



How To Achieve Lasting Riding Success

Introduction

“Start with the end in mind.” --Stephen Covey

Hi Superstars!

I am **so** happy that you have downloaded my E-book on How to Achieve Lasting Riding Success.

I am also really excited for you, because when I started out on my own riding journey I didn't have much help, I felt very much alone and very scared, and didn't know how to go about achieving the things I wanted. I knew I wanted to go to the Olympics, I knew that was my end goal, but my goodness that is **very** hard especially when you can hardly rise to the trot and you have only done trail riding!

It's a very long way to go from riding once a week on trails to becoming an Olympian, and I am still not yet an Olympian, so you might be thinking to yourself – “Well what do you know, and why are you writing a book?!” But I feel that I have experienced and learnt a lot in the last fifteen years, so that I can help you on your own journey and be able to give you a few hints and tips, so that you can bypass the things that do not work and continue with the things that **do** work.

First of all, I would like to introduce myself a little more, although I know you didn't download the book to learn about me, I feel I should give you some background information so that you can get an understanding of where I came from; perhaps you may even relate to my story yourself.

I first began riding when I was fourteen years old - I rode once during the week, and on the weekends my friend and I (we both didn't know very much about horses at the time) would go to the agistment where our horses were kept, and we would ride the horses all day.

We would do our version of dressage, and then some show jumping and in the afternoon go on a big trail ride. Back then my only goal was, I hate to say, to beat my friend in the race back home on the trail ride, we would gallop them all the way back. My only goal and riding vision was to get back first and beat my friend! My first horse was leased, until *finally* my parents agreed to buy me my own horse (after 10 years of begging) - I remember being so excited about it!

It is so funny looking back now to what my criteria was; it had to be prettier than my friend's horse, it had to be faster than my friend's horse, and I had this dream that the horse would come galloping up to me when I called it. And then, wow, we found a horse that did exactly this, and I all I could think about was how jealous my friend would be as her horse did not do this! So there were my criteria, my horse had to be prettier, faster and come up to me when it was called, so I bought the horse!

And yes, my horse was faster, although I am sure if my friend were to read this, she would disagree!



I started riding when I was 14, and decided I wanted to be an eventer

After a while, my friend told me she was moving agistment and joining what she called Pony Club - I asked: what *is* Pony Club? I had never heard about it. So off we went to Pony Club. When we were graded, the first thing I thought about was how I hoped I would get in Grade 4, and what if my friend gets into that grade and I don't?!

I actually thought that I was a really fantastic and wonderful rider, I thought I could really ride very well and that I could sit on anything and thought Olympics here I come, I really thought I had it all (as you do at that age!)

Pony Club really opened up my eyes and I realised that I wasn't really quite as good as I thought! Yes, I was put in Grade 4, and so my next goal was that I must get to Grade 1 - at the time Grade 1 was this *huge* thing. Grade 1 was equivalent to the Olympics as far as I could understand, and I used to stare at the Grade 1 riders and think to myself about how much I wished I was as good as them, as athletic as them and as beautiful as them. But my pony and I never quite looked the way that they looked!



I started competing EFA, realising I still had a lot to learn!

Little by little, day by day, year by year, I kept riding and practicing and I finally got to my goal

of Grade 1! I then started competing EFA, and realized that this was a whole new ball game. I thought that I was good, but I still had a lot to learn!

I entered EFA competitions and came last all the time - 40%, 50%, yes it really was quite tragic! So when people, clients come to me and say "Oh, I am really bad **all** the time, and I cannot win," – I always tell them that they are preaching to the choir – do you want to compare sob stories, because I have plenty!!

I had a horse who was quite spooky, I would do all of my tests in the middle of the arena – he would never get to the long side because he was scared that the letters would eat him, and here I was thinking I was really good to keep the horse going, but I wasn't at all, as I couldn't even keep him on track!

This was my progression. I had come from a trail riding girl who thought I was really good, to a Pony Club girl who realised she really didn't know anything. Then finally conquering Pony Club and winning Grade 1, and thinking again how awesome I was, and then going into EFA Prelim and realising I still knew nothing!

I loved that journey, I really loved it. That drive to become better and that hunger for improvement. I am the type of person who gets bored quite quickly, and I need something that challenges me or I have no motivation. So I guess I was lucky that I had all these challenges, because as I said, I was coming last and I knew I could only improve.

I then decided to purchase a new horse and I was really excited because it was



Cross country made me shake and want to throw up, so I decided to be a dressage rider instead!!

actually a proper dressage horse. I had originally thought that I would be an Eventer, but I never knew how high they actually jumped at Olympic level. When I did find out how high they jumped, I felt really sick and horrible about cross country, I came to the conclusion that I wasn't a Cross Country Rider and that I was actually a Dressage rider. So that was

great, and here I was with a new horse - I thought this is it, in four years I will be a Grand Prix rider!

So I started riding dressage, but my horse had other ideas – he decided he actually wasn't going to be a dressage horse. I didn't know anything about dressage and I was trying to train him by copying what I saw others do. I would go and watch other people ride and win and I thought I just need to do what they're doing, that was basically my only logic. I did have a trainer once a week at the time, but she was not a mentor, and wasn't someone who could guide me through, and answer my questions in a way that I could understand and learn from what I was doing.

So there I was with my horse, bless his soul, he tried so hard for me but I confused the crap out of him and he started bolting. If something upset him, he would become totally out of control and just bolt. I have a very embarrassing story that I don't tell often, but I think it is very important that you know my past. A lot of people now say to me - Oh wow, you have always been so successful, it's all been so easy for you; life has been so great for you, but I want people to understand that I can tell you that I have cried, I have cried a river, I have cried a bloody ocean, I have cried and have been frustrated and been so hurt, and so emotionally distraught through my riding journey.

Back to the embarrassing story - my horse bolted around Werribee Park, which for people who do not live in Victoria, is the main grounds where you go to compete EFA. My horse was in the arena, and while doing the 20 meter trot circle and then canter, he shook his head and said "I have had enough of that," bolted out of the arena and continued bolting around Werribee with me, of course, screaming at the top of my voice and yelling "**Stop! Help! Stop!**"

All very dramatic, because I tend to be a little bit of a drama queen, but it was all very traumatic for me, I was only 17 at the time and I just couldn't believe that this was happening to me, I was scared and I didn't know how to stop him. The worst thing was I was galloping past arenas where other people were trying to do tests in. I was so embarrassed and scared but finally I managed to stop him.

I dismounted and was walking him back to my float when a Medium level dressage rider at the time, I will never, ever forget it, walked passed me and said "Are you happy you bitch?" I was sobbing, and saying "I'm sorry," between the sobs and hiccups, "I didn't mean it," and she said to me "Well you did, thanks very much," and just walked off.



I finally got him to bow to my command - but it was 10 years in the making!

Of course I was completely distraught, and what my coach didn't tell me at the time (otherwise I would have stopped riding altogether) was that she was telephoned by the EFA and was told to inform me that if I couldn't control my horse I was going to be banned from all future EFA competitions for the next six months! She just advised me to stop competing until I could handle my horse.

I went home and thought oh my God, what am I going to do? I was so lost. In the end I came to the conclusion that the horse thought he had it over me, that he was too strong for me, so I got some guts, knowledge and looking back now, there was a shift in me and I said "You are never going to do this to me again!" So whenever I felt he was going for the bolt, I pulled his reins and held him back and said to him "Really? Do you want to talk about this?"

This was a shift in *me* for once not playing the victim, I was very good at playing the victim, and very good at blaming my horse and saying everything that he did was his was his fault and not mine. I was the victim of “poor me” syndrome, everything was happening to me, the *Queen*. I was the angel, and my horse the devil and it was all happening to me, against me, nothing was my fault, everything was their fault.

That was the first shift that was what I definitely needed. I finally realised that everything that was happening to me, what the horse does to me, I was responsible for, so if I want something to change, or for the horse to do something different, it is *only* going to be up to **me** to change.

Naturally, I didn't think about it so eloquently back then. I would say “I have to stop this horse from bolting if I am ever going to ride again.” That was great, because when I started competing again, I started winning and placing, and it was absolutely amazing. I went through Preliminary, and through Novice and then I got to Elementary, and I thought “Oh my God, I am so awesome, this is great, I am riding Elementary!”

I knew it was only a hop skip and jump away from Medium, where I would finally be doing things called “flying changes”, and I was so excited about this - I was finally on my way to becoming the Grand Prix Olympians whom I had been watching all my life.

The only problem was that I didn't really know how to do flying changes and neither did my horse. My horse was young and so was I, and here I was, knowing nothing, trying to teach my horse who knew nothing, such a complex thing, so, you have to love it, disaster, disaster, disaster!

Once again, I confused the crap out of my horse, so he developed a rearing problem, he would just go up all the time! So again, in another embarrassing and horrible moment, I was at a competition and supposed to enter at A in collected canter, halt and salute at X, continue at collected trot. I did the cantering and halt, then went to trot and my horse went into a full rear and then landed, I put my legs on again to trot and he then went up into a rear again... this went on for a minute (and you only have a minute to continue the test otherwise you are eliminated), so they rang the bell and told me I was eliminated. I tried to put on my legs again to tell the horse to walk out, but he reared again so I then had to get my boyfriend to walk into the arena and help me by leading the horse out.

That again was humiliating, devastating and again I questioned myself as to if I was good enough, how was I ever going to get over this? I felt I was the worst trainer and rider, I was the worst in the whole wide world! I was really down on myself and I had moved from blaming my horse, to thinking I must be the worst person in the whole world who cannot ride a horse, it was complete self hatred, which was not helpful either. Again, it came down to the fact that I wanted to ride, yes I **really** wanted to ride! People were questioning why I wanted to keep on going, when to keep going through the pain I was going through, the pain was never bigger with the thought I would never sit on a horse again.

Sitting on a horse for me is like my oxygen. When I am away on holidays the first thing I ask my husband is to go for a horse ride on the beach, or lets go for a horse ride in the bush, wherever we are, either in Europe or in Australia, all I want to do is ride a horse! He always says "Darl, you do not have to ride a horse we are on holidays!" I always miss the horses and I miss the riding, and it

is the riding and horses I look forward to when we get home, so that is why I kept going.

I actually went to the AEBC (the McLean's) this time and they taught me to stop my horse from rearing and we progressed from there - from Medium, Advanced, Prix St George, to Inter 1 to Inter 2. I say it as if it was all very easy but it took me about six years.

I learned so, so much in that journey; first I blamed the horse, then I blamed myself, and then it developed slowly into an understanding of "Yes, I *am* responsible," but at the same time I removed the blame from myself. I was as good a rider as I could be at that moment. I became much more forgiving to myself, much more allowing for my mistakes.

I used to be a rider who would never ride unless I had a coach - so I would only ride once a week, as I was terrified I would stuff something up, terrified that I was that much of a loser, that much of a crap rider, that I couldn't understand how to ride a horse on the bit and do a three minute circle, I had that little confidence! I had no confidence in my ability, no confidence in myself.

So really the next riding stage in my journey through my different coaches and the different things that I did were developing that mind set and developing that attitude of: Yes, dressage is completely serious, but it's OK to make mistakes and it's OK to play, there is no right way, and there are a million ways to do things, as well as a lot of other stuff that we are going to talk about in the Mind Set chapter.

So that is just a little about me. I wanted to give you that type of introduction so that you have an understanding of "hang on, it hasn't all been rosy" - I was going to be **banned** from the EFA because my horse bolted around Werribee.

That's a bit embarrassing! When my clients talk to me about competing and about how they are nervous and they have these beliefs like "Ooh, I could never do that," I say to them "well what is the worst that could happen?" and they say "ummm, the worst that could happen...I don't know." So I tell them my story, and they say "Okay, **that** is the worst that could happen!"

I just laugh and tell them "Awesome, because that happened to me, and guess what, I am still alive!" I didn't burst into flames, it made me stronger and it gave me a funny story to tell - and yes I probably should wish that it had never happened to me, but it happened for some kind of reason!

Don't think that things have totally changed and I decided to ride horses that wouldn't do that to me - last year one of my stallions bucked me off at Werribee in the warm up arena and then galloped around until somebody caught him. I was still publicly humiliated, embarrassed and devastated but you have to think about the purpose, about what you learn from it, how you can grow from it and what you can do better next time?

I am now super ready to get into this book and so excited to see you on the other side!



Chapter One - What is Success to You?

“Success without honour is an unseasoned dish; it will satisfy your hunger, but it won't taste good” -- Joe Paterno

I am so excited and ready to start telling you *how* to have riding success, but the first thing I need to talk about, the first thing we have to find out is; what does success mean to **you**?!

That is something I learned about pretty early in my journey, so as I said when I started; success meant to me, beating my friend in a race. Then when I started Pony Club, success to me meant getting to Grade 1. When I started competing EFA success meant winning Grand Prix, and now success means competing in the Olympics, and the final success would be winning a Gold Medal.

But at the same time that doesn't mean that going to the Olympics is how I can tick off that I succeeded, because I would be a very miserable and stressed out person, if that was the case. I experience riding success **every** day.

It is a goal – it's a mission, whether that is very small or very large. I have tiny little goals, like; I want to be able to give my horse sugar every time we are riding. So whenever we are riding and he has done something good, whatever we are working on, like half passes, flying changes, it doesn't matter, if he has done it well, I give him some sugar. So that is like a tiny bit of success and to

me the most basic riding success is when I am smiling - smiling because I can say, oh my God, that was a cool moment, I experienced bliss with my horse, I had a connection with my horse and am riding successfully by achieving something, and that it was a bit better than what I achieved yesterday.

So I am constantly experiencing success, which means I am constantly happy and loving my riding, but I also have this bigger vision of success which means that I am hungry, I am motivated and I am dedicated to keep riding, to keep working at it. I don't want to ever achieve – that might sound stupid – but I know I am never going to arrive. I know my personality well enough to know that even if I win a gold medal at the Olympics, I would then want two, and even if I won two I would want four, and if I would win four I would want six.

I know it would never end, because there would always be more to succeed, there would always be more to do and so if that was my marker for success, I know I would never achieve it. I would never enjoy the gold medal as there would always be more to achieve – I would then want two. So yes I have big goals, but to me the actual riding success is, the whole point that I have done to start this company, what my vision and message is... Riding Success, is determined by you, and it should be every day.

So my clients come to me and say, I can't canter, I am terrified to canter - I do it a little bit, my heart is in my mouth, I feel awful, I feel sick about it, I don't want to do it. So I do some NLP work with them, and I will never forget I worked with this client who for 25 years, she actually was cantering, she actually rode her horse quite often - but she was the most nervous rider you would have ever seen, and she always felt sick in her stomach, but she also loved to ride. It was the most amazing thing - so I did all this work with her and had her bolting

around the arena with this big smile on her face, and when I finally said alright stop, you are having too much fun, stop, come back.

So she came back to me crying her eyes out, and I said, “What? Too far?” which happens sometimes in my coaching – oops! But she was grinning and saying, “No these are tears of joy, because for 25 years I have not being able to enjoy what I just did.” That to me, was HER gold medal moment, and I was so happy and honoured that I could be part of that moment for her, because it was huge - it was her gold medal moment.

To me, people should not have a riding success goal that they *think* they should have - so if you are a dressage rider you *think* it should be grand prix; for you it might be the canter, or riding a clean flying change or whatever it is, that will bring about that joy, lightness and laughter to your life, than **that** is riding success.

When you think about riding success, the question to ask is: **What do you want?** Not what do you think you should have, not what do you think you want or should want. Not what everyone else thinks you should want or have at your club, agistment, or the crowd you hang out with. WHAT DO YOU WANT? What was your dream when you were little, or when you started getting into horses. So for me it was always about riding a black stallion, I always wanted a horse ever since I knew what horses were about - and I didn't get my first horse until I was about fifteen so for a good ten years there I had a lot of time to dream what I wanted.

And my dream was owning a black horse, and now people say to me “Wow, you have a stud that only has black horses, and you ride black stallions all day, that is weird,” and I just laugh, and I say “That’s not weird, I spent the last ten years of my life creating this dream and this goal for myself - it couldn’t have happened any other way.”



*My dream was to own and ride big black stallions, so it couldn't have happened any other way!
(Photo: Julie Wilson)*

So it is really all about understanding *you* and understanding what you want - what was your dream when you were little? So for all people it is different, and it knowing what you connect with and knowing what do I want, what would give me fulfillment? You know that feeling you get in your stomach when you just go “Wow!! I’ve done it, I’ve achieved it.” Like I said, it is going to evolve, it’s going change, you can’t perceive or even know the person you are going to be in a year, to know what you want then. So what do you want *now*? If I had said to you “Guys, I am a fairy godmother, and I have a wand in my hand, and I can give you what ever you want,” - what would you want me to flick my wand and give you? And whatever that answer is **THAT** is riding success to you, and that is what you are working towards. So I hope I have made that really clear. NO goal is bigger than the other, it is NOT like, “Ok, winning the Olympic gold medal

is obviously *much* more important than my cantering in a circle.” NO!! To me, cantering in a circle is even more exciting and more awesome than winning an Olympic gold medal - because to win an Olympic gold medal you need many things, you need a great horse, you need the luck, you need to be healthy, your horse needs to be healthy, a million things need to go right.



What will riding success give you?

But to canter a circle that is pretty much *you*. YOU control that, YOU can create that - yes, its all about YOU. I love all spectrums of the riding success scale. Most importantly, it needs to have meaning and heart to you - it

needs to make your skin prickle

and your heart rate go up when you think about it.

When I think about the Olympics my heart rate goes up and I get butterflies in my stomach - and I love that because it means I am really excited, and I want it, and am really passionate about it because it lights me up, and as they say, it really turns me on. So what lights you up and turns you on? When you have discovered that and you know what you really want, and more importantly why you want it. What will achieving that give you, that's a really important question to ask, because I laugh - winning a gold medal actually gives me nothing. I know it really sounds crazy, but what does it give me? It just means that I made it to the Olympics and won a gold medal, it means I was the best person with the best horse on that day whenever it was, at that time when I did the test and those particular judges thought so.

That is all that it means, it doesn't mean anything. It doesn't mean anything to me as a rider, it doesn't mean anything about me as a person, but something bigger than that.

What will riding success give you? That is what keeps you going through the hard times, so I know what achieving that riding goal will give me is just satisfaction for a second, and then it will give me a new goal! My life is all about getting things. Anthony Robins says; "Answer the question, life is..... " - and you are only allowed one word to describe it. So you can say for instance: life is fun, or life is a game, or life is for loving, or life is for living, or whatever it is. For me, life is a competition - everything in my life is a competition so winning that gold just means, yep, I have won that competition, so now I need a new competition.

Now we have talked about *what* riding success is to you – you have your goal, you know what you want to achieve, what the pinnacle of riding success is for you. So let's get into it!



Chapter Two - The Three Keys to Riding Success

"The key to success is making your dreams come true" -- Anonymous

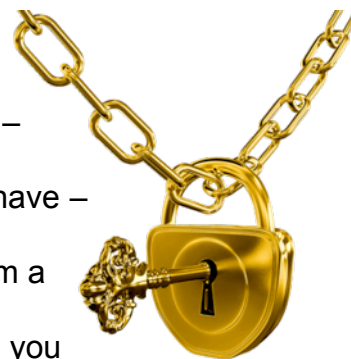
Riding success is made up of three things. The first thing is YOU!! You and especially your mindset. So I talked a little bit about how I firstly used to just blame my horse, and then I used to just hate *me*. And then now, through all my learnings and all my understandings (and believe me I am certainly not there yet!) I am in a better mindset in how I can ride and how I can serve my horse and serve myself.

So I think mindset is the first thing you need – you need to be in the right mindset, with the right beliefs, and you need to have the right skills so that you can shut off emotions – of course sometimes horses do things or things happen and we can't have emotions when we are riding – you have to be able to put all of that away, and filter it all out, so that we can just focus on our horse.

The second thing you need is the skills – we have worked on our mind, and can only focus on our horse, and we know we are 100% responsible for our own results, we are ready to rock!! Then we get on a horse, we have never ridden a horse before, we don't know how to make it go, stop, turn, move off our leg or anything.

So the next thing you need to learn is the skills – how do I ride a horse? How do I use my seat? What is a half halt? How do I get my horse on the bit? How do I get my horse through? How do I get him to turn? How do I get good transitions? How do I do a good dressage test? What is a centre line? All of these things that you need to learn which is the skill set and the base for your training. This is obviously really important – we are going to need this before we can be successful in our riding.

The third thing, and we tend to forget about this a little bit – and this is more for the Olympic-type goal that you may have – is that to have riding success, you need the horse. So I am a big believer that the mind can do a lot of things, and if you *think* you can *be*, and all these things, but I don't believe a donkey could ever win an Olympic gold medal – a donkey just isn't built the right way. It is like saying that a Clydesdale would ever win the Melbourne cup – it just isn't going to happen! So you need to have the right horse that matches what you are going to do.



If want to canter in a circle, and that is your riding success goal, you just need a horse that can canter – seems pretty easy!

If your goal is a bit bigger, say competing Grand Prix, you at least need a horse that can be taught to go there. My first horse didn't actually compete Grand Prix – he never actually scored high enough in the Inter II to qualify for the Grand Prix. But he learnt all of the Grand Prix movements, and so he was a horse that was very trainable (once his rider actually understood how to train him!) but he had no talent – he was built down hill, on the forehand, and had no natural ability whatsoever! He looked like a giraffe in the paddock!

This horse was never going to 'wow' the judges at an international level – but he was still a great horse, and had so much to teach me, and I learnt and grew and developed a lot riding and training with him. So making sure your horse can do his job is really important!

So, let's delve a little bit deeper into these three keys to riding success.



Chapter Three - Mindset

"Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude." -- Thomas Jefferson

Why do I harp on about this? I started my Diploma in Life Coaching and learning about NLP at the start of 2009, and I remember walking out of the intake weekend, thinking "Oh my god, I know nothing about anything!"

Everything I thought I knew had been challenged, everything I thought was real, wasn't – it was an amazing place to be! Taking this into riding – my riding improved out of sight – there was just so much that I could grow and develop and learn about with this new mindset, when I was riding a horse.

The main thing was becoming 100% responsible for all of my results, and all of my non-results. So everything that my horse did wonderfully under me – woohoo!! I was so excited because I had created all of that, that was all me – I was awesome!!

BUT, that also meant that everything he did wrong, everything that wasn't so great – I had created that, that was all my doing as well – I had to take responsibility for that.

I also had to take responsibility for the change – it wasn't my horse's responsibility to change, it wasn't his job to become better – it was only up to me to be better, it was only up to me to change.

I guess that was where I learnt also about behavioural flexibility – if you do something that doesn't work, then try something else! And that was something that was quite unusual for me in my riding, because I was so scared of getting it wrong! I thought there was only one way, and I was so desperate to know the right way, I was so scared of trying another way, and I couldn't dare think of trying something new for myself.

This was probably the most fun part – in the first month I had so much fun trying all of this crazy new stuff – patting my head and rubbing my tummy while holding the reins in one hand and wondering if that would make my horse piaffe – it didn't by the way – but imagine if it had!! It was really quite freeing and wonderful to be ok with that – if I failed, well we have this thing in



After learning NLP and all about Mindset, my riding improved out of sight

NLP that there is no such thing as failure, only feedback.

So if I did something and it didn't work, then that was ok – now I knew, I just needed to try something else! It was really exciting – I was like a kid in a candy store “really? I can try something else?” This is when things really started happening for me.

There are some clips on YouTube, and I have written a couple of articles on mindset that you can check out (these can be accessed via my website). It really does come back to how you think.

When I think about my idols in dressage, such as Isabel Werth, Klaus Balkenhol and so many other people - I think of all of the top riders and think – what do you have that I don't? as in “what were they born with?” Are they smarter than me? Were they born more talented than me? Are they some weird martians that I could never hope to be like? NO!! They are humans, they have the same access to their brain as I do, there is nothing that separates me from them except the experiences that we have had, and the choices that we make.

So obviously all of the top riders may have been riding for many more years than me. They might be riding really great horses – better horses than I have ever ridden. And they might have great coaches teaching them great skills – more than I could ever hope to have. BUT that's all! You might say but that is a lot, but that was really quite freeing to me.

They are not some martian that I could never hope to compete with or win with – I just need to get their experiences, and I need to make the same choices as them, and I will get the same results. This is called modelling from NLP. Once I figured that out, it was actually quite exciting.

If you have someone in your life that has experienced the same success that you would like to achieve, go out and model them – figure out how they think, what skills they have, how they got these skills, how they do what they do...

My mentor once said to me, don't go out and think "Wow, how does *she* do that?" – that is the wrong question to ask. Instead, ask "How do *I* do that?" If you see someone ride how you would like to ride, ask yourself "How do *I* ride like them?"

When you start to ask yourself these kinds of quality questions, believe me, you start to come up with some really great quality answers.

I could talk about mindset for weeks – I do in my workshops and my programs – I absolutely love it! Like I said I am so not there yet! I haven't learn even 1% of what is out there but it is definitely a great place to start, and a great thing to play with.

Someone I really look up to and I really admire his philosophy on life is Richard Bandler who created NLP. His mission, and his whole point of life is to experience bliss in every moment. COOL – bliss in every moment sounds fantastic! I really like that – so whatever you do in life, if you are trying to figure out how to rise to the trot, or do flying changes or whatever you are doing, if you are scowling and you hate it and you are beating yourself up over it, and it is all too hard, and you are too scared, too doubtful, too hard on yourself – lighten up, be blissful and enjoy the journey!

Hopefully this has made you realise that mindset is really so important in the Riding Success journey.



Chapter Four - Skills

"It's what you learn after you know it all that counts." -- Attributed to Harry S. Truman

The next step is your skill set, your education – you need to know how to ride a horse. It doesn't matter what you think, what kind of horse you have – if you don't know what buttons to press to make the horse do what you want, you are not going to be succeeding very much. So it is really, really important that you get the right education.

I remember when I was learning how to ride, I had a coach, and was so scared to ride without her. I don't know if this is necessarily the best thing – I know when I coach that I empower my clients to become trainers, not to become riders, so that they are able to train their horse and to ride without me being there.

So if I am coaching a client and they are riding – I am saying "circle 20m, more outside rein, more inside leg, use a bit more leg...I am just being a tape recorder for them. I am telling them what they have to do, and the minute that I am not there, they don't have someone telling them what to do!

Most people can't afford to have a coach that watches them every time that they ride, and most coaches don't have the time to coach each client every time they

ride! I empower my clients to train rather than ride. Of course, I will be there telling them to use more inside rein, more leg, or whatever they need to do, but so many times I bring the client back and ask them if they know *why* they used more inside rein.

Or something my clients hate (I love it!) – we do a drill on the half pass for example, and it won't work at all – and they will look at me, and I will say "What?" and they ask me what they did wrong. Instead of answering it for them, I ask them to answer the question themselves.



When you are learning how to ride, you want someone that can teach you not only the HOW, but also the WHY

To start off with they don't know, so I ask them to tell me what went wrong – "the horse lead with it's shoulders." So I ask them what do they think they could do to stop the horse leading with its shoulders? "I guess I could use more outside rein."

What else happened? "He lost rhythm and starting rushing" – so what do you think you should do if he is rushing? "I guess I should do more half halts and collect with my seat."

Ok, so we will try all of their suggestions, and off they go again into the half pass and it is perfect. I could have started screaming at them during the half pass, "Outside rein, half halts, use your seat!" and they would have listened and done it like a robot.

But the next day, when I wasn't there, they would have tried it again, gone across the diagonal, the horse would have again been rushing and leading with the shoulders, and they wouldn't have remembered what I had said.

Because I bring it back to them, because I believe, I know, all of the answers are within you now. Sometimes when I ask my client what went wrong, they tell me they have absolutely no idea what went wrong, then it is my job then to go through it with them and explain what happened.

But first, I ask them if they did know what to do to fix the problem, what would they guess to do? Normally their guess is right, they have just never had the belief and the freedom to explore what they think might work and might not work.

Make sure you have a coach that teaches you the skills so that you understand them for yourself. You want someone that not only tells you HOW but WHY – I am a huge believer in the WHY!

As a rider I am always asking the questions – how could I do this better? What is going wrong? What could I do more of? What do I need to do less of? This is what you need to understand as well with the skills – if you are learning something new such as canter transitions, make sure you know it in detail. Make sure you understand what you are doing and how are you doing it. That, to me is being fair on your horse as well.

If I can't completely break down what I am doing, I tend to spend a bit more time on it off the horse. You might laugh at me, but once I spent 3 hours working out one time tempis with lefts and rights and everything else – because I was so confused in my head (I have a thing about left and right!) before I got on my horse.

Don't think that I am some angel because I am not – I got on my horse and at first I was confusing the crap out of the both of us because I was getting mixed

up with my lefts and rights! And my horse was cantering around thinking “oh my god, what did I do to deserve a jockey like this?!”

But that is ok, because I love my horse, he is doing his best, he knows I am doing my best, and together we muck around and try and get there. This is how it needs to be for you. Yes you need the skills, yes you need to know *why* as well as *how* to do something – you need a coach that gives you that. Be prepared to not get it right first go! Nobody gets it right on the first go!

My favourite thought on that is the philosophy – when you first started to walk, did you just get up on your two feet and start walking around, saying “gee mum and dad, look at me walking around!!” I guarantee you didn’t! You went to get up and you fell down, then you went to walk and you fell down and then you went to walk another step and fell down. Why would anything in riding that you are learning be any different? You are going to fall – it’s ok!

Just as the baby tries and tries again, you also have to trust that you are going to get better every single day. If you are not getting better – email me! If you say, so you know what, I have been working on this riding thing for 30 years, and I still can’t do a rising trot, then I am going to ask – wow, who is your trainer!! I hope you understand that everything in life is *your* creation – all the good and all the bad – you created that. The life you are living, is the life *you* wanted. Don’t worry – I get a lot of clients that scream at me and tell me “no I don’t, why would I possibly want this?!!” Guess what – you did. You might not have consciously wanted it, or actually wanted it, but you **did** create it. At some level, you thought that this is what you had to create. So if someone is not achieving the success they want, the question I ask them is – and why would you want that, why would you create that for yourself?



Chapter Five - The Horse

"When you are on a great horse, you have the best seat you will ever have." -- Sir Winston Churchill

For riding success you have to have the right horse. You need to have a horse that has the right talent for what you would like to do with it. So if you want to win the Melbourne Cup, I think you need to have a horse that can run. If you want a horse that will the Olympics, I think you need a horse with incredible movement, incredible temperament. If you want a horse that can jump to World Cup showjumping levels, I think you need a horse that has the ability to do that.

So yes you need the talent and the ability, but to me riding success is a journey that happens for me every day. So for me, temperament is the most important thing, the partnership is the most important thing and the relationship between horse and rider. I really couldn't care less if my horse can go to the Olympics or not, because I love him, and I love riding him. This might sound really stupid, but at the same time what is more important to me – my horse, or my Olympic gold medal? I already figured out my Olympic gold medal gives me nothing. By every day, my journey and my relationship with my horse gives me something.

I have a stud, and I help people make choices – if buying a horse from my stud is going to be the right thing for them. I make sure I have hour-long chats with these people. I ask them what they really want, and if this horse is really going to give that to them. At the end of the day, if it is their dream and it is what they want, then they can buy the horse. But if I think it is not the right match, then they won't take the horse off my property, and I may recommend something else for them.

So make sure when you are buying a horse, or when you are looking at a horse that you already have – it doesn't have to be a world beater, unless that is what you decided that is what you need to have. I don't actually believe that anyone can be that – I don't believe that anyone says "Yes, an Olympic gold medal is all I want" – because I don't see how you would actually achieve an Olympic gold medal without a relationship and a connection to your horse.



How can you not love this horse - he makes working and riding a pleasure

We are all riders, we all know why we got into horses, and it is because of that love. And that to me is the riding success, and that to me is the journey. So those are my two takes on the horse – yes you want to buy for talent and ability, but at the end of the day, he is your buddy, he is your horse, and that is a decision that you have to make for yourself.



Chapter Six - A Mentor

“Mentor: Someone whose hindsight can become your foresight.” --Anonymous

The last thing about riding success I want to talk about to you before I get into your action plan is *how important is a mentor?*

I have talked about it before – you have a riding instructor or someone like that who comes once per week as opposed to someone who is a coach – who believes in you and really helps you!



A mentor has been there and done that - they know what works and what doesn't.

So I have some amazing students and I get some amazing results with them – this is because we work together! When they go out and compete and do well, it is really great because that means I have done well too – I get to have a glass of champagne and run around excited like a crazy person because of how well they have done!! Sometimes it may not have been because they have won something – we may have set out to get a certain score, or

overcome a fear, and they may have done that! So awesome, rock on, have some champagne! I know that helps them a lot too – I know this is something that I love to have in my riding journey too, to have someone by my side that

has been there too, and made those mistakes and learnt from them and come out on top in the end.

It is common NLP knowledge that if you have a mentor, you are going to fast-track your way to success, because the mentor has been there and done that. The mentor knows what works, but also knows what doesn't work, so you don't waste time doing something that doesn't work. I understand that in Australia especially it might be hard to get a mentor, because we are so isolated and many of our best riders go overseas to compete, especially in Europe. So I love looking on the internet and thankfully there are sites like YouTube – I love watching the top riders in action – whether it is dressage or jumping or pleasure, you will be able to connect with them and look at what they are doing and achieving - the riding success that you want to have. Then you can start asking yourself the great questions so that you can get where you want to go.

How did they become the great rider they have become? What do they have to think about themselves? What do they have to believe? What do they like/not like to do? Get into their heads – it is quite a fun exercise!

I like to get into Isabel Werths head – I'm sure she would think I am a crazy person and freak out if she knew what I thought about – but I do think things like what would Isabel have for breakfast?

It might not even be relevant to riding, but you need to think at that level of detail. Because if I think that she would be a toast kind of person rather than a muesli kind of person... then when I am riding a horse I think "What would Isabel do here?" It is like I know her, and she is a part of me, and I can then access the riding skills that I need through that. So it is really important to have a mentor, someone that can help you and guide you along your riding journey.

If you have coaches at pony club or ARC or other people that you look up to – ask them! I know that I have all the time in the world for anyone who wants to ask me anything, because that is the whole point of being on the planet – to give and to receive – nothing makes me happier than to impart my knowledge and give to anyone what I can that is on the same riding journey that I have been on.

I know that when my horse bolted around Werribee, the last thing I needed was some women coming up to me and saying “Thanks a lot, bitch, you just cost me my test!” That was worst thing that could have happened to me! If I had have had someone that came up, especially a top rider, and said “You know what darl, that happened to me once” – that would just make me feel SO much better!!



Chapter Seven - Action Plan for Riding Success

"No action, no change. Limited action, limited change. Lots of action, change occurs." -- Catherine Pulsifer

We set a goal in Chapter One – what do you want, what is riding success to you? So we have what riding success is to us, the last thing we need is an action plan to get there. Action plans are cool things – I love them – I have a million of them, for every part of my life! The main thing is that you break your big goal down into little goals.

For me, the goal is an Olympic Gold medal... so breaking this down into smaller stepping-stone goals – to win an Olympic Gold I first need to go to the Olympics, and below that, it is getting on the Australian team...getting on the Victorian team... actually riding Grand Prix.

So then break each one down into even smaller stepping stones as you get to your mini goal. So once I start competing Grand Prix, the next step is to score over 60%, then score over 65%, then over 70% and so on...



For me, the goal is an Olympic gold medal, but it is the stepping stones on the way that will be the reward

So if the most current goal for me is to compete Grand Prix, then the question I need to ask myself is – Who to I have to be? What do I have to do and believe? What do I need to have to have that goal? And then I have to answer these questions...

So I have to be strong, smart, better skills and understanding, better and quicker timing better half halt... thinking and brainstorming about all the things I have to be as a rider.

I have to believe that my horse is great and that he can do it. I have to believe that I am a great rider and all these other kinds of things.

I need to have all of the Grand Prix movements, I need to be able to pull it all together – I need to have all that, and have the judges like what I do so that I can then go on and achieve the goal.

The best quote that I have heard about breaking up your goals is “How do you eat an elephant? One small bite at a time.” And this is true with goals – it doesn't matter how big they are – it is just stepping stones – you need to know all of the stepping stones that you need to achieve to get there!





Conclusion

“Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway.” -- Unknown

I hope this has been in brief, a nice little short introduction into Riding Success, how I perceive it to be. Like I said, it is a journey – every day should be blissful, every day should be wonderful, and not to tell you that the crap is not coming, because it is, sorry!! You are going to cry, it will be frustrating, you are going to hate it, you are going to think it is too hard – all these things are going to happen – so embrace that, enjoy that.

My life at the moment is going through some huge, traumatic things, drama things – it doesn't matter how trained I am in this, part of me is just like “oh no, life is so awful!” And the other part of me is saying “I cant wait for the good stuff to hit! “Because that what life is – when there is darkness, there is light, when there is night, there is day, when there is black, there is white – our universe is full of polarities. When something is good, something else is going to be bad and vice versa.

So just enjoy all of it – enjoy the bad even if it is after the fact (and not when it is actually happening). I have to look back at my horse bolting around Werribee and giggle, because if anything it has given me a good story!

I hope you have enjoyed this book – if you want to ask me any questions, please contact me at info@yourridingsuccess.com

If you like what you have read, and you would like to know more, click on my programs page or private coaching with Natasha on my website www.yourridingsuccess.com and I would love to have a chat with you as to how I can assist you in your riding journey!

As always, to your very most biggest success,

All my love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Natasha Althoff". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Natasha" written in a slightly larger, more prominent hand than the last name "Althoff".

Natasha Althoff



Links

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