



Rolfing for Equestrians

It's as if Rolfing was invented for equestrians: When a rider has received Rolfing, body awareness and the importance of position are enhanced; Rolfing reduces tension and promotes relaxation. **Without awareness of position, without balanced flexibility, strength, endurance, and relaxation, both rider and horse are at increased risk of injury and for wasting precious time and energy in training and showing.**

With four legs supporting him, a horse in nature is almost perfectly balanced. As result, he only needs to expend a moderate amount of energy as he effortlessly runs and jumps through his environment. But when ridden, his effortless movement is compromised.

To appreciate how difficult is IS for a horse to be ridden, consider how humans are constructed:

We are totally and completely imbalanced. Asymmetrical inside and out, a human's two legs as well and two arms are never exactly the same length. Even we were to spend a lifetime working out, both arms and both legs could never be as equally strong or as equally flexible.

Furthering our imbalance, our organs, glands, and viscera are entirely asymmetrical. We are in fact now, and will always be, totally imbalanced beings.

Additionally, each and every injury and trauma, both physically and emotionally, compounds our natural imbalance. Even if we were lucky enough to never have experienced significant trauma or injury, simply the natural process of aging increases our unevenness.

Even if you don't feel your imbalance, it's there. Even if you don't feel your imbalance increasing, it is. As our imbalance increases, depending on our health history and age, it becomes increasingly difficult to control the subtle, and often not-so-subtle, aspects our body.

It is therefore essential that riders understand that even the slightest imbalance, be it physical or emotional, adversely affects rider and horse communication. In virtually every written equestrian resource reflecting the importance of communication, you'll see something like this:

The rider communicates with the horse with a subtle shifting of body weight, the right amount of leg pressure, and specific subtle signals to the horse's mouth through the reins. To ride in harmony with the horse, the rider must be sensitive enough to follow the horse's movement through the seat and back, yet maintain elegant upright posture with quiet, independent legs and hands. And so on.

The logic is inescapable: As accumulated injuries, stress, and age increase, your ability to control your own body decreases; even if subtly *and even if you don't feel it happening*. Even when subtle, your body's imbalance makes it increasingly difficult for your horse to maintain his own balance and to do what you ask of him (more so when you are injured or growing older).

Think about it! We take a near balanced horse away from nature and place a totally imbalanced human on him ... and then ask the horse to maintain his balance as we guide him through a series of complex exercises.

Keeping in mind that no human is perfectly balanced, the more experienced and balanced the rider, physically and emotionally, the easier it is for the horse. The less experienced and/or more imbalanced the rider is, physically and emotionally, the more the horse must expend unnecessary energy as he strives to regain and maintain his own balance.

And yet, with a person sitting on his back, irrespective of how experienced or balanced the rider, the horse must work to keep his own balance and union. Still, he gallantly tries to give his very best.

We need to do better for the horse ...
And for ourselves.

Before we ask a horse to respond to our hands, seat and legs, and to perform the various and complex elements of a test or course, we really should ask ourselves:

If my horse is being trained to enhance his flexibility, alignment, strength, endurance *and* relaxation, how fair am I being to him when I myself am not working on these very same things? If I want my horse to succeed maximally, shouldn't we *both* be working on enhancing alignment, strength, flexibility, endurance, *and* relaxation?

Throughout your riding career, you have been asked to create within your horse, a progression of gymnastic exercises that lead to a balanced mount. As a rider, you want to do everything your trainers ask of you, but it's often difficult because even when you understand what they ask of you, your body doesn't always comply. And when it doesn't, what chance does your horse have to be the very best he can be?

That's where Rolfing comes in. Just like what an advanced trainer can do with a horse, when *appropriately* practiced *without* forcing, Rolfing can help a rider create enhanced awareness, flexibility, and subtle control. Rolfing also promotes softness, lightness, and relaxation. Trainers know that for horses, this is far easier said than done.

Rolfing and riding have this in common: It takes years of practice for a trainer to bring the very best out of horse and rider. It also takes years of practice for a Rolfing teacher to bring the very best out of a Rolfing client.

For both riding and Rolfing to succeed, there are no short cuts to success. Although success requires concentration, consistency, and discipline; forcing and "trying" compromise long-term success. With both riding and Rolfing, you might achieve short-term results by trying hard or by using strong hands, legs and a strong seat; but in the long term, you increase your risk of injury and failure.

Maximum success in riding and Rolfing comes by learning how to appropriately do less in order to get more; by learning how to gain length, strength, and enhanced endurance without tension; and in so doing, learning how to promote consistency through a relaxed and balanced state of mind and body.

Said another way, maximum success does not come by working hard, but by learning how to *hardly* work.

Find out more at our website, at <http://www.backtolifehealingarts.com> Here you'll find out how you can maintain your body in optimum balance and alignment with our unique combination of hands-on therapies. You can also call us at 561.584.8400

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