

The Dressage Rider

THE BACKGROUND

An experienced assessor of dressage and elementary level rider ('M'*) contacted Inside Performance after hearing about NLP and followed a suggestion that it would be a huge help to her riding performance.

Despite a number of years riding experience and success in competition, M in more recent years had experienced increasing amounts of stress and anxiety when hacking out with her horse, who she described as a 'Saint' to ride

Some of the key issues surrounding her riding were...

- An increasing and debilitating anxiety that often prevented her from hacking out from the riding school.
- Fear of the horse 'spooking' and what '*might*' happen
- Experiencing a life-threatening fall and injury during competition in 1991, followed by a 'spooky' horse in subsequent years of recovery.

M's desired outcome for her 1-2-1 sessions was to overcome her anxiety and to feel confident on the horse so that she and her horse can enjoy riding again.

THE SOLUTION

When working with M, it was vital to use NLP language skills to get to the **heart** of the issues that she was using to create the anxiety when riding. When working from an NLP perspective, it is important for the client to learn the underlying belief frames of NLP, particularly when learning to take 100% responsibility for their results both during the sessions and when performing.

This was a key learning for M, who could immediately see the benefit of taking charge of her emotions and actions on the horse, which originally (as with many athletes) she didn't realise that control over her performance was 100% hers...even if the horse does spook, it's her response to the situation that counts!

Here a few examples of some of the NLP methods that were used with M...

- Time Line Therapy™ – a powerful visualization tool that is used to change the way we **think about** our memories in the past that have a negative impact on us in **the now**. This technique was particularly useful for M to allow herself to let go of all the Anger, Sadness, Fear, Hurt and Guilt she was experiencing around her riding accident in the past that she was carrying with her during present day performance.
- We explored what M wanted to achieve and what was important to her about her riding in order for her to create a clear and achievable image of how she sees herself - as a confident rider. This indicated that her belief in her ability on the horse was already strong.
- Mental rehearsal tools were used to alter the negative self-talk that M was using during her riding that resulted in her anxious state. A common issue for most athletes. M was given the techniques needed to alter that self-talk and change the way she represented it's meaning in her mind – making it positive for her riding.
- A powerful state management technique known as 'the circle (or saddle!) of excellence' that uses M's physiology and imagery to access any positive and resourceful states that she can access any time during her performance.

THE RESULTS

After one session, M was immediately motivated to take what she'd learned and 'get back on the horse!' Progress has been steady and positive for her riding, which after her change in mindset over control of her own performance has led to M achieving more with him in the riding school than she had since her anxiety began to take over.

Any negative emotions that she carried which haunted her performance have faded away and despite the occasional and inevitable 'spook' from field animals – both M and her horse have been ***“so much more forward thinking and positive”*** in their riding, making it an enjoyable experience for both!

“Thank you again for your help; things really have got better. Of course, they might have got better anyway, but even though it's taken a few months, I have the tools to help when I get a setback...I'm actually riding better from a technical point of view than I ever have.”

THE FUTURE

After accessing those feelings of enjoyment for both M and her horse, they both continue to ride and improve at her dressage school....and they are quite happy for the moment doing just that!

*The name provided is an alias to honour client confidentiality.

