



Breathe
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by Nancy Lowery
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The Natural Leader

I have learned about leading people from my horses. A horse taught me getting the job done isn't about the process or the tactics employed but rather about the relationship developed. I will be forever grateful for what my horses have offered me.

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This is the third anthology of images, thoughts and quotes from the past year's newsletters. ***A Year of Inspiration*** and ***A Year of Great Expectation*** are available for download in **The Collection** on our website www.TheNaturalLeader.ca.

In appreciation: Cover Photo: Lisa Mercer.

Many of the other images in this book were captured by my husband Chris Byron



Remember to Breathe

I It was a struggle to get this year's eBook together. Excuses were easy to find. I couldn't find the words to introduce the work, there should be more images, I have no new sketches. Then the unthinkable happened, my nephew took his own life. Colin was 25.

Random bursts of thoughts flowed on what I could have, should have said. Little things would trigger emotion. Thoughts and memories of an amazing kid with no where to place them. With time thoughts can focus on the good over the sad and are becoming more organised and ready to express.

This eBook was to be titled "*Breathe*" long before I received news of Colin's last. A friend provided a perspective that has helped somewhat. When a loved one dies of cancer we mourn the loss but understand the reason. We lost Colin to mental illness, I still struggle with the answer, but it is a view I can hold on to.

Considering a different perspective is what we ask participants of The Natural Leader programs. When asked how she was doing, Colin's sister Tara offered, "*it's one day at a time Nancy.*" Each day I find myself taking a deep breath when the feelings begin to express themselves. I will focus on the good of who Colin was and will continue to revel in what life has to offer.

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A Year of great Expectation

A year begins with great expectation. It may be a resolution or goal to change a behaviour or habit or simply a hope for better things to come. Inevitably we look forward and focus on what we want to do differently. The new year offers a fresh start but it also provides the opportunity to reflect and acknowledge what we have accomplished in the past year.

In *"Why Positive Change is Hard"* I referenced David Rock in his TEDTalk on The New Science of Change. Rock suggests our brain is wired to avoid change because learning is very energy intensive requiring the brain to create new circuits. The brain's default is to conserve energy so it is much easier to continue doing what we know.

Rock used a simple metaphor to describe brain development *"New circuits are like delicate seedlings, requiring careful watering and care."* Like watering those seedlings, developing new brain circuits requires a mere ten seconds a day. That 10 second rule is the reason why posting a quote, a phrase or a reminder on your desktop, fridge or mirror is so effective in helping us achieve a goal. The act of repetition helps the brain develop the new pathways required for a new behaviour or habit.

While we may not like to admit it we are naturally resistant to change. It took me a long time to recognise I am a creature of habit. I don't believe my answers to many of the psychometric tests taken over the years honestly reflect that, but you can't argue with absolute proof, ten years of feeding horses two and three times a day no matter the weather is routine.

Stepping outside the comfort zone of routine is harder than I expected. My natural inclination is to come up with the reasons why I need not bother going to that event in town be it weather, traffic or time. The commitment requires me to change. If the activity falls into the time I should be feeding or I haven't paid yet category it is so

easy to decide not to go. I realise I have become the master of excuses.

This year my resolution is to reach out to the many I have made virtual connections with. New or renewed, one person at a time, I am fulfilling that commitment. While social networking may be huge I still prefer the power of personal connection. After all connection is what we speak to in our programs.

Creating that new habit might be easier than we make it to be. As a teen when all appeared to be overwhelming, Mom suggested *"I create a list of things I was grateful for in one column and what was bothering me in another."* Needless to say the list of good things was lengthy, the few in the other column didn't seem quite so daunting. A simple task I have carried with me when I take on something new – My expectations for 2010 were many. I have succeeded with some, fallen short on others but acknowledge what I have achieved goes a long way to inspiring what I can do this year.

Implementing change begins with recognising what you are good at and building realistic expectations from there, then create the reminders you need to accomplish them. So I have posted a question for myself – *"Who am I connecting with this week?"* on my desktop and to begin the year I have created another ebook.

The ebook referenced above is *"A Year of Great Expectation"* and available for download in **The Collections** section of www.TheNaturalLeader.ca



**Dr
Seuss**

*"Be who you are and say what you feel because
those who mind don't matter
and those who matter don't mind."*



"Emotional intelligence is not something we consider when things are going well but it is something we need when they are not."



Certainty *Versus* Conviction

Ask a horseman how to solve a particular problem with your horse and the answer will more than likely be *"It depends."* A response you might find somewhat frustrating if you prefer certainty in life.

While there is much you can be certain about with a horse, a simple answer is rarely one of them. The horse's lawyer, Tom Dorrance, summarized it well *"A horse is only afraid of two things. Things that move and things that don't."*

Certainty versus conviction and the question *"Who is in charge of my success?"* was the topic of discussion on a recent trip, the two hour drive was like a private session with two leadership experts. To paraphrase their definition, *"Those who work under the idea of certainty believe what they know or hold is true. Those who work from the perspective of conviction allow room for dialogue."*

Certainty is simple. Ideas are presented as good or bad, right or wrong *"This is how it must be done"* or stated as fact. Take for example Bush's speech to Congress following 9/11 *"You are either with us, or you are with the terrorists"* Bush offered a position that was not open for debate. You either agreed or you were, quite simply, the enemy. Certainty offers little room for interpretation. Control over the outcome is often given to someone else.

On the other hand. Conviction offers the position that *"I stand for something and feel strongly about it, but I am open to hear what you think"*. For those who follow an idea with conviction it is ok to ask a question, challenge an interpretation or include your own perspective. Conviction doesn't need to be seen as fact, but as a view or belief that has worked. When you have conviction about something you believe you have control over the outcomes and are willing to engage in a discussion to that end, because you own the idea.

A perfect example of people holding belief over an outcome unfolded half way around the world. For three weeks the Egyptian people, no longer willing to accept the status quo, acted with the conviction. The certainty of religion, gender, race and status were no longer barriers as people took to the streets by the hundreds of thousands, until Mumbarek finally stepped down February 11. What is clear is each individual took the responsibility to play their part in ushering in a new era.

Leadership as demonstrated by the Bush statement is a command control style of leadership that weighs on fears and expects compliance. In fact the cost of questioning or defiance has already been defined.

Leading with conviction requires self-awareness and authenticity. In the case of Egypt it began with one individual inspiring and convincing another that change was possible. It was truly authentic and collaborative leadership in action.

The difference, for either horsemanship or leadership, comes down to those who are self-aware and authentic about what they desire to learn and offer.

Learning from one teacher or the other can help complete the picture we create for ourselves. I choose to follow my horsemanship path with conviction. My goal is to present the best offer I can to my horse.

I work hard to manage my emotions and I continue to explore ideas, environments and situations where I can be my best.

Of that, you can be certain.



**Tom
Dorrance**

*"A horse is only afraid of two things.
Things that move and things that don't."*





"I could always see the best in a horse. Since I've gotten older, I can usually see the best in people, too." **TomDorrance**



“Leadership is knowing when to speak and when to listen.”

Are you a Thought Note Person

A Are you a thought note person?

I certainly am. When I hear or read something that strikes me as interesting I am very likely to capture it in my notebook. The problem is, I often don't review those notes till days or weeks later and the meaning of the words has all but disappeared.

Perhaps it is the cryptic way I capture the thought, but without the context or intention behind the words, I sometimes have no clue as to why I wrote the ideas down.

Our internal editor can cause us to skip the most basic of information, assuming we will fill those details in later. Unfortunately those details can be the basics that the idea is built on. Without those connectors our thought lies incomplete, words on the page or just as likely in the notepad on our digital device.

I suppose, it should come as no surprise to me that I execute tasks in the same way. Whether it is through my communication, the projects I undertake or how I interact with others when I leave out key pieces of information my expectation lies incomplete.

Actions that rang true for me with one of last years colts. Starting Gabriel last fall went really well. Typically I get a colt to a point and then let them mature on that over the winter months picking things up again in the spring.

This spring I discovered a small hole that became a gaping disaster when Gabe turned his back end into the carraganna hedge. A branch must have tickled him up under the flank turning my angel into a rank, bucking bronco putting forth an effort that would have made any Stampede cowboy proud.

Fortunately for me, it was before I got on as it would have been an oversight I would not have been able to ride out.

We never want to put ourselves into a situation where we have to ride out an incomplete thought, the problem is we rarely know when it is about to happen.

It has now taken me twice as long to get Gabe back and riding to where we should have been this spring. It has however been time well spent and an invaluable lesson – never skip on the basics, never assume someone else really understands your expectation and remember to complete the thought.

When we turn our internal editor off it is so much easier to hear what you are saying, listen to the questions and watch for what others need. These three simple steps help us anticipate when a blank needs to be filled.

If you view it as an opportunity to start over – you always have another chance to complete a thought and make a good first impression.



Buck
Branntaman
"With reins come responsibility."





Navigating Change

A Polynesian mariner navigates the ocean by the clouds, the stars and the sound of water on the hull of the boat. A horseman pays attention to the ears and body of the horse to know what to offer next and a CEO assesses the business environment to gain information on how to lead an organisation.

The mariner and horseman have developed a keen awareness for their surroundings, basing their next move on feel and experience. If only the signals were as clear for the organisational leader!

In "Thoughts on Leadership Today..." Laurie Maslak, Phd suggests *"the Executive and Managers know all the right things to do, they have all been through extensive leadership development programs, but there's little buy-in (to do the right things in practice)". It does not appear to be a lack of good leaders, just a lot of good leaders doing bad things. Many offer a multitude of reasons for this: a persistent level of increased stress and growing workloads; working managers who don't have anyone to delegate work to or continue to believe they can just do it faster; the economic and competitive market pressures; (and finally) the common complaint "there is no time to lead properly"*

When people are overwhelmed a natural default is to focus on task versus strategy, a concept that NYTimes columnist, David Brook explored in his recent TedTalk. Brook offers that we have become very good at living by things we can measure such as tactics, skill and safety and not so great at talking about character, emotions and values. We are social animals so we reflect what is going on inside and outside of us but we can only manage what we recognise. He goes further to suggest that good decisions are emotionally based and that wisdom is a reflection of the unconscious mind and our ability to be sensitive, sympathetic and empathetic.

Just as Maslak observed, Brook believes we must get better at talking about what matters to us. We should feel as comfortable talking about love, passion and what inspires us as we do about spreadsheets, resources and markets. We look to those we admire for guidance because leadership *"is a practice that requires vigilance, persistence and a constant awareness of self, others, and the environment. Leadership development is both an internal and an external process."*¹

Like the mariner who listens to the water to recognise wave patterns or the horseman who spends years observing and working with horses to recognise how their body language impacts a horse's behaviour, leadership requires that we take a step back and contemplate on our own actions. *"Leadership, in its truest sense of the word, is both an internal and an external experience."*² The rational part of our being has us taking courses, reading books and listening to experts, yet the imprecise art of leadership comes from within.

Just as the mariner was seeking safe passage for others, the horseman transforming a colt into a dependable riding horse. A leader must be aware of their emotional input and output in order for others to aspire to be their best.



1&2 – Excerpts from *Thoughts on Leadership...* Laurie Maslak PhD.

more on David Brooks TedTalk
http://www.ted.com/talks/david_brooks_the_social_animal.html

Elizabeth Lindsey & *The Ancestral Voices of her Past* TedTalk
http://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_lindsey_curating_humanity_s_heritage.html

*Discover
the power of listening
through
the art of whispering*

My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear.

Optimism is better than despair.

So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world."

*All my very best, **JackLayton***



Meeting Expectations

The Natural Leader has not been what you would call an overnight success. Eight years into this journey the tide is turning, you could say I am ready for the shift. Writing, facilitating and learning has helped me develop programs that make me proud. Are they all perfect? Far from it, but each and every effort is an opportunity to learn, building a network and wonderful client base one experience at a time

Nancy

Nancy Lowery - Lead People Whisperer at The Natural Leader, lives and plays with her horses north of Calgary Alberta Canada.

Along with delivering corporate leadership and team learning programs Nancy writes a monthly newsletter and (almost) weekly inspiration; launched a new eBook *"In Business to Define"* on marketing equine programs; has discovered hot yoga works out the strains and sometimes bruises from starting colts and developing the remainder of the herd. This year's goal, to develop Jack into a bridle horse. Nancy is honoured to continue offering programs through The University of Calgary, participate in the 100th Anniversary Celebrations at The Calgary Stampede and proud of the growth of our client base. A special thank you to Sanjel Corporation for believing horses have something to offer in our leadership journey.
Thank you for being a part of mine.



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