

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a blue cap and a blue jacket with white horse silhouettes, is smiling and hugging a brown horse. The horse has white wraps on its lower legs. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden fence.

THE SECRET OF LIBERTY

A Free Ebook

WITH LINDA PARELLI





About Linda Parelli & Happy Horse Happy Life

Linda Parelli is the founder of Happy Horse Happy Life. She is the co-founder of Parelli Natural Horsemanship and creator of Pegasus Personal Growth. An entrepreneur, writer, philanthropist and refreshingly positive and powerful teacher in the horse world dedicated to helping you become the person and rider you want to be – cultivating a Happy Horse and a Happy Life.

After 30+ years of leading world change in horse training and relationships, Linda Parelli has established her own program and unique community for horse lovers who want a HAPPY HORSE, no matter their discipline, interest or level of expertise. From novice to professional, there is a lot to gain when it comes to using psychology for connecting with your horse at every level – recreation, training and competition.

Horses don't care about your outfit, they just need you to know how to reach them... English, Western, Jumper, Endurance, Trail Rider, Dressage and Natural Horsemanship... this Happy Horse approach will make you a better teacher, trainer, leader, communicator and rider.

We're so glad you're here. Now, flip the page and begin to discover the Secret of Liberty!



WHAT IS THE SECRET OF
LIBERTY?



When I think of Liberty, I think of freedom and connection...

The freedom for your horse to choose to connect with you.

... or not!

Learning to become who your horse wants to be with, play with, engage with, and perform with, is not easy. But the rewards are amazing and go way beyond the round pen.

There is no better compliment and nothing more magical than achieving the ultimate connection with the spirit, the essence, of your horse.



The Magic of Liberty

The classic mistake people make when going into the round corral is they think about running the horse around in circles. And then others run around with their horse and do tricks and jumps... and all that is fun and impressive... unless your horse is not connected with you. You don't want the horse to stay with you because he is being obedient and disciplined, you want the horse to be 'with' you, connected and focused on the same things as you!

That's when liberty becomes really magical. There is no better feeling than when your horse looks at you - really looks at you - is mentally engaged and enthusiastic.



So, what is the goal? CONNECTION!

I like this definition of connection:

Simply put, personal connections are interactions with more depth and substance than surface-level greetings or small talk. A personal connection is a genuine bond formed between two people wherein each person feels seen, heard, and known.

In the context of horses, I'd have it say:

Simply put, connections are interactions with more depth and substance than surface-level greetings and tasks or tricks. True connection is a genuine bond formed between you and your horse, where each of you feels seen, heard, and known.

As I continued to research meanings, I also found this, which I find VERY interesting...

"In humans, one of the most social species, social connection is essential to nearly every aspect of health and well-being. Lack of connection, or loneliness, has been linked to inflammation, accelerated aging and cardiovascular health risk, suicide, and all-cause mortality."

I believe the same is true for horses.

And now it is time to learn about the Connection Game. Your goal is to convince your horse that you are worth connecting with and teach your horse that connection is the goal.



THE CONNECTION GAME

Let's Teach Your Horse the Connection Game!



Teach your horse to connect with you when on a line or lead rope, and when it's consistently good after a few sessions, you can try it at liberty in a small pen or round corral.

Have a clear picture of what you want: Your horse is drawn to you, wants to be with you, and follows you. First, you'll teach connection on a lead rope, then progress to the round corral and paddock.

Establishing and keeping a connection is key. You must teach your horse that it's the right thing to do and fix it any time he loses connection.

1. On a line or long lead rope

Equipment: Halter, 12' Line (no shorter), Stick & String. (Progress to a longer line: 22'–30')

Walk towards your horse's tail. Go out and around in a wide circle, around his 'bubble' (personal space) about 6–10 feet from the horse.

Try not to pull on the rope, leaving as much slack as possible without the danger of your horse stepping over it.



When your horse turns to follow you, widen out and 'melt' away from your horse. This entices the horse to follow you as it's a soft, inviting energy.



Make sure you turn away slightly and are not facing your horse.





Removing pressure by walking away as your horse follows offers the horse comfort and relief from pressure, and they are attracted to that.

When you stop and stand still, make sure you are relaxed and have a friendly feeling in your heart. You don't need to be petting and rubbing him, just stand still and relax so your horse can learn to do the same with you.

If your horse does not turn to follow you, continue until you are right behind the tail (but not too close - stay out of the kick zone!) and gently flick your horse's tail with your stick and string. Be sure you are at least 6 feet away when you do this in case your horse kicks.

The moment your horse turns towards you, widen out and drift away.

Be really casual in your energy, and not too slow, not too fast... just right.

Once you have the connection game solid on a 12ft Line, progress to a longer line, then eventually to liberty.

2. In a Round Corral without a rope

Equipment: Round corral (50–60-foot diameter), Stick & String. It is best to have a round pen or corral that is no larger than 60 feet because if your horse gets too far away from you, or is able to run around too much, the process will take longer - or you need a lot more skill.

Walk away from your horse and see if it will follow. If not, head toward the tail.

As you go towards the tail, walk in a wide arc around your horse so you don't push into his personal space. Keep about 10 feet away and gradually get closer if the horse does not respond.



When the horse turns towards you, smoothly fade away as you keep walking without changing rhythm, speed, or energy. This creates a kind of 'draw' and attracts your horse to follow you. Don't worry if he's lagging a little.



Once there, do what your horse likes... pet him, find itchy spots, or just relax and do nothing.

If the horse does not turn towards you, keep heading to the tail (in a wide arc) and when you get about 6 feet away, gently flick the horse's tail with your stick and string.

If he walks off, stand still and wait to see what he does. He might turn and look at you, in which case you turn and fade away.

Should he stop, simply walk in an arc towards the tail again. Pretty soon he will come towards you as soon as you look like you are aiming for the tail.

Connection game tips for behavior types

● MOVER

The Mover is more likely to run away from you. When this happens, stay in the one spot and after they run behind you, take a step back and gently flick backward with your stick and string as if to say “Shouldn’t have done that”. Make sure you wait until the horse has gone through the space or you will make him crash into the wall! Pretty soon the horse will turn back and forth in front of you and then finally look at you... and you fade away or walk away depending on how strongly they connect.

● STOPPER

The Stopper has more trouble coming to you, simply because they tend to stop when confused rather than stay in motion. Just keep walking towards the tail in a wide arc and widen out when they step towards you a little. If they ignore you when at their tail (and well out of the kick zone!) you can gently and playfully flick at the tail so they can’t ignore you. It will take time but once they get it, it's strong! Be a patient teacher.

Note: If you are in a grassy area, some horses (the pushy ones) may just eat grass and spin around facing you but with their nose in the grass. If that happens, gently flick the nose to tell them ‘not that’.

● PUSHY

The Pushy horse usually connects very quickly, but beware... he or she could be connecting like a shark! They tend to push into your space. If so, don’t make them wrong. Rub and scratch them vigorously and then move on to the next lesson. There is no need to repeat it if it is already happening ;)

● TENSE

The Tense horse takes the most convincing, mainly because they are emotional and don’t see you as a safe place... yet.

Practice

Practice your Connection Game both on a line and, when ready, at liberty.

Make sure you play with this every time you go to get your horse, but just 2 times a week in the round corral - every day becomes too much pressure. Keep the picture strong in your mind and learn to be more aware of how you move and how you're communicating with your energy and positioning.

As your connection gets better, you'll start to see things getting better in other areas too, even riding, because the relationship will go to a whole new level.

Even if you have done some liberty before, I want you to discover the secret of your horse WANTING to connect with you rather than you disengaging the hindquarters constantly to make him stay with you. There's a BIG difference!



Like what you've seen here? Join the Happy Horse Happy Life community FREE for two weeks to get instant access to my full Secret of Liberty course where you'll get 13 full Liberty lessons with over 40 videos to guide you every step of the way!



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