

Humans can be 'Touched by a Horse'

Psychotherapist has found horses make wonderful healers for many human problems

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Enterprise reporter

Melisa Pearce always knew that horses made her feel better. She's owned and ridden horses since she was 10 years old. Pearce has won two world championships showing horses; and owns a three-time champion American Paint Horse stallion who has bred more than 150 foals.

But it wasn't until this trained psychotherapist noticed her patients gravitating to her horses at a retreat in Flagstaff that she discovered that these lifelong friends also made her patients feel better. After spending time around her horses, Pearce noticed her patients would come back "more grounded, more secure."

"I started to see my horses as co-healers," she says. Those "co-healers" have inspired a whole new type of therapeutic practice for Pearce. These days, horses are a part of her psychotherapy practice at her ranch north of Boulder. She'll share her theories with participants of the Healing Arts and Healthy Lifestyles Show this weekend at the Eagle County Fairgrounds.

Established in 1986, "Touched By a Horse" has been featured in national publications. The Denver magazine "5280" named it the "Best Spiritual Retreat." Pearce, who gives seminars all over the country, says people's emotions have vibrational qualities. For example, family members will likely sense one person's bad mood



Special to the Enterprise
Melisa Pearce is one of the featured speakers at this week's Healing Arts & Healthy Lifestyle Show, Sept. 28-30, in Eagle.

before any words are spoken.

Horses are sensitive animals that quickly pick up on a person's mood, she adds. You can't fake it with a horse.

"I might be able to say, 'Oh, I'm doing fine today'; but the horse will call you on it," she says. Horses require people to be in the moment — not distracted — and to be very clear about intentions. This teaches people

Eagle Valley Healing Arts & Healthy Lifestyle Show

What: Featuring green technology, organic products, alternative healing

Where: Eagle River Event Center, Eagle County Fairgrounds

When: Sept. 28-30

Times: Friday, 4-8 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Admission: \$5 a day for adults and \$3 for children; or \$10 for a weekend pass

Details: www.eaglevalley.org

to be honest with themselves, and to practice patience and clarity.

Pearce works with both horse owners and those who've never even ridden. Her program is in demand to treat addictions and eating disorders. Corporate clients use the horses for team building exercises. Working with the horses can detect possible imbalances in the family of an addict; or point out work practices that may need to be adjusted.

Pearce uses games or exercises to get a point across. For example, she might ask a client to step inside the ring with a horse and, without using a word, ask the horse to run in a certain direction, or stop or go. She demonstrates how first; then, without explanation, asks the participant to repeat what she just had the horse do, sans

voice commands.

At first, most people have little success and are flummoxed. But with some work, they are usually eventually able to complete the exercise. It's really a lesson in communication style and body language.

"It feels like magic to the person when they finally achieve it," says Pearce.

At the Eagle Valley Healing Arts & Healthy Lifestyle Show, Pearce will demonstrate just how a horse connection works. She will also speak about human emotional healing through horses, and offer some individual counseling. Her booth also offers high-end gifts and Pearce's book, "Whispers from the Horse's Heart."

Pearce will offer lectures and demonstrations at the Eagle River Event Center, Eagle County Fairgrounds on Saturday, Sept. 29 at 5:30 p.m.; and on Sunday, Sept. 30, outside, at noon.