feeling. She wanted to share her knowledge with the world and started a certification program so that the healing she discovered could reach more people than she could help alone. There are now over 180 Equine Gestaltists© in the



world. What started with one amazing, very observant therapist and horse-woman, has grown exponentially. I am one of many Equine Gestaltists© and I couldn't be more honored to offer this service to everyone willing to improve themselves, honor and love themselves so that they can eventually live in harmony.

For more information, visit www.wildfiredreams.com

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