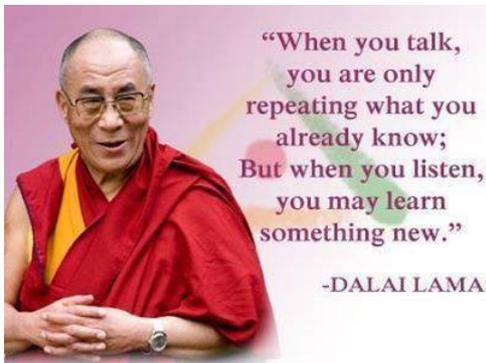


# MIZU NO KOKORO - a mind like water

*Do you listen ... or do you wait to talk?*



*Usually as riders we tend to talk and "send" a lot. As trainers we request all sorts of specific responses and physical achievements of our horses. To safely ride on the trail, to create healthy biomechanics or maybe to satisfy our ambitions in competition.*

*It is okay to expect a lot ... but when you want to be partners with dignity - you want your horse to play this game with you - you*

*need to be willing to wait for, and listen to your horse. With an open mind, so you can see, hear, feel and learn freely. With a mind and a heart like water. "Mizu no kokoro", as they would say in the world of martial arts.*

## *Mizu no kokoro - a mind like water*

### *Still Water*

*Imagine a lake where the water is calm and the surface perfectly still. No stirring by wind, rain or movement underneath. The water gives you a perfectly clear reflection of it's surroundings, of what is really there.*

*This is how we want our heart and mind to be when we are with horses: still, calm, relaxed, free of internal dialogue and judging. We want to see, hear and feel our horse as he really is, undisturbed by assumptions or disturbance.*



### *Ripples*

*When disturbed, the water ripples. It reacts as much as it needs to... not more, not less.*

*How we react to our horse should be in harmony with his actions. No over- or underreaction.*

*The reaction in our heart and mind can be like water; an equal match to the situation.*

## *Return to Calmness*

Soon after the disturbance the lake will return to its original calmness. This is a lesson to learn and apply to our life with horses as well. Too many times we forget to return to silence; we keep our aids on when the horse is already answering our request. Too often we keep looking in the rearview mirror at what happened in the past, and forget to think forward. Thus we keep making ripples in the water, and our reflection of what is really there will be blurred.

After your reaction to a disturbance, or after your horse has answered to your aids, remember to return to the calm mind you would normally keep. Just as the surface of the lake becomes pristine once again.



## *Adapt and flow*

Water adapts to circumstances. It changes its flow or form as needed. With a mind like water you will not get trapped in dogma's or patterns from the past. You can adapt to what your horse offers. Accept it, harmonize with it, synchronize with the movement, join the flow and stay connected. If you fight it you will never really win. If you accept what is and stay connected, then you may change the way of the flow in another direction and find unexpected progress. It is the adaptable mind that will create the strongest partnerships.

## *Mindfull horsemanship: open, here and now*

When your mind is like water, you are openminded, in the 'here and now'. You are still, calm and at peace with yourself and your horse. You listen before you talk. You are connected, patient enough to follow, adaptable and active enough to lead. Making assumptions or judging what you see is like stirring a stick in the water. It makes ripples and blurs your feel and vision. With a mind like still water you will feel and see what is really there, without judging it, and start changes from there. Once you achieve this clarity of mind, you are then capable of something very special called insight: the ability to see, feel and understand your horse with a light heart. Then you can train together with wisdom and kindness.

