

New career: Charmaine Lane is setting up as an Equine Facilitated Learning practitioner at HorseWorld, where she's pictured with Henry Picture

Picture: Anna Barclay



Teaching us to learn from equine friends

Bristol-based Charmaine Lane is embarking on a new career teaching Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) – which is an effective way to teach people about themselves, with the help of a horse.

Leaving her previous competition-based equestrian life behind, she'll be using the four-legged residents of the Witchurch rescue and rehabilitation centre HorseWorld to help people with a variety of troubles.

She explained: "Clients may include a whole range of people: you don't need a specific 'problem' to benefit enormously from a dose of horse wisdom, although working alongside psychotherapists, EFL can compliment a therapy programme."

More specifically, EFL may help couples with relationship problems, people with depression, or children with learning disabilities, and the common thread joining them will be the art of communication – or perhaps the lack of it.

Explaining how she embarked on the EFL route, Charmaine said: "I enjoyed competing and I loved being with the horses, but there was a point when my heart wasn't in it any more. I came across some literature about EFL and how it helped people with learning difficulties.

"In 2008 I did an EFL workshop, which reconnected me with my love of horses that I've

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had since I was a child."

Horses, she says, are perfect teachers because of their integrity and honesty. Living only in the present moment, with no hidden agenda, no capacity for emotional games or lying, they use a variety of non-verbal ways to show their feelings.

Some of these signals will be expressed physically, but also more emotionally, through the energy invisibly given off.

Horses pick up on information from energy fields, even from across the other side of a paddock, and, with practice, people can tune in to that energy," Charmaine explained. "Horses also give us non-judgmental feedback and we can use that to teach people how to relate each other."

Describing a typical EFL session, Charmaine will first meet a client and discuss what problems need tackling. Next, she'll introduce a body scanning technique to help the client figure out what they are feeling by listening to the signals their body is giving.

Lastly, it's time to meet the horses. The client will stand in the horses' energy field and is to encouraged to notice whether they are drawn to a particular horse, or not.

By first knowing each horse as an individual, Charmaine can glean an awful lot about a person's personality, depending on which they choose, or which horse chooses the client.

One woman was approached by a horse that kept encroaching into her personal space so that she would gradually back away. With a little prompting from Charmaine, the woman realised that this happened routinely in her everyday life, particularly at work. The knowledge empowered the woman to stand up for herself.

Once the horse is "chosen" and following a move into an arena, which is safer for all, Charmaine may introduce a grooming exercise to see if the client notices how the horse reacts to different touches and whether he or she adapts their behaviour accordingly.

Does the person notice that the horse loves being scratched with a hard brush on the neck, but not on the belly? A person who is oblivious to a horse's preference is probably equally unaware of their own effect on humans, physical or otherwise.

Charmaine is at pains to point out that, at all times, the needs of the horse comes first and what better place than welfare charity HorseWorld to endorse her work.

To contact Charmaine, call 07830 070680, or email info@amazing-mind.co.uk.