

You do not have to compete to seek excellence in equestrianism; really, it is seeking a level of excellence in everything you do while remembering that some days are going to be better than others. The key to this is to ask yourself, "Did I do the best I could today in the situation I was in, under circumstances that may have been out of my control?" If the answer is yes, then you have achieved personal Gold!

Winners are not people who never fail; winners are those who never give up!

With this journey you will encounter people and situations that you may not like or agree with. These things are often out of an individual's control, especially if you are working within a team. Don't get upset with these people or situations! What IS in your control is how you allow it to affect you, how you choose to react and what you learn from it.

Keys to Success

Attitude- If this was easy everyone would be doing it!

Knowledge - Don't limit yourself. Do your best to gather as much information as possible, ask questions and understand why! Audit clinics. At the very least you will confirm in your mind what you don't want to do. Be progressive!

Techniques - Take the knowledge and be disciplined enough to master it.

Tools - Be open-minded. What works for one doesn't work for all, especially with horses.

Time – 10,000 hours practice does not make perfect, only perfect practice makes perfect. I recommend you read Malcolm Gladwyne's book *Outliers* .

Imagination - Think outside the box, and even better, what box?

Laughter - Take it all in stride, and learn to laugh. People like being around someone who can laugh.

Support - What are you doing to encourage people to be part of the journey? How are you a part of another's journey? When was the last time you did something 100 % for un-selfish reasons?

It helps to understand where you are in the scale of learning.

- 1) Unconsciously incompetent
- 2) Consciously incompetent
- 3) Consciously competent
- 4) Unconsciously competent

With everything I do, especially with my horses, I am clear on what my principles are. My mentor Pat Parelli says, "If you don't stand for something you'll fall for anything." Are you doing this *to* your horse, or *with* your horse? I am a competitive person at heart but in everything I do I make sure I put the relationship with my horse first. In return my horse will go the distance with me.

Help your horse have a strong foundation before specialization. Do you have more Icing than Cake? I often see this in the horse industry. Horses that are spectacular when being ridden can't cope with the basic things in their life. They do not have the emotional and mental fitness to handle trailering, horseshoeing, the bright lights of the competition arena, the crowd clapping or life size panda bears. Have you helped you horse become "Calmer, Safer, and Braver"?

The smile! Have you ever had one of those days where its just O.K.? I have those days all the time, but I try to have them with a smile on my face. The smile doesn't mean everything is fine - it means I'm struggling but I know this is a part of life and I'll get through it. The smile encourages others to be a part of the journey while they are helping me overcome the challenges of pursuing excellence.