Explore Power Word (Skillbuilding)
Instructions & script

Purpose:

All Power Word exercises are Skillbuilding exercises, because they invite you to consciously take action or change something in relationship to the power word. Power words help you discover more about limiting beliefs underneath our patterns. Exploring these with the help of a horse, can lead to the client discovering how he or she can approach or go about something in a different (more effective) way.

For example, the word 'CONTACT' during the preparatory body scan with a client brought up feelings of sadness to the heart, along with the information, "tribe". During the session with the horse, the person discovered that she felt lonely in her circle of family and childhood friends, who all had very different interests in life, and that she would really like to be part of a group of like-minded people. She had a limiting conviction about having to fit in with the hobbies of others and that her hobbies should be practical, sport oriented, rather than to explore her wider interests. She came out with a practical idea about finding and joining a spiritual meditation group.

In this exercise, you may either decide to choose a power word for the client, or let them choose one. In doing so, it is important to choose words that are “positively charged”.

For example, use Authority instead of Dominance; Confidence instead of Insecure;. Flow instead of Depression or Stuck. By choosing words that represent a desirable state of being, you help the subconscious aim for that, even if right now it is a point on the horizon. Any challenges the client may have with getting there, will automatically come up in the process, to be faced with the purpose of overcoming it to get to the desirable state.

If the word represents a challenge or problem, the subconscious will remain focused on challenges and problems instead of seeing a way forward that represents a better quality of being.

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 client gets to choose the horse they want to work with.
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's!) 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.

<u>Supplies:</u>

For facilitator:

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

For client:

- Pen and paper or notebook for notes
- Boundary device
- Depending on the exercise, lunge whip or other props to practice the skill

<u>SCRIPT</u>

Step 1: 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 2: 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, "We have an intention for the exercise with this horse today and that is to explore a Power Word. You may choose one or let me choose one. Is there a power word you would like to explore?" (If no, you pick one that you feel matches the clients' situation or challenge.)

Then continue: "So now I'm going to say the power word, so you can check where it lands or gets activated in your body. The word is _____.

Where is this being activated in your body, or is your attention is being drawn to in your body?"

Once the clients name the spot in their body where the word 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 for advice on exploring this word 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 tips it has for the client for exploring the word with it.* Ask what the client gets back from his/her subconscious in response to that question. Record the client's response.

Step 3. 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 [THE POWER WORD CHOSEN].

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!"