

Please Note: The following is a previously written article that we believe will be beneficial when attending clinics.

LEARNING SAVVY FOR CLINICS

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I'm back! I arrived at the Pat Parelli Center in Pagosa Springs two weeks ago and I am having a VERY exciting summer. I returned from Australia to support the launch of the new Parelli Level 1 home study program and my new book *Move Closer Stay Longer* which was inspired by my adventures with Pat and Linda these past few years. The book teaches strategies to eliminate fears that block the path to your goal. I will write more about that in the future.

I also wanted to talk with students who'd been using the strategies in *Great Lies We Live By* and who have completed *The Labyrinth* online course. Needless to say it has been a busy year, and this next one promises no less.

Given I'm here and am surrounded by students in classes and observing how they approach learning, I feel compelled to write about a few ideas that relate to how you can get the best out of a clinic when you finally get everything in place to attend one.

INTRODUCTION

The first thing I did when I arrived was to offer to lecture to Linda's incoming Level 3 class. As it turned out I did this for everyone at the Center that day. As many of you know I have been mostly focused on helping to improve the learning process for home study students. But I do know a good bit about how to help students take advantage of a face-to-face course as well and there had been little opportunity to offer that to Parelli students until now.

The purpose of the lecture was to help students think about the nature of learning and the behaviors that would produce good results in *CLINIC* situations. This is very different than what is required of students when they are working at home on their own as independent learners. Very few people think about this, and it leads to sometimes hit-and-miss outcomes for their time spent.

I want to share with you a few of the ideas I discussed in that lecture. If you find yourself heading to a clinic or a course these are the kinds of thoughts and strategies you'd do well to take with you into that situation.

GET BIGGER

When taught juggling as part of the “ Learning To Learn” course I was always surprised to find the students who were having the greatest difficulty learning off in a corner, out of my view, practicing. One time I even found a few women practicing in the restroom!

I prided myself on being a safe instructor where people could be a learners – uncoordinated, confused and looking a bit silly. But I guess no, because clearly I was driving some of them to hide from me. And, I observed that those who disappeared never produced the same quality result as those who stayed where I could observe what they were doing and offer feedback.

I started to teach my students the idea of “getting bigger,” not smaller, when they were having trouble. This means to get MORE visible the worse things are going. If you are having trouble then you WANT to be seen by an instructor. They can quickly assess what is causing the problem and lead you to the next step in a positive direction.

One of the great opportunities and advantages of attending a clinic is that you have one or more instructors observing you with “educated eyes.” They can see things in your actions that you cannot feel. They can advise you to make changes that quickly improve your performance that you, on your own, might never stumble upon.

Get in the middle of the pack and do what you can do! Get what you came for - feedback!

FAKE IT ‘TIL YOU MAKE IT (NOT)

There is this funny concept that came out in the ‘80s that you should act as if you can do something even if you can’t and somehow over time this would lead you to an improved performance in the future. There are situations and activities in which this idea can help, but a **learning situation is NOT one of them.**

This is especially true if what you are learning has caused any fear. In a clinic some students feel a palpable pressure to do things in the extreme edges of their comfort zone (the place where it feels like the plane is falling out of the sky). This can be caused by many factors (concern for how you will be perceived by others, wanting to get your monies worth, and so on).

Only YOU know YOU. Instructors offer opportunities for learning different tasks; it is your responsibility to know when you have to say “no.”

Fortunately, in the Parelli program *fake it ‘til you make it* runs counter to many of the important principles of the program. But individual students can still go way over the top without the instructor ever knowing!

Yes, discomfort is a sign of learning, but out-and-out fear is not. Don't fake it hoping you will make it. Tell your instructor when what you are asked is too far outside your comfort zone.

ASK QUESTIONS

Recently I wrote an article for Savvy Times about **the behavior of asking for help** when you need it. I addressed why so many adult home study students and course graduates who do need help don't ask.

When you are a participant of a clinic your willingness and comfort to ask questions is a very important feature of your success.

There are three distinctions you need to take advantage of by asking questions at a clinic, *Ask someone to help you!*

At a clinic you have one thing you do not have at home: An instructor! They are there to facilitate your learning process. For all the magic they pull off they CANNOT read your mind!

But, we all know that for some people it is not *comfortable* to talk to the instructors. These learners do something more comfortable and far less useful. They ask other students to help or for feedback on their lessons!

Asking other students for help with your horsemanship is not the best thing you could be doing. You will always find students willing to help, but they are just that – STUDENTS! Ask questions in a timely fashion.

Being at a clinic means that you are engaged in a learning environment that is very constrained. Hour by hour, your learning is compounded by your understanding of what came before it. Confusion can snowball out of control very quickly. Even asking a question a day late can cause real problems for your instructor and needless to say, yourself.

When something is up, get it handled promptly.

Respect that your questions affect other students.

There is nothing much worse in a learning environment than sharing that environment with a student who has no awareness about the effect their questions and stories have on other students and on the instructor.

I do not think these students wake up in the morning and think, "I know what I'll do. I'll go to class today and annoy the Dickens out of my fellow students by asking lots of lots of questions!"

But they do.

Questions should relate to things that confuse you and that if not cleared up might affect your learning. Questions related to your personal interests or curiosities are better asked out of class time.

DON'T LET YOUR PERSONAL LEARNING STYLE INTERFERE WITH WHAT YOU CAN GET OUT OF THE CLINIC

When I took on the project of seeing if I could accelerate the process of learning the piano for people who wanted to learn to play I had a problem. My learning preference did NOT include action and experimentation! Oh, no not me!

I preferred to read books about playing the piano!

It is obvious that I was not going to learn to play the piano by reading a book. I had to develop a tolerance for learning in a way that was quite a ways outside my comfort zone. I had to be willing to strike the keys, make mistakes, do this with an instructor, and make horrible noise. It was really hard for me to expand into comfort for a new way of learning that was suitable for my goal! But I did for the sake of achieving that goal.

Many of you have now read the chapter in my book *Great Lies We Live By* that addresses the issue of learning styles or the approaches to learning different students have. Some people may like to get the overall picture first, while others could care less about this. Others prefer to jump right into action and experience new things, while others are more comfortable sitting in a classroom taking notes or on the fence observing.

How you like learning opportunities to be presented becomes your habit and other styles can be outside of your comfort zone – and resisted.

Note that there is nothing wrong with any of these styles. They all produce good learning effects BUT NOT FOR ALL THINGS. You may find that your learning preference is NOT the best for the way learning is presented in clinics.

If that is the case, YOU have to expand to take advantage of what is offered. Instructors look at their outcomes for the course and THEN decide on the best method to see that you achieve that outcome. Their job is to make this decision then be skilled enough to help all learners of all styles navigate the course.

You don't have to like it for it to be effective!

IN CLOSING

Clinics are special learning events. They can accomplish qualities of learning that other forms such as reading, self-exploration, and so on cannot. But much of what each of you will gain from the clinic is dependent upon how you deal with the methods of teaching that

are best suited to clinics and to the environment.

I hope you will take this article out again when you are next heading to a Parelli course.

Now it's time for me to get back into my own course! Wish me well.