Embodying Intention (Skillbuilding)
Instructions & script

Purpose:

This is a skill-building exercise with a horse. This advanced exercise can be done at the end of a trajectory, or at the end of a multi-day workshop.

Clients should already have an understanding of the body scan, feel safe enough to engage in dialogue with vulnerability, and you as facilitator should have had the opportunity to evaluate their skill and ability to stay present in the ring with a horse.

Embody Intention brings the elements of body scan and a respectful, intuitive connection with the horse, with the additional task of setting and achieving an intention.

Clients learn how to generate internal energy behind their intention and then send it to the horse. They practice with how their body gives them information about working and communicating with another being, and with feeling and visualising an intention before carrying it out.

This exercise will bring out any false self patterns, memories/stories and transference that sit in the way of achieving intentions. This activity helps them develop nonverbal skills associated with connection, timing, focus, moderating energy and boundaries-in-motion, balanced with sensitivity to what others need.

Setup:

Take the time to properly explain this exercise to the client, preferably before you get to the horses. Once you are with the horses, their attention may be distracted and therefore important information may not stick.

1. The horses for this exercise must be familiar with being loose lunged, and also with the type of whip you use. Make sure you know from personal experience what each of your horses needs in motivation, body-positioning, and energy, to achieve the intention. Never ask a client to do something with a horse that you yourself cannot achieve with that particular horse!
   Furthermore, you must ensure that the horse in this exercise matches the skill level of the client – if it's someone who has not loose lunged before, you need to ensure the horse you work with is OK to be loose lunged by a beginner. So if you only have one suitable horse available that can be loose lunged, the client can't choose between horses.
2. Safety: The client should stay on his/her feet, bring a "boundary setter," and should not put himself/herself between the horse and the fence.

3. In this exercise, the client's intention is to practice with specific skills. This intention and how the client can engage is explored with the help of the preceding body scan process. So there is no point in establishing or planning these in advance.
4. The exercise may contain a number of steps and is therefore finished when the steps have been completed or when the learning curve around the skill in question has been sufficiently explored. Sometimes the horse indicates when the session is finished (for example, by no longer engaging and standing at the fence) - we always honor the horse's wishes first.
5. The client can talk to you if they have questions during the session.
6. In Skillbuilding sessions, your role is to proactively coach on the skill the exercise is about. It is important to leave it up to the "3x rule" whether you offer a tip or instruction immediately in the process, or whether you take a more questioning approach.
   If a client asks for help, make an assessment with your gut feeling and what you know about the client so far, whether they are asking this from their authentic self or survival behavior. Let that assessment determine how you deal with the request for help, and make sure that you don't respond to the desire of the false self (both yours and the client'sI) to generate distraction from the challenge that causes the emotion Vulnerability to arise. If it is an authentic request for help, try to provide the help the client is seeking to the best of your ability. If it could be a false-self strategy, such as "learned helplessness," you might suggest, for example, that the client come out of the ring briefly to do another body scan, around what is currently being touched with them.
   (If you are not sure what to do, it is always better to initiate a body scan than to give instructions or ask further questions. If it is indeed the case that the client's survival behavior is getting in the way of engaging in the learning experience, your questions will soon give the head a chance to further engage with the distraction!) In Skillbuilding, you try to make the questions you ask as specific as possible to the learning around the skill and the actions the client is taking. Eg: "What were you trying to do?" "What was your intention with that movement?" "Why are you walking away from the horse at this point?" Etc.

Supplies:

For facilitator:

- Clipboard
- Script
- Pen and paper for notes
- Boundary device

For client:

- Pen and paper or notebook for notes
- Lunge whip

SCRIPT

Step 1: Explanation and Human to Human demonstration

First explain this is a this Skillbuilding exercise which helps develop the following skills:

1. Learning to get things done from others, by focusing on sensing the energy of the other in relation to your own energy and intention levels.
2. Moderating and directing your own energy and intention effectively as needed, balancing both their 'volume levels' as well as their timing.
3. Develop a higher level of self-awareness about your ability to set an intention and achieve your goal while staying connected to yourself and your horse/other.

Explain: **Commitment + Crescendo + Direct Positive Feedback = Success**

Commitment is the decision to move.

Crescendo is the internal 'volume button' of **intention** and **energy:**

1. I would like to try this
2. I could do this
3. I think I can do it
4. I will do this
5. We're going to do this together now.

Direct Positive Feedback is communicating either verbally or non-verbally your appreciation for your (horse) partner's cooperation. Make sure this is authentic and that you are congruent. Allow yourself and your horse to enjoy the small moments of success.

Success is doing your best! Whatever that means today, for yourself and this horse.

Step 2: Human to human exercise: client in the role of horse.

After the above explanation, you start with a human-to-human demonstration that aims to familiarize the client with the actions and volume control involved in moving a horse. Even if the client has a lot of horse experience, it can be enormously insightful for them to feel what it is like to be a horse for once.

This demonstration is mainly about the client experiencing through body language how the pressure is increased to trot and then decreased again to walk.

The client does not have to walk the same number of laps as the horse. Depending on the space you have, it may be smaller rounds than the horse has to walk. However, it is important that there is enough space for both you and the client to be present in your body with your mind.

Step 3: Human to human exercise: client in the driving position

After the client has practised 'being a horse', it is time to let them drive you around using the crescendo. In this step you give them feedback on their execution to build on the skill before they do it with the horse.

Step 4: Demonstration with the horse

Before the client does the exercise with the horse, you demonstrate it with this particular horse. *Note: you may skip this step if your client has a lot of experience with loose lunging.*

Step 5: Preparatory body scan

Be prepared to take notes for yourself of the client's responses to the steps of the body scan process.

Make sure the client stands outside the fence of the space with the horse, with his/her back to the horse, and face to you.

Then say, "Close your eyes, scan through your body, and tell me what feelings or sensations you feel in your body. (With multiple sensations) Which one is most prominent?" (Write down)

After the answer is given, say, "Make the sensation as big as it can get, as if you were putting an amplifier on it. Breathe oxygen and awareness into it. Ask the sensation what information it wants to make clear to you. What is this about?"

Then you ask, "Now that you got the information, go back with your attention to the sensation. Has it changed?" If yes, then this body scan is finished.

If the sensation has remained the same or has intensified, ask the client to refocus on the sensation and ask it for another piece of information. Repeat until the sensation has changed or gone away.

Step 6: Setting Intention

Now ask the client to turn around toward the horse. The client basically keeps the eyes closed, but may keep them open if they strongly prefer it.

Then instruct the client: "The intention of your exercise today is to make the horse walk and trot in circles. We are going to ask your brain to do what it does best: visualise achieving this intention. As I state the intention, look in the direction of the horse. Imagine yourself performing it with this horse. Your intention is to take a boundary setter into the ring, greet the horse, stand in the centre, and then let the horse move around you, first X laps at a walk, then X laps at a trot and then X laps at a walk again. [If you have time for this and the horse is capable of doing this: Then change the horse's direction, do the same the other way, step up crescendo to trot, and back to walk again]. Then thank the horse, and leave the arena."

Check with the client if they are able to visualise this and if they are ready for the next step. Then continue:

"Once you have the visualisation in your head, drop it into your body. Tell me where in your body the visualisation lands."

Once the clients name the spot in their body where the intention has landed, ask them to focus their attention and breathing on that spot, direct awareness and oxygen to it, and to ask that part of their body *what needs to be activated within them* to engage the intention of the exercise with the horse. Ask the client to open his/her eyes when an answer to this comes up, and tell you (write it down).

Then say, "Let's see if your horse has any suggestions about this." Explain possibly: "This is a metaphor for checking in with those you are interacting with, to see how they would prefer to handle this." [You can possibly name the analogy in leadership coaching of asking for input from a team member with specific expertise].

Now instruct the client to make contact with the horse, and silently send the intention to the horse and ask the horse *what the horse needs from the client*, to do the exercise with him/her. Ask what the client gets back from his/her subconscious in response to that question. Record the client's response.

Step 7. Exercise with horse

Before opening the gate to the arena with the horse remind the client of the following points:

- Client may ask you for help or suggestions at any time when needed
- Remember the safety rules
  - stay on your feet
  - don't put yourself between the horse and the fence
  - don't block the horse in a corner
  - the middle is the safest place
  - "When I say STOP, immediately stop what you are doing and get at least 1 meter away from the horse."

Then you remind the client what his/hear body's advice was, and the horse's advice, about the intention of the exercise.

Now let the client enter the arena to interact with the horse.

When they ask for help, or feel stuck, questions about purpose and implementation of actions are appropriate to break the deadlock.

- "What were you trying to do?" / "What was your intention with that movement?" / "Why are you walking away from the horse at this point?"/ "What was your intention?"
- "What needed to be activated in you in the body scan?" / "What did the horse need from you?" (Remind the client of this if they have forgotten).
- Sometimes they already got the point and are looking for something more, in which case, "Does the exercise feel complete?" / "Do you want to try something more?"
- Note this pitfall: if you ask "What's happening?" in a skill-building exercise, you run the risk of the client getting stuck in focusing on, and/or repeating, his or her "story" (Drama Triangle!) rather than practicing with the skill. The intent, of course, is to give space to the client's story if it is an emotional block in their ability to engage in

practicing the skill. The difference is very subtle, and can be very difficult to recognize. This is why we avoid this question in skill-building exercises.

- It is very tempting to start giving instructions to make the client do it BETTER than they are already doing it. Sometimes this can be appropriate, e.g. if the client already has a higher level of horse experience and their learning curve is about refinement. But be careful to stop in time, i.e. as soon as the client has achieved success, so always end on a positive note and then don't start making it another level harder. When learning something new, "perfect" is usually the biggest enemy of "good enough"!
- Also, beware of the temptation to turn it into a lesson in horse training. These exercises are about the client's inner process of being able to apply the skill in daily life, not about teaching the horse something or making it move better!

When the exercise is complete for the client, you can suggest that the client comes outside the ring to finish with the horse, and suggest that they thank the horse first.

Step 4: Completion:

This is a SKILLBUILDING exercise. So you complete it with the skillbuilding questions:

1. What went well/what was successful?
2. What were challenges you encountered?
3. How did you face these? / How did you overcome these? / What could you experiment with?
4. What do you take away/have you learned about Embodying Intention

If it occurs to you 3 times, give the client one observation back about something you yourself noticed but keep it to yourself in the way you phrase it. Example: "The moment you gave your clue more emphatically, the horse immediately started to move. I associated that with both finding something exciting and being determined to do it."

Again, beware of your own ego! Do not give the client an analysis of his or her actions. You may give observations, but choose your wording very consciously so that there is no judgment about HOW it went. Not even if the client asks for it. Make sure the client's initiative and attempt, however clumsy, is seen and positively confirmed.

Eg: "Of course, the more often you work with horses in this way, the easier it becomes. What matters is what you learned from engaging in the exercise" / "I got the impression that you really had to gather courage to set that boundary at level 5. Well done for persevering in that!"