

“Overcoming Fear.....Part Two”

A few months ago I talked about “Fears”. How we get them, keep them and overcome them. At that time I mentioned that I had a fear of horses. Well, I’m about 4 visits into my “overcoming my fears” by getting to know horses just a bit better. I’ll have to admit I am taking baby steps as I work to build my confidence and overcome my fear.

My first trip just included being introduced to Star and a bit of grooming (Star, not me). Walking into the field where Star and his friends, Patch and Doc were was even intimidating and I’m not talking about what I could have stepped on. I was a bit shaky to say the least, heart was pounding a bit faster than normal and even though it was on the cool side, my palms were sweating. All I could imagine was me being in the wrong place at the wrong time or being ignorant like I am about horses that they would possibly attack me or something because I was in their territory. My coach was really starting to wonder about me. Well, of course nothing did happen. Coach put that rope thing around Star and guided her in to the barn. I stayed clear.

Once in the barn we began getting me calmer around Star. While Coach went out to fetch some of the grooming equipment I was left on my own with Star. The wind was pretty brisk, which I learned can spook a horse, and before I knew it Star was making noises and moving around. Well, nothing out of the ordinary, of course, but I didn’t know that. I was behind a fence about as quick as I could go all the while telling Star it was going to be ok (of course, I was really just trying to tell myself that). When coach returned I reminded her of my GREAT fear of horses and suggested she never leave my side again. She obliged and we got along great.

So the grooming began. I was using something that looked like it belonged in the kitchen. Apparently horses like how it feels – gives them a good scratch down. Then I was put in charge of brushing Star’s mane. It was quite long with a few tangles. Remembering how I use to do this with my daughter I worked ever so gingerly to get them out. Star didn’t mind and we had our initial success. Before leaving Star was rewarded (or was I rewarded) with eating oats from my hand. That is one strange feeling and at first I wasn’t sure this was a good idea. Baby steps.....baby steps.....

This week I finished my fourth visit. I have continued grooming Star gaining more and more confidence (do you know how dirty you get doing this?), lifted her legs to try and get the “gunk” out of her hooves (do you know how hard this is?), watched my coach get a riding lesson (even good riders continue to have lessons) placed a harness around her (do you know how hard it is to learn the language of horse equipment), fed her an apple, walked her and rode her (ok, so some may not have called what I did riding).

Time, persistence, patience from my Coach and especially Star and desire are helping me to overcome my fears. I’m not there yet, but it is beginning to feel differently when I am with Star (and my coach). I believe it is a confidence. My palms are not sweating, my heart has slowed down and I haven’t run for cover in a while. I don’t know if it would be there with a different horse and if I was by myself, but I do know I have taken steps in the right direction. Baby steps.....and instead of anticipating pain or misfortune (as fear is defined) I am anticipating fun!!