Alice Trindle Presents:

Developing a Willing Partnership

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Alice Trindle was born on a ranch in eastern Oregon, the only daughter in a family of five brothers. She learned to ride behind the back of the saddle holding on to her brother's belt loops. In the past 15 years Alice has continued her relationship with horses, and had the opportunity to study with several true horsemen such as Tom Dorrance, Ray Hunt, Dennis Reis, and Bettina Drummond. She conducts clinics in Oregon, Washington, California, and Idaho, and offers multi-day horsemanship retreats at her ranch in eastern Oregon.

Work-in-Hand

Clinic #5 in a series of ten

Author's Note: Thanks for your questions. I appreciate this interaction with readers. Go online to <u>www.nwhorsesource.com</u> (Ask the Experts) to see answers to questions generated by this series of articles.

Work-in-Hand

I grew up on a cattle ranch in eastern Oregon, with five brothers to guide me along, occasionally fight with, but to always watch over me. My friend Kris and I would ride endless hours, usually bareback, through the Elkhorn Mountains with all types of fantasies to entertain us during those ideal summer days. Riding was just what we did. There was not a lot of thought involved, our horses basically did what we asked of them, and looking back, we had a pretty wonderful relationship with our horses. For me the thought of taking "riding lessons" went about as far as the one day I spent in horse 4H! Dressage was not even in my vocabulary, and if it was, all I saw was the costume of the rider, and nothing of the principles.

Now, over 30 years later, in my current horsemanship journey, I have been introduced and become addicted to a deeper approach to working with horses. I have read and re-read books by such true horsemen as Tom Dorrance, Alois Podhajsky, and Henry Wynmalen. Over the past three years I have had the good fortune to study with Bettina Drummond, and it is with this relationship that I became aquatinted with the concept of "work-in-hand". In this clinic, I'd like to share with you MY concept of work-in-hand, and how this ancient classical dressage skill has been helping me to understand self-carriage in my horse.

First, what is work-in-hand? Here's the Alice Trindle 101 version: Work-in-hand is a set of ground school maneuvers that places the human in a close and intimate position that aid the horse in developing self-carriage, while performing specific movements. There are many movements, patterns, and combinations of patterns that can be accomplished in work-in-hand positions. However, in this clinic we will discuss five basic movements and patterns I use for introducing work-in-hand to my horses and students. Let's get started with these five basic patterns:

- Developing the triangle of support rein and active rein
- Turn-on-the-forehand or hips-around-shoulders
- Shoulder-in or sideways on a circle
- Leg-yield on the diagonal to the wall
- Back-up

(Watch for clinic #9 and #10 talking about shoulder-in and half-pass postures for other suggestions on how to use work-in-hand.)

Equipment You Will Need:

Loose ring or D-ring snaffle bit; Mecate or English loop rein; Dressage whip.

Please Note: For purpose of this article, we will conduct our work-in-hand beginning on the left side of the horse.

Developing the Rein Triangle

The first step is to go through our "Horseman's Protocol."

- Become Present
- Think & Visualize
- Focus, which Prepares your Posture
- Allow & Reward

Stand at the left shoulder of your horse and with your right hand reach up and find the rein. Gently pull down on the loop until the rein that is on the right side of the horse's neck forms a straight line from the right corner of his mouth, up to his mane-line. That is the first side of your triangle, and what will become your "support" rein. Next, with your dressage whip placed gently in your right hand, reach up to the mane-line, and follow the rein down to the point of the horse's shoulder, and grasp the rein lightly. This is the second side of your triangle, and with a little downpressure in this hand you will influence the support rein. Finally, draw an imaginary line from the point of the horse's shoulder to the bit resting in the left corner of his mouth. Lightly grasp the slobber strap or rein at this point with your left hand. You now have a "rein triangle", with the right hand making suggestions to the right or support rein, and your left hand making suggestions to the left or active rein.

At this point ask for a little softening in the poll of your horse with a little down pressure in your right hand, and a slight tip of lateral bend with your left hand. Your arms should be extended, and rather heavy in the wrists. Let gravity be the weight in your elbows and wrists. (Note Illustration No. 1) The idea is NOT to pull your horse into a soft-feel, but rather make a suggestion and ask him to become present and ready his body and mind for your next request. (1)



Juandero has prepared his body, and I have a soft "rein triangle". Don't get confused with my get-down rein, which is attached to the saddle horn!

Turn-on-the-Forehand

At this point you should have developed a nice soft feel with a slight lateral bend to the left and you should be standing at the left side with your belly button pointing nearly under the horse's neck. Extend your dressage whip back towards the horses rib cage and rump. Our goal is to feel and see the energy move from the horse's inside hind foot, towards the outside shoulder or rein. The hind feet will cross from the inside hind foot to a balancing-up on the outside hind. Think of your whip as flat saber that you will place flatly on the side of your horse, and start by compressing the air and then elevate the level of the request to get the desired response. The hips will flow around the shoulders on a larger arc and you should remain relatively in the middle of the circle, simply pivoting on your left foot. Try not to over-bend your horse to the left. If he should rush, put a little more down pressure in your right hand to effect the supportive rein. First ask for a couple of nice, rhythmic "cross & balance-up" movements in the hindquarters, then ask for a few steps more, until you have made one complete circle. (2)



Juandero is preparing to step the left hind foot under. Ideally it would be traveling on a diagonal line towards the outside shoulder. If your horse tends to over-bend, stand a little more in front of him to ask for the turn-on-the-forehand.

Shoulder-in or Sideways on a Circle

Once turn-on-the-forehand is working so that all you have to do is point at the inside hind foot and the horse gracefully crosses to a balance, it is time to carry this forward and sideways on a circle. Start with the same close-in positioning, but as the foot begins to swing under the horse, change your toes and belly-button to project your energy under the horse's neck, and move your feet forward. The idea is that you still have that cushion of air between you and the horse, but now you are moving WITH him on a large circle. His hindquarters still seek a larger circle then his forehand, but now both the hind feet and the front feet are reach/crossing and balancing-up. Keep a slight downward pressure in your right hand, a caress in your left hand, if you need it to keep a slight left

lateral bend, and your arms extended. We are looking for the horse to carry himself softly and rhythmically sideways on a circle with the energy coming from the inside hind quarter to the outside shoulder or rein.

Leg Yield on the Diagonal

From your sideways on a circle posture, pick a point on the outside track which is slightly ahead of your horse's shoulders and a straight diagonal line to the wall. Move your intentions, toes, and body energy more through the shoulder or even under the neck, placing your toes on the diagonal line to the wall. Remember, keep your hands consistent – soft, in a line out from the point of the shoulder, and parallel to the ground. While the shoulders lead slightly, make sure the hindquarter is reaching underneath, also following the angle and direction of the diagonal line. (3)



Backup

Before reaching the wall, try speeding up your toes to place your body a little in front of the horse. You should now be prepared to stop your horse on the wall in a slightly "haunchesin" posture. After pivoting on your feet you will be facing the horse's tail with your belly button and eyes looking down the track parallel to the horse. Carry this shape backwards a few steps, preparing to set your body up so that you can step through and pivot your weight on the leg closest to the center of the arena. As you pivot your weight, also change your eyes forward, towards the horse's ears, with belly button down the track. (4)



Last, ask the horse forward, pushing off of his outside hind, by bringing his inside hind foot forward with your body language suggestion. You will be amazed...if you get your pivot correct, then the horse will ride the inside hind forward every time! (5)



With these five exercises or patterns, you can begin to design your own combinations of dance movements. However, remember to...

THINK about the movement requested before you start, and SEE in your minds-eye the pattern on the ground first.

FEEL for a softness and a confidence in the horses' carriage, moving his energy from the inside hind to the outside rein.

ALLOW the horse and yourself time to find the balance and rhythm.

REWARD the movement and the effort by going forward on the track softly, and with verbal and internal "At-a Boy's!

Over the last three years I have been applying work-in-hand concepts and positioning in almost every one of my clinics including the colt starting. I have found tremendous success in helping the horse and the human to better understand self-carriage, balance, rhythm, and the use of the outside rein to aid in achieving a softer, willing, and brilliant dance. There is however one caution... It is not EASY! Give yourself the time to experiment, try to remain patient, and reward your slightest successes. Once you have felt a horse dance with you "in-hand", you will become addicted to the feel and the float, and start seeking the same effortless communication while on board.

(For further study I recommend viewing Bettina Drummond's videotapes: Work-in-Hand for Lateral Flexion & Work-in-Hand for Vertical Flexion) TNT