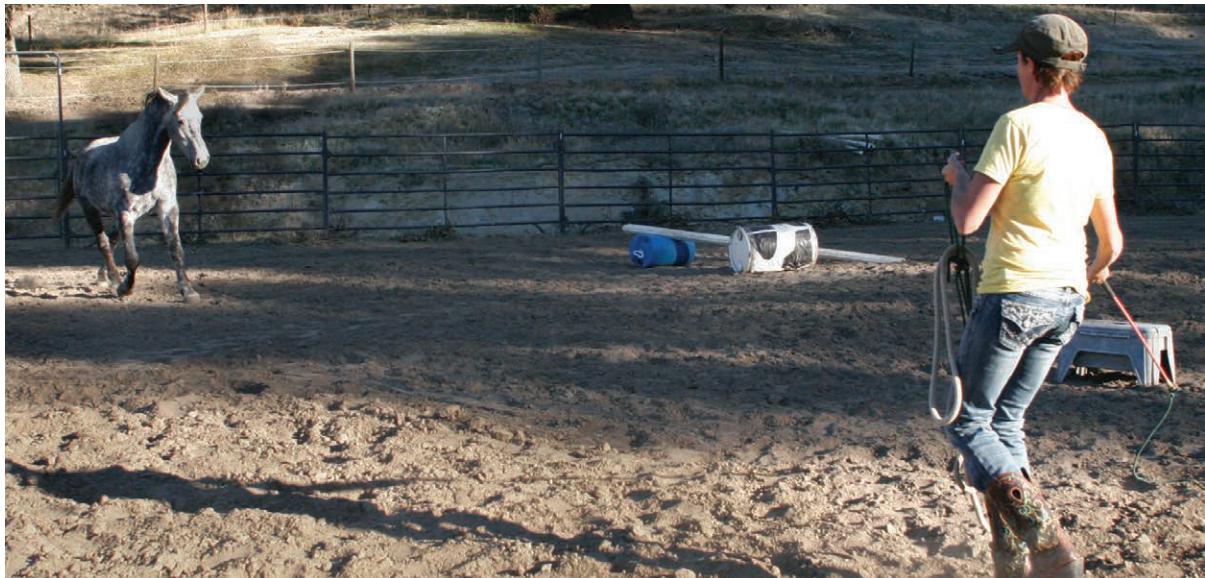


Build a Stronger Relationship in Just 15 Minutes a Day

I think I'm like most horse people. I love spending time with my horses. However, I am also a busy mom with two young boys, trying to juggle day-to-day life with kids and work. Finding an hour or two for my horses can be difficult. However, I can usually find 15 minutes. This is a strategy I use. It should get you motivated to get out with your horse and build a stronger relationship. It's time to be successful, and *enjoy* your horse!

How much time do you invest into your relationship with your horse? If I told you that you could get results in only 15 minutes a day, you probably would

question it. How could you be successful in just 15 minutes, when you go out for hours and your horse doesn't seem any better than the last time? The truth is, you can get a lot done in a small amount of time. It just takes a plan, a focus on small successes, and commitment from you to get out and invest the time each day. Now, I'm not saying your results will be immediate; however, you should start to see a change in your relationship soon. Give yourself permission to be okay with whatever is offered in 15 minutes. You need to recognize the smallest change, and realize that he has the rest of his life to be perfect.



Everyone has heard Pat talk about “simple things done well.” Well, how well does your horse do the simple things? Here are five of the 13 things that Pat says everyone needs to be good at with their horses:

1. Catching
2. Haltering
3. Hands-free hoof prep
4. Trailer loading
5. Saddling

CATCHING

Does your horse catch you with enthusiasm? Or do you have to catch your horse and lead him out like a husband going Christmas shopping? If your horse won’t come to you, you may spend your 15 minutes sitting at the gate. Eventually your horse will get curious enough to come over and check you out. Think about how you catch your horse and how it could be better. What would it take to get him to canter to you? Maybe your bring-back on the Yo-Yo or Circling Game needs to be better. Remember that “catching” their attention is the first key. Once you have their mind, the feet will follow.



HALTERING

How well does your horse halter? Do you have to fish for a nose, or does your horse practically halter himself? Can you halter from your knees? Can you halter from his back? Think of what you have been doing, and then what would be a little bit more difficult. It might be as easy as getting your horse to tip his nose around instead of pointing forward. Use your 15 minutes to work towards that goal!

HANDS-FREE HOOF PREP

Maybe you clean your horse’s feet out every day, but can you teach him to help you pick up his feet? Can he place his feet on things when you ask? Can you snap and have him pick up his feet, or can you pick up the feet from one side? Can you hold his feet like the farrier does? Your horse may be fine when you pick up his feet, but what about when the farrier comes and tries to put on shoes? I had a horse in training that had to be drugged every time the farrier came. I tapped on that horse’s feet with a hammer, maybe 1 or 2 minutes each foot, every day. I started with picking up each foot and holding the hammer, and then progressed to light tapping, then firmer yet rhythmic tapping. The horse needed shoes about a month later, and no drugs were needed. This horse never knew she was being trained. Like Linda says, “It was peppered in.” You start by getting the horse confident, and rewarding small successes.

TRAILER LOADING

You don’t have to be in the program long to know that it takes all Seven Games to be excellent with trailer loading. Where do you need to start? Think about how your horse trailer loads. Does he go in and freeze, or race in and out? Trailer loading is a process of many steps. Think about which of the Seven Games need to be better. Then spend your 15 minutes developing more understanding or feel in that game. If your horse has issues with stepping up and down in the trailer, work on stepping up and down off a bank. If he has a problem with squeezing into the trailer, work on squeezing under a tarp. Can you back him between two barrels? Remember to keep your goals small; if your horse can’t get near a tarp, start with walking near a plastic bag. Your horse may not have any problem going in the trailer, but can he trot or canter into the trailer? Can you trailer load from the roof of the trailer? Can you back him in? Can you

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send him from 45 feet away? Will he trailer load into a moving trailer? If the answer to any of these questions is “No,” then you know what to work on with your 15 minutes!



SADDLING

You can become excellent at this, and you don't even need your horse to do it! The best way to get better at saddling is to spend 15 minutes saddling the fence. Your goal should be to take the heaviest saddle you have and swing it up on to the highest rail you can find – without the stirrup banging the fence on the other side. This technique creates muscle memory. Start by taking a light saddle and swinging it onto a short fence. Get fluid and rhythmic, then build up your strength with a heavier saddle. Then swing it onto higher fences. Remember that there are two sides of your horse, so you should be able to saddle from either side easily. Once you get the rhythm of the swing, the weight of the saddle won't be so much of an issue. Next, take your new skill to your horse. This is a Friendly Game, and if your horse is anticipating the saddle or stirrup banging them in the side, then there will be fear associated with the placement of the saddle. Now, if you have great technique and your horse stands perfectly, can you send your horse to the saddle and have him stand next to it? Think about how they participate in the process. Does he enjoy being saddled, or does he check out? This is your opportunity to spend 15 minutes investing in your relationship, and building trust and understanding. This is all part of the Friendly Game.

So, think you can do it? Can you make a commitment to your horse for 15 minutes each day? You need to pick the one thing you want to focus on. Next, assess where you and your horse are with that task, and then break down the goal and start where it is easy. Think laterally and get creative. Just get out and spend time with your horse, even if it means spending 15 minutes doing something simple. It will improve your relationship. If you'd like to learn more about any of the five things listed above, there is an abundance of information in the Parelli Connect Learning Library. You are working towards these goals, and it might take weeks, months, or years. And that's okay. But just remember: every day, you will be 15 minutes closer. **ST**