

# Creating Exceptional Leaders



*... through learning with horses*

*a facilitator's guide to integrating  
leadership through horsemanship*

*by Nancy Lowery*

# Creating Exceptional Leaders

*... through learning with horses*

*a facilitator's guide to integrating*  
**The Leadership Challenge®**  
*into leadership through horsemanship*

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ISBN 978-0-9809320-1-0  
Canada

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The Five Practices & 10 Principles of The Leadership Challenge®  
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Cover Photo: Lisa Mercer  
all other photos/illustrations: Christopher Byron & Nancy Lowery

*To the individuals who have been a part of developing the content for this guide.*

*To Fred Jacques for imagining the exciting possibilities the work with horses offered,  
thank you for taking the risk and joining me in this experiment.*

*To Elizabeth Scott of the University of Calgary, Business & Professional Programs  
thank you for seeking out innovative programs for your clients.*

*To Sharon Quarrington & Anna Garleff your objective perspectives  
on how this guide should be organised is greatly appreciated.*

*To my sister Janet Gray for assisting with editing so my thoughts would connect for others.*

*To the participants of the sessions who challenged their perception of leadership  
and shared thoughts, emotions and learning with us. Thank you.*

*I gratefully acknowledge that the work of Kouzes & Posner has been an inspiration.*



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The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®:

**Model the Way**  
**Inspire a Shared Vision**  
**Challenge the Process**  
**Enable Others to Act**  
**Encourage the Heart**  
(principles on pg 10)

*“Leaders know well that innovation & change require them to experiment and take risks.”*

## About this Guide

The purpose of this *Facilitator’s Guide* is to provide a program outline to use in your work with horses. It is an accompaniment to the body of work available through The Leadership Challenge® by Kouzes & Posner. They have captured data from thousands of individuals, so it is not only a credible resource but is easily accessible and relevant to leadership programs with horses. Offering sessions based on the material available in The Leadership Challenge® allows participants to continue to expand their knowledge, learning and experience outside the arena.

Time and again, over the many leadership sessions we have run, participants share one thing in common: the desire to spend more time with the horses! To meet that expectation, we get people into the company of horses as soon as possible. This format requires frequent debriefing through the activities. To capture the attention of participants mid-activity we define a process check at the beginning of the day. We call ours “Hold Your Horses” and it is literally that, people and their horse partners form a circle or horseshoe as we debrief. The classroom is used to set up the experience, reflect and share learning and to provide observations and make connections.

To fully integrate the five practices a two or three day program is the minimum time required: however, we recognise that it is not always practical or possible to do so. The one day format is the perfect opportunity for those familiar with The Leadership Challenge® concepts to apply them through the activities with the horses. The concepts then become actions, which lead to awareness and ultimately the behaviour change required to advance leadership potential.

For this work to be truly meaningful, participants should be allowed to experience the impact and development of a one-on-one relationship with a horse. When a relationship develops through trust and respect, complexity of task and expectations can grow. *Creating Exceptional Leaders ...through learning with horses*, truly **Challenge(s) the Process** of traditional workplace learning models and leadership principles.





## Leadership is a Relationship

The beauty of bringing horses into a discussion about leadership is the premise that leadership is a relationship. Horses are a herd species and therefore naturally seek a confident leader. It is this innate desire to be with others that make the horse a wonderful learning partner. As leadership is a developed skill, there is much we can learn about the importance of awareness in our leadership presence and capacity from a horse. Learning how to be a leader in a herd of two is a powerful and emotional experience.

We trust that what we have included in this *Facilitator's Guide* will help provide context for discussion. Activities create a parallel for a unique leadership learning experience. As working with horses will demonstrate, leadership is about credible and observable behaviours and actions.

### Our Role as Facilitator & Educator

The horses truly do most of the work in these programs: they make what is obvious clear to the participants.

Our role as facilitator is to be aware of what is going on between horse and handler and to help the person see what is relevant for them.

Our role as educator is to ensure participants are provided with enough information for them be prepared to engage safely.

This guide is about *Creating Exceptional Leaders ...through learning with horses*. The next book you should pick up if you haven't already done so is, *The Leadership Challenge®*, by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner. It will be important for you to understand the concepts, the stories and the information behind their work. Their books and a wealth of additional information is available from their website - [www.TheLeadershipChallenge.com](http://www.TheLeadershipChallenge.com)

While this adaptation is best received by participants who have previously been exposed to the concepts of *The Leadership Challenge®*, we have also found horses to be an innovative means to introduce the work and encourage participants to explore the five practices further.

This *Facilitator's Guide* includes activities to support a one or two day program. Additional activities, referenced in the Appendix are from Volumes 1 & 2 of *The Games People Play With Horses*. Available through [www.TheNaturalLeader.ca](http://www.TheNaturalLeader.ca).

*"Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow, and any discussion of leadership must attend to the dynamics of this relationship."*







**Primary Goal** - *participants assess their own areas for leadership improvement through behaviour feedback from the horse.*

## Objectives

As a result of this session participants will be better able to:

- understand specific behaviours of leadership
- make a solid connection from their learning with the horse to a practical workplace application on how behaviours influence leadership performance
- communicate fundamental values & beliefs
- understand the role that the awareness of self plays in our interactions with others
- apply the leadership concepts outlined in The Leadership Challenge® in a meaningful context
- identify areas for improving their leadership capacity
- have fun while learning!

### Physical Setting

The nature of this work requires two completely different arenas for learning: The physical one for working with the horses and a separate space for discussion, reflection and relaxation.

### Conducting Leadership Practices Inventory® (LPI)

For those certified to conduct and assess the Leadership Practices Inventory® (LPI), we suggest including the LPI no sooner than day two. This allows participants time to get comfortable in the company of the horse and receive in the moment feedback. We are confident that this way, you will find discussion around the LPI even more meaningful. Refer to the Facilitators Guide for the Leadership Practices Inventory® for managing the review and integrate it as time/activities permit over day two and three. We do not recommend including a review of the LPI in a one-day program unless it has been fully integrated in a previous session.

*Facilitator Tip:* It is important to recognise the physical aspect of this work trumps the schedule and it is good to mention that at the beginning of a session. A horse does not wear a watch so taking the time required becomes an important aspect of the learning. Identifying this early on also allows the flexibility to get a read from the group on what they wish to accomplish as you progress. That said, there are times when focus on success overcomes an individual's ability and knowledge, so it will be your role to step in and assist/summarize the activity so horse and participant do not get frustrated.

*"You can't make people trust change and trust the system. You have to actually create a system that is trustworthy, then people will begin to move much faster than when you're trying to elicit change."*





Nancy with one of her mentors  
the late great Ray Hunt

## About the Author

This career path began quite simply because of a horse. Having worked with horses most of my life, I was drawn to an Appaloosa mare - she was to become the best teacher I have ever met. I initially sought out trainers to help me with this all -too -challenging mare. Some tried to convince me she was a horse not worth fixing. Then I met a fellow who suggested that the only problem the horse had, was me.

It was in the process of learning to understand how my horse saw me, that the transformation from project manager to program facilitator began. As I changed my view on my horse and the outcomes I so desired, I became a better project manager. I found I spent more time listening, waiting and watching. My relationships with my team changed as I began to understand that leadership is about setting the example - a concept my horse had been trying to tell me from the moment we met.

I truly believe the horse is an incredibly willing, forgiving and patient teacher if we choose to listen and then get out of the way. It is amazing how quickly we can become one.

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Nancy Lowery operates *The Natural Leader* near Calgary, Alberta Canada. Nancy blends her passion for horses with a creative talent and energy that husband Chris describes as similar to that of a Border Collie. With over 15 years managing teams for clients such as Mercedes-Benz, Procter&Gamble, Nokia, Disney and Parks Canada, Nancy's leadership programs speak from the perspective of personal experience. In the heart of the Canadian cowboy country Nancy is changing the corporate perspective on the horse from sponsoring entertainment to one of leadership - one program at a time. [www.TheNaturalLeader.ca](http://www.TheNaturalLeader.ca)

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To learn more about *The Natural Leader* and order a copy of the *Facilitator's Guide* - *Creating Exceptional Leaders through learning with Horses* visit us at [www.TheNaturalLeader.ca](http://www.TheNaturalLeader.ca) or speak with Nancy at 403.669.3666

Other books by Nancy Lowery:

- *The Games People Play With Horses* - Volume 1 & 2 (available in digital or print versions)
- *A Year of Inspiration* - Essays & Quotes on Leadership and the Horsemanship Connections (a free eBook)

The Natural Leader herd: Zoe, Slick, Maddison, Seth, Sydney, Rose, Rhys, Amy, Rain, Jack, Dixon, Monster, Spider, Noah, Gabriel & Mikey the donkey

Maddison, Jan Hornford, Laurie Pettifer,  
Nancy Lowery & Fred Jacques

