

# Touched by a Horse

## Equine Coaching Stories

### Volume 3



Melisa Pearce, Editor

Touched by a Horse, Inc.  
Elizabeth, CO

**Touched by a Horse Equine Coaching Stories (Volume 3)**

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*I dedicate this book, my work, and my heart for all time  
to my beautiful and courageous daughter, Molly.*



*1988-2013*

To learn more about Melisa's daughter Molly please visit:  
[MollyPearce-EakerFoundation.org](http://MollyPearce-EakerFoundation.org)



# Foreword

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Horses are multitalented, sensitive, intelligent, and clairsentient creatures sharing this planet with us. They have taken on so many essential roles and have willingly served with their human partners over thousands of years by plowing fields, pulling heavy loads, carrying warriors to battles that were not theirs, providing transportation, and participating in sporting games. In recent times, they have also helped disabled people “walk” again and carried riders to vistas on trail rides. Throughout time, they have consistently provided loyalty and companionship at a level that is beyond compare.

I have dedicated my life to assisting horses in becoming seen in a unique role: as incredible healers of the human spirit. As a psychotherapist, my practice became blended with my love of horses over thirty years ago. My horses began engaging with my clients in an informal process, astounding both myself and the client with their eagerness to support, engage, and even pantomime their own wisdom.

My practice is based on Gestalt. I’ve embodied the basic tenants of this methodology through years of training and therapy practice, becoming a leading Gestalt teacher and trainer of others. Mindfulness, staying in the present moment, having full awareness of all the parts of self, acknowledging resistances, and taking responsibility for one’s choices are but a few tenets of Gestalt, the genesis of which can be found in

the work of Fritz Perls in the 1950s. The work has evolved greatly, and it remains one of the most effective experiential processes for examining one's life.

Having observed hundreds of horses during my life, I am keenly aware of how naturally Gestalt they are. Horses are living each moment *in* the moment they are experiencing. When not in the presence of a human request, horses stay in a place of serenity. Horses do not create anxiety by obsessing about their future, nor do they create depression by obsessing about their past.

In our Equine Gestalt Coaching Method (EGCM), the coach and the horse work with people to be in the moment, which is just as horses live and model for us how to live. One discipline titled "I and Thou" assists the person in becoming fully present in about ninety seconds. With practice, it becomes a way of life to tap into this discipline several times a day.

The coach leads the person they are working with in bringing their attention to a part of self (heartbeat, breath filling their lungs, etc. ) for ten seconds and then gently coaches them to shift their awareness fully to their environment (a breeze or sounds, for instance). Alternating attention from their body to the environment, back and forth, allows them to experience the present. This practice allows them to feel grounded and out of their trickster mind, which is enticing them to worry about things ahead of them or feel concern about their past.

Having had horses all of my life, I trust that horses also live a life centered on their awareness of the vibrational fields. This is a natural sensitivity for them, and they use it to keep themselves safe from predators or places that could cause



them harm. With great generosity, they share this skill with humans, offering us assistance in bringing our personal vibrational fields, which are sometimes flat or functioning suboptimally, back into attunement. But helping us raise our vibration when needed can only happen if the horse is invited and allowed to do so, and most people are unaware of their somatic and energy fields, which are highly vulnerable to thought and emotion. Our Touched by a Horse EGCM coaches understand energy fields and work with their equine partners to facilitate the healing for people that bringing them into attunement can foster.

The innate gifts and abilities of the equine, combined with the effectiveness of the Equine Gestalt Coaching Method, allows the client to explore the unfinished parts of their lives and experience clearing and completion. That in turn allows them to *respond* to things in life instead of *react* to them.

The stories in this book are true experiences of a few of our EGCM coaches who, with their equine partners, assist people worldwide. I thank each of our authors for their contributions in sharing these stories in support of our work to have horses seen as the incredible healers they truly are on the planet.

For more information or to find a coach near you to experience this work, go to [TouchedbyaHorse.com](http://TouchedbyaHorse.com) or call our office at 303-440-7120 so we can find just the right coach match for your needs. You can also email us at [office@touchedbyahorse.com](mailto:office@touchedbyahorse.com).

In Synergy,  
*Melisa Pearce*  
July 2018



# Acknowledgments

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This anthology is a collaborative labor of love and dedication. Celebrating the tenth year of our certification program, this timely collection of heartfelt stories touches me deeply. I am grateful to the many hands and hearts that have played a part in this project.

A warm thank you to each of our contributing authors and our poet for their work and tireless attention to ensure that their stories were well written, rewritten, edited, and presented in this book. As lightworkers of our Equine Gestalt Coaching Method, each of them share a devotion to the work itself. So do the horses. These stories beautifully express how the horses work with their human coaches in healing work that is truly transformative. And be prepared, because the stories you are about to read will likely open your heart a little more.

The cover art is the work of Kimberly Beer from Missouri. Kim has been photographing my horses, students, and graduates for nine years now. She captured the loving interaction that graces this book cover. The exchange between this horse, Lightning Blackjack, and his coach partner, John Schonewill, is one of mutual gratitude, and Kim caught it perfectly.

The clever drawings heading each story are from artist Alice Griffin, who is also a Certified Equine Gestalt Coach from our program. Alice lives in New Mexico, and she is a

fun illustrator to work with on projects. Her insights into the stories and personal experiences told here led to the creation of just the right drawing for each story.

All books have many creative hands and eyes involved in birthing them into the world. Nick Zelinger has created the covers and designed the interiors for all three anthologies. Nick is a pleasure to work with. Manuscript text, author photos, and art all land on his desk—often in numerous emails and across several weeks. Somehow, he puts his magic into pulling all the separate parts together in design. Nick, we thank you for your professional and patient touch!

Another of our EGC Method coaches assists with the gathering of all the raw elements from each author. That may sound easy, but time and again, we are reminded that it is *not* easy. Annette Price from Colorado spearheads this project, and once again, I note to myself that Annette is a patient, encouraging, and loving person for each writer and me to interface with along the journey. Often, Annette provides the caring support for the writer that they need to continue to work on their story, and then an hour later, she is collecting the pictures and bios of each writer to make certain the credit is accurate for each one that is accepted. She interfaces with the copyeditor and me to keep the project moving. I am so grateful for her friendship and expertise as we tackle this third book!

The big boss editor is Melanie Mulhall who stands a formidable five feet tall. Once again with this third anthology, Melanie is a mighty package that keeps this process moving along. Each story is edited for content and all elements to assure us a professional product at the end of the journey. Best of all, she has become not only the editor for my books, but my dear

## Acknowledgments

personal friend. Thank you once again, Melanie, for your expertise, patience, and master coordination of this project.

My sweet husband Dane and I are truly blessed to work with such loving people in our Touched by a Horse community. Our horses have shown us their desire to make a difference in the emotional lives of humans in our work. Each day, they remind us that life is happening in the present moment, to be treasured and fully experienced. Our hope is that in the pages of this book, you will find their truth for you.





# A Spiritual Awakening— My Journey to Wholeness

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Gail Hager

**H**appiness was playing sports, swimming, or riding horseback when I was growing up in Montana. I don't remember happy family times, just the traumatic ones. My father was a hardworking man, but he drowned out his experiences of war with alcohol. As time went along, the drinking got worse, and so did the abuse. My mother was also hardworking and did all she could to keep our family together. We were poor and had little to get by on. The first time I saw my mother ride, I was in awe, and I always wanted to ride like her. Fortunately, my cousins' family had horses and my grandparents owned a dude ranch, so horses were part of my life.