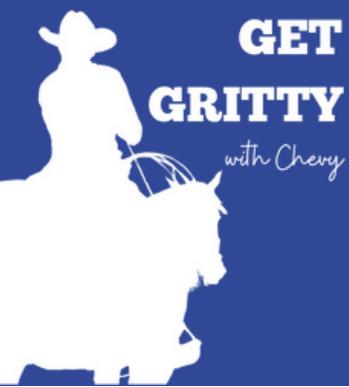


# CONFIDENT & COMPETITIVE COWGIRL



Mental Skills for Cowgirls that want to Get Gritty, Face their Fears, Live their Dreams and Be Confident in the Competition Arena.

# **WEEK 4: MENTAL SKILLS FOR SHOW DAY**

*"Success is where preparation and  
opportunity meet."*

*-Bobby Unser*

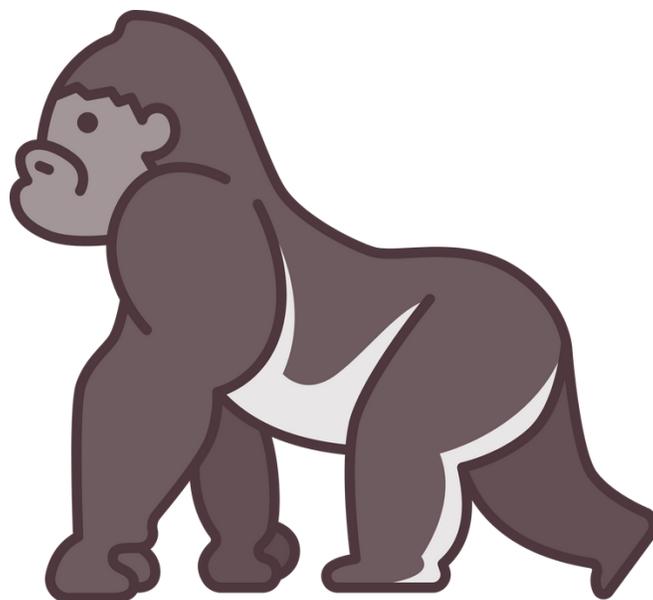


# **CONTROL YOUR APE**

Have you ever been at a horse show, and heard someone complain about the weather, the footing, the judges or what the food stand was serving for lunch? Or have you been that person?

It is easy to get caught up in complaining about the things we wish were different. However, when our thoughts are focused on the negative things that we ultimately have no control over, we are wasting our energy! And we need all of our energy focused on the task at hand so we can be at our best for our horse.

On show day, we need to focus on controlling the controllables. And the controllables we have 100% control over is our APE, our Attitude, Preparation, and Effort!



# **ATTITUDE**

*Your Attitude is the difference between an Ordeal and an Adventure!*

Choosing what attitude you want to have on show day, and then controlling your thoughts and emotions to maintain it, isn't easy. There will be challenges and obstacles along the way. How you respond to them, your attitude, is what will be the difference between a positive, fun showing experience, and a stressful, negative one.

Here are some tips to maintain a positive attitude at shows:

- Avoid negative people. And don't be the negative, whiny person either. Good vibes only!
- Make sure you get enough rest, food, and water. It is hard to have a good attitude and perform well when you are hangry!
- Hunt for the good stuff. If the rainy weather means the arena won't be dusty, notice it!
- Compliment others. If you like someone else's show shirt, tell them! It gives them-and you!-a positive boost!
- Smile!

# **PREPARATION: PRE-SHOW ROUTINES**

Many pro athletes use pre-performance routines to be ready, focused, and able to perform at their best.

Riders can do the same thing. By planning out what you will do to prepare and when, it helps you to be more in control and focused.

On the next page is a sample, filled out Pre-Show Routine, then a blank form for you to use to create your own Pre-Show Routine.

# **SAMPLE PRE-SHOW ROUTINE:**

## **The Night Before the Show:**

*I will make sure to eat a good meal and get plenty of sleep. I will check out the show grounds/arena, and add specific markers to my visualizations. I will visualize my pattern before I go to sleep.*

## **The Morning of the Show:**

*As I drink my morning coffee, I will visualize my patterns. I will make sure to give myself plenty of time to get ready.*

## **If I start to feel nervous, I will:**

*Ask "What's important now?"*

*Remind myself that I show to improve my horse and my horsemanship. It's about the journey!*

## **1 Hour Before I Compete:**

*Bathroom break! Take 5 minutes in a quiet place. Hold my favorite power pose for two minutes, say out loud my positive affirmation. Drink water/have a small snack, then get on my horse. We are ready for this!*

## **At the In Gate:**

*Square breathing. Repeat my positive affirmation. Stay in this present moment. I am excited-watch this!*

## **My Positive Affirmation:**

*I am a confident, gritty rider.*

## **My Post-Mistake Ritual:**

*Ride on and WIN!*

## **My Attitude:**

*Preserve my good vibes-stay by other positive people! Smile, and notice the good in others!*

# **MY PRE-SHOW ROUTINE:**

The Night Before the Show:

The Morning of the Show:

If I start to feel nervous, I will:

30 Minutes Before I Compete:

At the In Gate:

My Positive Affirmation:

My Post-Mistake Ritual:

My Attitude

# **EFFORT**

How much effort you put in, and how hard you work before, during, and after the show, is entirely up to you.

It takes time and effort to develop a relationship with your horse. This is something that you need to do- your coach or trainer cannot do this for you!

Here is where some self-reflection needs to happen. At shows, are you giving 100% effort to riding at your best? In practice, are you working hard to improve yourself and your horse? After shows, are you reflecting on and analyzing your performance to identify areas where you didn't do so well? Then are you putting effort into making those areas better?

Horsemanship is hard. If you want to be successful in the show pen, then you need to put in the effort.



# **WEEK 4: MORE MINDSET TIPS FOR SHOW DAY**

*"Mindset is everything. Your success begins and ends with mindset. In between it's grit that carries you through."*

*-LeAura Alderson*



# **NERVOUS? OR EXCITED?**

When you are feeling nervous or anxious, you are in a high-arousal state. Calmness or feeling relaxed is a low arousal state. And it is just about impossible to shift immediately from a high-arousal state into a low arousal state.

Instead, redirect that energy by reframing it. Instead of saying “I’m anxious or I’m nervous” say “I’m excited!”

To your brain and body, anxiety and excitement are the same physical response. They both increase your heart and respiration rates, make you more aware of everything going on around you, and cause an adrenaline rush so you have the energy to respond.

The only difference between the two is how you perceive it. So by changing your thoughts from “I’m anxious,” to “I’m excited” you shift from a negative feeling to a positive feeling, and now you are much more likely to be able to transform that extra energy into going out there and doing something fun with your horse.

Isn't that exciting?

# POWER POSES

When we assume "power poses" it changes the hormones in our bodies-namely, increasing testosterone to boost energy and confidence and lowering cortisol to reduce stress. Our bodies influence our minds, and we can use our posture to influence our emotions.

My favorite power pose is the "Wonder Woman" Pose-standing tall, hands on hips, chin up and looking straight ahead.

Before you get on your horse, hold your favorite power pose for a few minutes. Breathe deep, stand tall and proud. If you can do this in front of a mirror it is even more effective.

To further boost your confidence, repeat your favorite positive affirmation while you hold this power pose.



# **WIN**

Do you get overwhelmed by show nerves as you are getting ready to compete?

Ever make a mistake and can't quite seem to shake it off?

Or do you have trouble focusing on what you need to do in the show pen?

Lou Holtz, Notre Dame Football Coach, used the acronym WIN to help his players stay focused on the present moment and take action to perform at their best. WIN stands for "What's Important Now?" Asking this question gets your mind out of a negative spiral and refocused.

So when you find yourself feeling nervous, distracted, overwhelmed, or stuck, remember WIN.

# QUIT RUMINATING!

Quit Ruminating! You are NOT a Cow!

Replaying and focusing on negative thoughts, or having past mistakes self-doubts run through your head over and over, just like a cow ruminates and re-chews her cud, is not going to help you or your horse perform at your best. Ruminating is a common focus problem and performance block that many riders face. So quit ruminating. You are not a cow!

When you catch yourself ruminating, recognize that the thoughts are not helpful.

Then, make the shift to Productive Reflection by asking yourself: "What can I do about this right now?"

If the answer is nothing, then let it go.

If the answer is an action that you can take right now, do it!

If the answer is an action that you can take later, write it down and commit to doing it.



# **NO GRIT, NO PEARL. NO PRESSURE, NO DIAMOND.**

Do you know how a pearl is made? A little piece of sand, a piece of grit, gets stuck inside an oyster. The oyster responds by building layers of calcium carbonate over that piece of grit. It takes years for the oyster to layer by layer, bit by bit, transform that little piece of grit into a beautiful pearl.

A diamond is made up of carbon-actually quite similar to the graphite in pencil lead. Carbon atoms on their own cannot become a diamond. In order to transform into this sparkling gem, it must experience high temperature and extreme pressure over a long period of time.

To make ourselves into someone great, we need to transform some pressure into a diamond, and take some grit and make it into a pearl.

