



Pet Tips 'n' Tales

by Mary Ellen "Angel Scribe"

Medicine Horse

"There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man."
Winston S. Churchill

"A few years ago," said Joy, "I was ill and unable to work. My horses are my passion, but our family was financially slipping, so I offered to let them go — the horses, that is!"

Horses are expensive and a lifetime commitment. They live 25-plus years. Monthly boarding costs \$375-\$1000, and our two horses eat 1/2 a ton of hay a month, adding another \$300.

Horse hooves need trimming every 8-9 weeks, and Dixie has to have \$90 shoes every two months. So you can see why I offered to sacrifice and sell them for my family's well being.

My husband, Dean, a kind and understanding man, said, "NO. Those horses keep you going."

And they do. They are a pivotal part of my healing medicine. He took over feeding and caring for the horses — never once a complaint.

When I walk to the barn my pain decreases, my mood lifts and I feel better and can do so much more when I get to the barn. When I go back to the house, the pain comes back. Being near horses somehow triggers my natural pain blocker.

My horses are an answered prayer for a little girl who grew up immersed in poverty, where owning a horse was just a far-away dream.

When I was 10 years old, I promised myself that I would own a horse. It took 30 years, but I did it! I have now been a happy horse keeper for 18 years.

I love everything about horses: The way they smell (dirty or clean), look, feel, and how I feel near them. I love how they nicker when they see me coming. Nickering warms my heart, clear to the bottoms of my feet. It's like cats purring that makes your heart smile.

I also love grooming horses



Courtesy Photo

The hearts of Joy and Dixie, a 21-year-old Quarter horse, are deeply bonded. During Joy's healing, Dixie is Joy's "best medicine."

and even enjoy scooping their manure — it is such a good workout.

Horses are herd animals and need a companion horse or another four-leg, grass-eating animal like a goat or sheep. That is why we have two horses: Dixie, a 21-year-old Quarter horse, and Gabe, an 11-year-old Mustang. Dixie arrived with her name, but I named Gabe after Archangel Gabriel because he has white markings on each shoulder resembling angel wings.

My horses have a game they love! They toss their 100-pound 4X6 foot rubber-stall mats around like playing cards. They grab them between their teeth and fling them around like nothing — even dragging them out of their stalls. I wish they would find a new game because I need help dragging the mats back in the stalls."

A "Jolly Ball" was designed for horses, but Joy's won't play

with it. They prefer their mats. But when her dog spots their ball, he steals it and plays with it while she cleans out stalls.

"The thing I wish horses did do is...poop in one spot!" laughs Joy. "Manure mixes in with hay, wasting it, and makes it harder to clean up. It would be easier to pick up their manure if they could miraculously be trained to do it in one location. I don't mind shoveling. It is great exercise and you don't need a gym membership with hay and manure to shovel and toss daily."

After 18 years, Joy is still passionate about horses and amazed to have realized her seemingly im-paws-ible childhood dream!

Tips

Before becoming a horse's life keeper, ask questions! Horses, as kind, loving and wonderful as horses are, they can be dangerous! Consult a profes-

sional, visit a horse boarding facility and a knowledgeable "horse person".

"Always wear a helmet when riding," insisted Joy. "I've only fallen off once, but that's all it takes. Thankfully, I had my helmet on and it did its job well by protecting my head."

Guaranteed! Horse health problems are expensive! Before buying or gifting a horse, have a vet do a pre-check because they may have an issue that you can't see or afford.

Horses are mammals, like us. They experience heat and cold.

Yes, horses in the wild stand under trees for shelter, but domesticated horses need solid shelters. One wall and a roof is better and kinder than nothing. Horses without protection from the weather can develop rain rot on their backs. Our horses needs are respected so they have a barn for shelter."

Pat in Chehalis, Washington wrote, "Many songs and music were inspired by horses. Listen to the music's beat and you can clearly hear the rhythm of horse hooves."

In America, as cowboys rode the range they created songs to the beat of their horse's hooves. In some songs/music, you can hear the distinct beats of a trot, a gentle lope, or a gallop which adds another dimension to animals and the world of music."

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You owe it to the world to pursue your weirdness

BY NED HICKSON
News Media Corporation

As an Oregonian who spent several years living in Portland, I feel the city's unofficial mantra "Keep Portland Weird" is a noble pursuit. The world needs weird. Not the current presidential candidates kind of weird, which is like a Stephen-King-horror-novel-with-a-rabid-dog-and-terrifying-clown kind of weird.

No, I'm talking about a less volatile, better coiffed and more enjoyable kind of weirdness that helps us keep a fresh perspective on daily life.

Albert Einstein, Edgar Allan Poe, Leonardo da Vinci, Lucille Ball — all were geniuses in their own way who reminded us to see the world with wonderment by unapologetically pursuing their weirdness.

I'm no genius. I'm reminded of this every time I spend five minutes getting frustrated with the TV remote, then realize it's the garage door opener — usually after the neighbor calls to tell me our Labrador is repeatedly being knocked unconscious. Though I'm no genius, I do consider myself weird. And so do others. Particularly my teenagers, who avoid eye contact whenever we're in public because they're afraid I'll do something weird that will embarrass them.

Or as they jokingly say, „DESTROY OUR LIVES!“
Ha! Ha!

Ok, maybe they're not joking. The truth is, though they may feel being in the car with Dad while he orders from the drive-thru in an Arnold Schwarzenegger voice could have a lasting impact on their reputations — or at the very least completely screw up our dinner order — I believe the example of infusing random acts of weirdness into daily life is an important one. That's because being weird requires looking at a common situation in an uncommon way. As a parent, there are few skills I want my children to develop that are more important than the ability to think unconventionally. It's that type of thinking that leads to technological breakthroughs, builds self-confidence and develops problem-solving skills.

Not counting me and my TV remote, of course.

Being able to wield weirdness is like having Thor's mighty hammer to smash negativity and the mundane. Although if you think you're going to look as cool doing it, you're kidding yourself. Regardless, it's an effective way of turning a bad situation into a better situation; an unfortunate circumstance into a laughable moment; Kanye West into... another laughable moment.

You get the idea.

The world is getting more plugged in and, coincidentally, more stressed out. Weirdness is a necessary coping mechanism that benefits everyone. So please do the responsible thing by embracing your weirdness. Or even someone else's.

But if they're part of the Portland Naked Bike Ride, I'd have them put pants on first.

(Ned is a syndicated columnist with News Media Corporation. His book, *Humor at the Speed of Life*, is available online at *Port Hole Publications*, *Amazon Books* and *Barnes & Noble*. Write to him at nedhickson@icloud.com)

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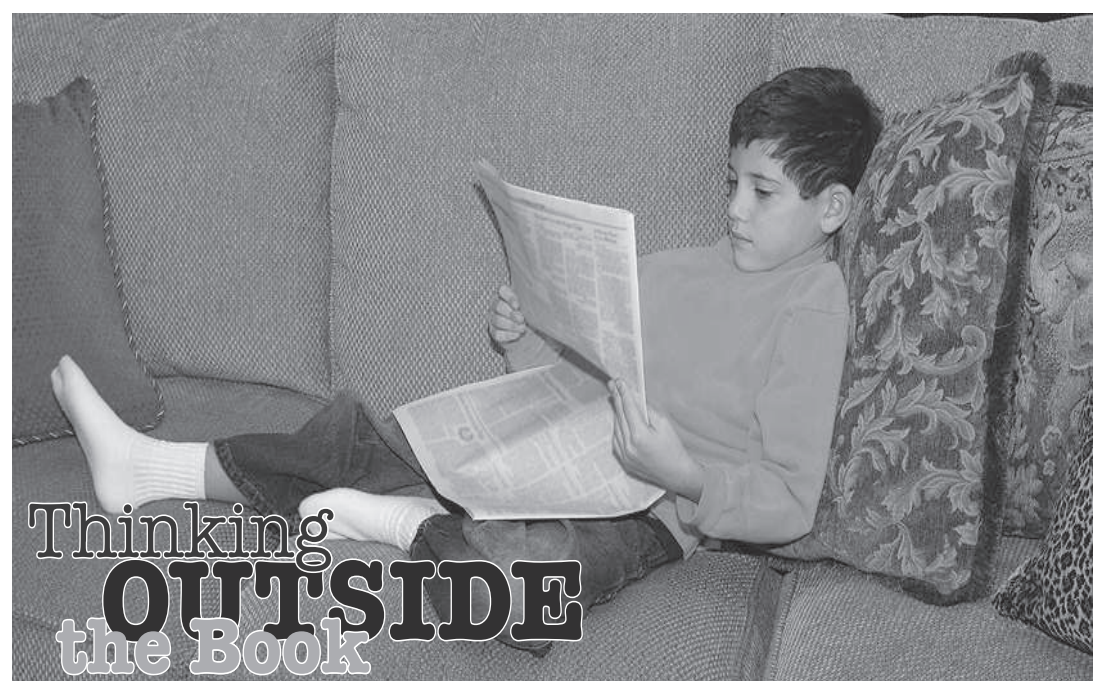
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