



## **I Am That Horse: How to break free into an Equine Guided Education (EGE) enterprise**

You could say that I took the long way around to understanding the difference between becoming a success and becoming a person of value. I was striving for the former; but in so doing I've come to understand that the latter holds a whole lot more, because if I am a person of value, then I can add value to others. If I am adding value to others, then I have achieved what I set out to do. I have also learned that, while technological, economic and other resources are critical in building an EGE enterprise – in fact I lead a workshop series on this – it is the personal philosophy, belief and drive that truly provides its foundational success.

Following are some of the self-limits that I have overcome and lessons I've learned while building an EGE enterprise. These are the points most remarkable along my journey of which I am still reminded in moments of uncertainty. When I reflect on these emerging lessons, my state shifts back into harmony. My hope is that, in some way, these lessons will resonate with others, and help them along their path of developing their own and unique EGE enterprise.

### **Trust the horses and the process.**

I heard Ariana Strozzi, pioneer of Equine-Guided Education, adjure this simple – yet fundamental – piece of counsel numerous times. And so I practiced this from the beginning of my Certified Equine-Guided Educator fledge state, when I offered six free and small group workshops to friends and colleagues. It took just a few experiences of teaching and coaching for this lesson to sink in, but I came to fully experience its truth — in my body, spirit and mind. Letting go and trusting the horses to uniquely respond to humans is critical to my confidence, grounding and centeredness as a teacher and coach.

At one of the first workshops that I facilitated on my home ground, there was a small group of people gathered in a circle of chairs outside. When moved to speak, one woman shared that she was beginning to recognize how she was barring herself within her life. Her tears flowed as she spoke. Poppe, one of my horses, a senior gelding and former racetrack horse who had a lifetime of experience with bars and gates, walked over to her, as if compelled by an unseen force, and gently lowered his head to her chest. I remember feeling that this was the time to say nothing and just allow the quiet exchange of healing and consolation to take place. This was fully Poppe's place in the process, not mine. It was mine to simply hold the space in those tender moments. The horses do and will respond to people and their presence in their unique, intuitive way, whether or not I interject. So I deeply accepted,



became comfortable, and trusted the unfolding of this process for the sake of my own ease and to transmit this ease to my horses and clients.

### **Listen to your heart and truth.**

Early on in my CECE career, I noticed that when I spoke of my passionate pursuit to start up EGE services, a few people responded with pessimism, indifference, blank stares, negativity and disbelief that such a concept could result in a bona fide business. Defending and explaining my aim didn't feel good, and worse yet, felt like it was moving me anywhere but forward. Then, at the perfect time I listened to Dr. Wayne Dyer, a humorous author and speaker, which confirmed my experience. He spoke of not worrying about other people's approval, and he spoke also of the importance of being "independent of the good opinion of others" in order to self-actualize. Taking this to heart, I intentionally practiced listening to my truth and not attaching myself to an outcome or to anyone's opinion. Rather, I would just do what my heart spoke of and I'd figure out the rest. I did not verbalize my passion to anyone but a chosen few, in whom I recognized a supportive spirit and, more importantly, a sense of passion and purpose similar to my own. When incubating such a fresh and tender vision, I learned that it is important to keep it to myself and close to the heart until it begins to have a sturdy stem of its own. As it develops, the growth – not the words – demonstrates the substantiation. It was only then that everyone around me began to take notice and offer positive remarks, energy and feedback. Then the practice of listening to my own self-wisdom, heart and belief grew stronger. I no longer felt I needed the validation from outside sources and I eventually embodied a knowing. Owning and living my passion felt powerful and direct. By becoming conscious of my passion-power from within and avoiding getting in its way, I could begin to see and hear people responding to me positively and recognizing my purpose.

### **Remove doubts, anxieties, fears, tension (DAFT!).**

Identifying doubts, anxieties, fears and tension simply for what they are – and nothing more – is key. At times I felt swallowed and paralyzed by these self-induced growth inhibitors. Days, weeks and months passed and I would make only circular movement, like a dog chasing its tail. I was feeling overwhelmed by all the things I thought I was supposed to do to build a business of this nature and often felt panicked about not knowing the order in which they should be done: a web site, brochure, newsletter, promotion/outreach/advertising, program development, perfect language and descriptions, insurance, a business plan – and more! It was around one such



time of extreme DAFT that I traveled to Skyhorse to attend an EGEA Annual Conference – specifically to hear and meet one particular speaker, Pat Wagner, a fellow organizational development consultant. The one-line description for her presentation was ‘Business Planning Through the Eyes of an Intuitive Realist.’ I listened to my gut and flew across the country. If anyone could help me with answers, it was this kindred life learner. We met for lunch, and she patiently listened to my DAFT and offered feedback. Most importantly, she said something that I still draw upon daily and share with others: “You. Have. What. It. Takes.” This simple truth, imparted by someone with her expertise and knowing, was worth the entire trip. As a result, when I landed back in Vermont, I shifted into my center, learning how to “pay attention to my deeper awareness that has its own unique language and timing,” and thus replaced the frantic DAFT of “what do I do and when should I do it?!” I returned home and joined a Master Mind group that empowered me to self-create a strategic plan – which included allowing my intuition to guide me in letting go of unnecessary and assumed activities and self-induced stress. I almost immediately felt the powerful traction of forward movement. I continued to practice connecting my business mind with what mattered most to me – the practice naturally invited me to ask the creative ‘how’ question instead.

Up until that point, I had allowed more superficial, cultural and external beliefs and messages – usually in-my-head fear and judgment based – to lead the way. When I began to fully feel and realize that the previous episodes of DAFT were based on irrational and artificial beliefs that did not belong to me, it became much easier to question those old non-serving cues and dispel them with my new and self-created beliefs that served me better and more productively in the present. While coaching and teaching others through EGE to work through old messages and beliefs that do not serve and replace them with a chosen belief system, I literally became what I taught. Overcoming fear, judgment and the ‘old, non-productive ways’ is precisely what EGE offers. If we pay attention, we notice clearly that the horses themselves demonstrate a critical need to be in a fully present state of harmony and availability, free from fear, judgment and self-doubt. I take my daily lesson from them and teach others the same.

**Commitment: the patient and purposeful persistence of passion.**

Commitment is something difficult to describe and quantify. I believe it’s deeply personal to each one of us. I think the key piece to its sustainability is its intertwinement with passion, letting nothing stand in the way, no matter how long it takes. Somewhere along the way, maybe since the beginning of



my certification and investment, I maintained a posture of 'I will do what it takes to build this'.

In March 2005, near the end of my certification process with Ariana, each of us in our small class participated in a declaration exercise held in the large arena with 5 horses milling around at liberty. When my turn came, I couldn't begin fast enough. I hopped down from the fence where I had been perched, quietly observing others. I began steadily walking and holding a fist gently in the palm of my other hand, low, in front of my center, while Ariana encouraged me with her questions, helping to shape my declaration. I remember feeling like the rest of the world peeled away – no other people, no other horses, not even a clear vision, just me and my commitment. Before I could even recognize what I was saying – that I would offer EGE programs in Vermont for the sake of personal evolution and self-growth – a few more simple words came tumbling out. "May, May . . . it will happen in May!" All of the horses that had been relaxed in a dozing state, with heads hung low in the far reaching corners of the arena, all at once came zooming in to surround me. I only remember the gasps of my classmates and Ariana's voice reaching through to me, quite gently and very steadily, urging me to look around. It was sobering to see the horses so close and standing at attention around me. I still often reflect that this was the truest confirmation I could have on my path. As it turned out, after returning home in May 2005, I began my EGE services by holding several free workshops. As well, in May 2005 I met the father of my future son. Both were significant points on my path -- both having a baby and birthing EGE programs were desires and declarations that I made through this EGE class! My EGE business is now 7 years old and my son is six.

This true and passionate commitment to offering EGE services became pregnant with possibilities and opportunities that seemed to naturally unfold. Or, perhaps it was simply because I consciously connected to my deep desires that I began to recognize opportunities that had already existed. The realizations felt quite powerful. I continue to touch upon this commitment to guide me in my self-actualization as a leader of my EGE enterprise. An important part of the practice is becoming comfortable with the balancing act of vision and to not knowing exactly what is around the corner or how it is going to manifest, but to continually trust that the best will unfold. Sustainable, passionate commitment comes deep from within us, where boundless opportunities lie in wait. All we need to do is connect to it.



### **Vision – holding a strong intention and sense of direction**

Here is where the figurative rubber meets the road. With my deep trust of the horses' intuitive responses and the equine-guided process, closely listening to the truth of what my heart had to say and the commitment that gave me the fortitude to move forward, I then needed to frame my vision for an EGE enterprise. I remember at first being equipped with only the vision-experience of SkyHorse Ranch. I knew nothing else. (And for those who have been there, I think I can speak for most of us: that's a big vision to be-hold!) Holding that as my only vision was a pro and a con. It was a pro because it was a high and awesome standard, a con because of the nature of its size. I'd probably fail trying to achieve such a vision. It felt overwhelming and impossible. I reminded myself that it took Ariana some time to build SkyHorse Ranch – and with access to very different resources than I had available to me. I needed to figure out how to create a unique outlook, based on taking stock of my own current resources, accessible resources and my unique talents.

To comprehensively take account of available resources, I used a format called Holistic Resource Management, or HRM. Though I spent some time developing my HRM, it was relatively straightforward. The process included taking stock of such things as my education, trainings, skills, years of experience, property and financial assets, who could influence an outcome and decisions, environmental and local resources, a personal lifestyle statement and more. “At its core, the holistic decision-making framework uses the holistic goal to guide decision-making. The holistic goal ties people's desired way of life, based on what they value most deeply (materially and spiritually), to the ecosystems and resources that support their vision. The holistic management framework also considers the key role that animals play in renewing the land.” (Wikipedia definition of HRM), it was a relatively easy process compared to the next piece.

Next I needed to dig deeper. It was a query that Ariana posed to me one day during a 1-1 coaching call, a simple, yet pointed, question that I really needed to chew on in order for me to break through to another level. She asked me to reflect on what I do, wanted to be doing, and what I've already done then figure out common denominators. (1. Sharing EGE with others through coaching, teaching and facilitation 2. My current and past work experiences 3. What has deep heart and meaning in my life). As well I interpreted this to include the underlying qualities, values and strengths of these 'doing' domains. Since this exercise, many of my clients hear me submit, “All rivers converge to one and all rivers emerge from one. (This



metaphor works well for me because my place overlooks a great river confluence in Central Vermont!). Once I got a handle on how and where these domains met and complemented each other, yet another great dam had broken down for me. The powerfully, affirming current sluiced, flowed and gushed. My organizational development consulting business began to merge confidently with the fledgling EGE enterprise because I now clearly recognized the crossover. I was then able to successfully write my own biography piece for my EGE business, and develop an authentic mission statement. No coincidence, my mission/purpose/vision statement seems to develop deeper and clearer each time I journey on an (almost) annual pilgrimage to Skyhorse Ranch. By consistently refining the vision of leading my own unique EGE enterprise (there are exercises for this!) I am better able to embody it and grow what it takes to support clients in their personal and professional change, organize and support my staff, and better develop my professional services.

### **Enthusiasm –For Love Of What (FLOW)**

Several years ago, I made a life-altering decision for myself. I decided I would only do work that I was enthusiastic about and loved doing. At the time I was a three-quarter-time organizational and funding development consultant for Newman Consulting, LLC and a one-quarter-time Equine Guided Educator for Horses & Pathfinders, LLC. This decision was daunting for me, since I was a single parent and had financial responsibilities. I decided not to accept any jobs or clients about whom I was not enthusiastic – or who weren't enthusiastic about being and becoming part of the creative solution for the environment, their business or themselves. I would not do it just because of the money. I would do only what felt right for me to do. I would do only things that felt intuitively related to the meaning and purpose of my life. I feared I would fail, that it would take too much effort – or something worse. Yet I now create more money, energy and value in my life since that decision than I ever have before. I still live my life based on that decision. Now, as a one-quarter-time consultant and a three-quarter-time Equine Guided Educator, I coach clients that I love and at whose growth and creativity I marvel. Through my offered services of Equine-Guided Education, Somatic & Bareback Horsemanship and Team Building & Leadership Development, more people are investing in themselves, their businesses and more meaningful experiences with horses -- and moving forward with enlightenment, effectiveness and sustainability. They are making connections with themselves, others and the horses in ways previously unimagined.



As a result:

- I learned that clients do not equal money. I simply offer a way to people's own solutions and wisdom; I am here when they are ready to come. When they are ready to receive solutions and value from my offer then they do need to realize I am here (promotion) and I strongly believe there is a deep value exchange. I learned that my success and value is not defined by my income or number of clients; my success and value is better defined by my quality of presence and quality of work.
- I find creative and meaningful, passive and active ways to support myself financially until a full shift is made (if it is to be made) from Newman Consulting to Horses & Pathfinders; I will blend H&P and NC through coaching and consulting work, drawing on the wisdom of the horse throughout both domains.
- I shifted internal financial beliefs/messages of "just getting by with an expected income" to "abundant, organic and surprising growth and gifts in exchange for the value I provide my community."

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In a developing field such as EGE, which is still so unknown to some, yet so intuitively familiar to others, there can be moments of uncertainty that an EGE-based business could be lucrative or even sustainable. It is in these moments of self-doubt that I reflect upon my psycho-spiritual list here to refill myself with what feels fundamentally truer than any business model or plan that I know of. Packing these elements, I believe that I will always create ways to touch my EGE enterprise vision.

I once experienced a woman doing a piece of inquiry work with a horse at Skyhorse Ranch in which she was connecting to a sleepy horse about her own purpose and path and asking what steps to take next. All at once the horse vividly responded to the woman's inquiry by opening her eyes wide, dramatically arching her back, extending her neck, raising her head and literally growing taller and fuller before all of our eyes, filling herself with her large spirit and big possibility. I carry that vision with me and fill myself up during any moments of my own human self-doubt. I am that horse.



In sum, for you who may be burgeoning practitioners, here is the core list of recommendations:

1. Make yourself quietly sit in your seat and experience full trust of the horse's response to yourself and to others.
2. Be "independent of the good opinion of others" and take time to be quiet and listen to your heart of hearts
3. Believe you have what it takes -- because you do. Offer yourself as a conduit between the horse and others.
4. Commit to move forward and let nothing stand in the way, no matter how long it takes. It will come to fruition.
5. Create your own unique vision based on your unique gifts, resources, experience and outlook and create ways to touch on it almost daily.
6. Figure out what you love the most and make a stand for it - with burning enthusiasm. It will return to you in ways unimagined.