



Liberty Basics



Definition of Liberty

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Definition of Liberty

- freedom from captivity, confinement, or physical restraint
- freedom from control, interference, obligation, restriction, hampering conditions, etc.; power or right of doing, thinking, speaking, etc., according to choice.

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Definition of Liberty Horse

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- A horse that performs skills and communicates with their handler without tack.
- A horse that **LEARNS** skills and communicates with their handler without tack or aversive tools.



Common Methods of Training Liberty Work

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- Drilling skills on lead until they are automatic, and the horse no longer thinks of doing anything else.

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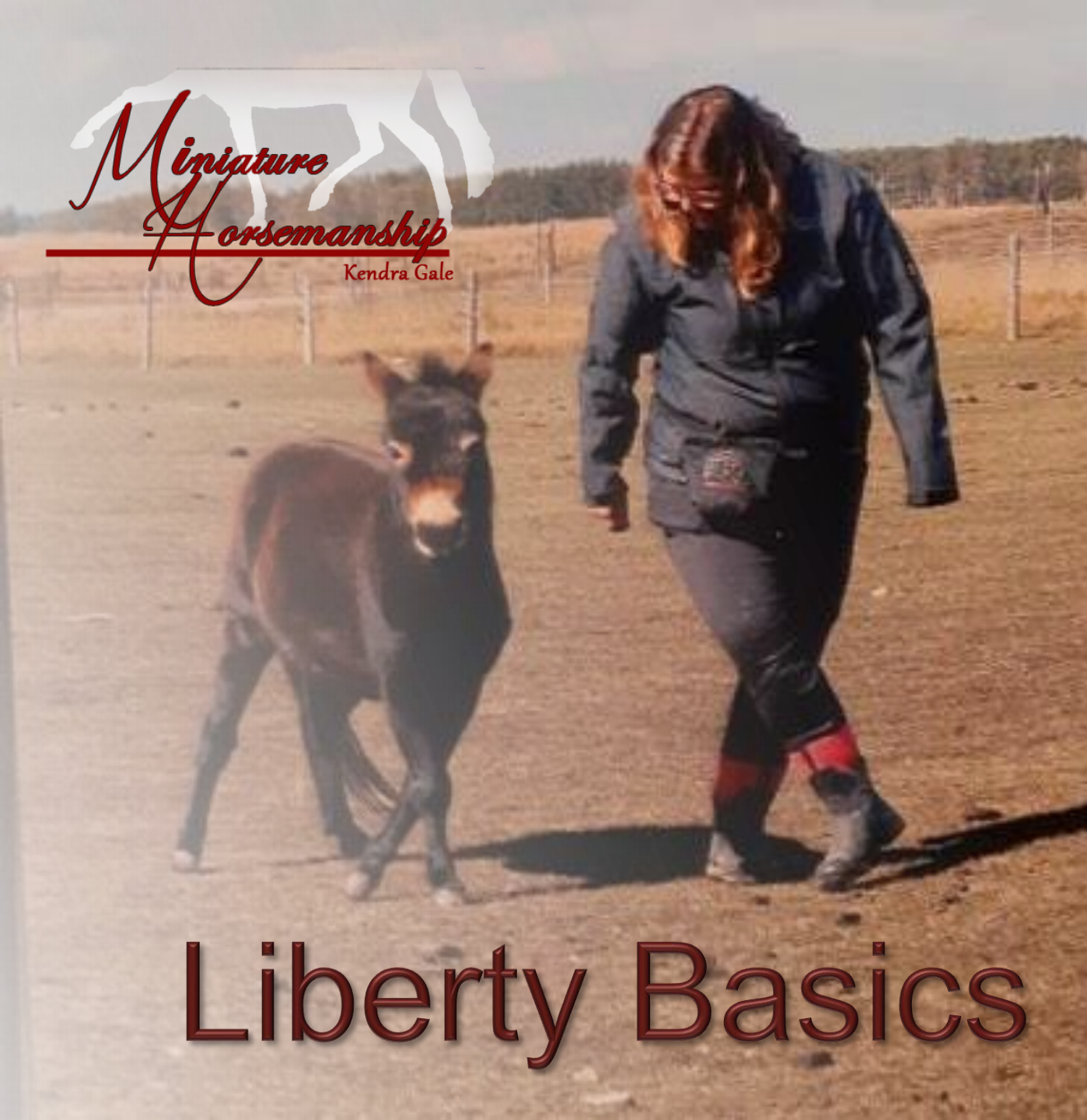




Common Methods of Training Liberty Work

- Drilling skills on lead until they are automatic, and the horse no longer thinks of doing anything else.
- Making the “right” choice easy and the “wrong” choice hard.
- Using positive reinforcement and choice.

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Common Methods of Training Liberty Work

Liberty as a goal:

- Drilling skills on lead until they are automatic, and the horse no longer thinks of doing anything else.
- Making the “right” choice easy and the “wrong” choice hard.

Liberty as a tool:

- Using positive reinforcement, play and choice .



Learning Theory

	Reinforcement	Punishment
Positive (Adding Something)	Reward Desired Behaviour Primary Reinforcer: Food Secondary Reinforcer: Praise, Scratch, Rest, Turnout	Punish Undesired Behaviour Adding an Unpleasant Stimulus: Shout, Smack, Jerk.
Negative (Taking Something Away)	Reward Desired Behaviour Removal of Stimulus: Pressure, cluck, tap. Most Common in Horse Training. Timing is Crucial	Punish Undesired Behaviour Removing a Stimulus: Rarely applicable for horses; better for children,

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Questions?

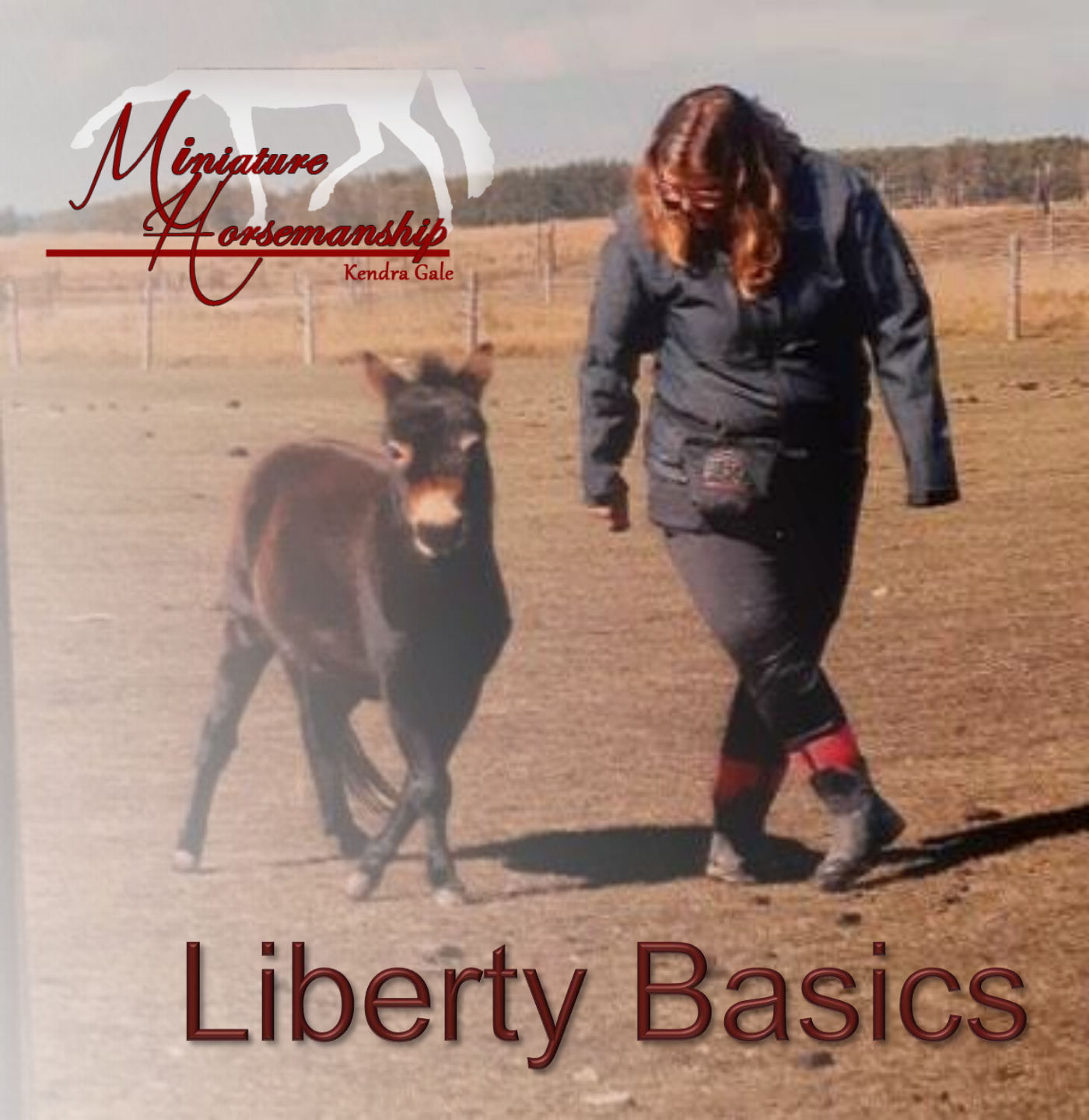
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Positive Reinforcement

- Food is a primary reinforcer – they need it to survive so it is very motivating.
- Horses evolved to eat throughout their day, and to actively seek and find food, making it ideal for using in training.
- Make it more rewarding to be with you than not.
- Reward what you want to see more of, and ignore what you don't.



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Benefits of Positive Reinforcement

- Associate the human with good things.
- Work towards a reward instead of away from an aversive.
- Encourages problem solving and creative thinking.
- Food rewards stimulate a dopamine release in their brain, which results in a positive association with the activity AND enhanced learning and memory.
- Studies show horses learn more quickly, and retain what they learned after fewer repetitions.



Choice

- Because we aren't controlling the horse with tack or aversive tools they have to choose to participate.
- Our job is to make the choice to play the most rewarding option.
- Trickiest part is allowing them to make choices that aren't what you had in mind.

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Benefits of Choice

- Having control over their own movement will make them MORE willing to try new things and engage with you.
- Making the choice to participate means they learn more quickly and retain better.
- Relationship building – choosing to spend time together.

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Getting Started

- Begin in a smaller, familiar space: paddock, stall, barn aisle.
- Make sure your horse is full or there is hay available.
- Find a food reward that is reinforcing for your horse and that is easy to feed in small amounts.

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Introducing the Method of Communication

- “Be Polite” – teaches treat manners at the same time as teaching them that their behaviour results in a food reward, AND introduces your bridge or marker signal.
- Ignore everything except what you want to see – nose not on you, positioned at your side – then bridge and reward.



Adding Movement

- Once the Be Polite position is solid, begin moving around in the space.
- Can add changes of speed and movement in different directions.
- Introduce additional skills.
- If they wander off, always go back to earlier stages, and try a smaller step.

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What if they leave?

- Let them explore.
- Ask for their attention.
- Reward lots when they choose to return.
- Ask why they left. What were you doing? What could you change?
- Don't take it personally – everyone is allowed an off day.
- Don't make them come back – instead be extra interesting and rewarding so they can choose to come back.



Open The Gate

- Move to bigger spaces.
- Incorporate play.
- Let your horse suggest activities.
- Choose joy.

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The Rewards

- A stronger relationship
- A confident and willing horse
- Improved training skills
- More fun than ever before

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