

Success with separation anxiety using 1N

Australian horse lover Trudi writes about her successful experience using 1N to relieve her new horse of separation anxiety.

“About 3 months ago I bought PJ, a 16 hh, 14 year old Thoroughbred. PJ raced with some success until he was 6 years old before being sold to some people who tried him at polo, he was soon for sale again as he reportedly was not quick enough on his feet. At that time the lady who sold him to me saw him and took pity on him because he was in very poor condition. Despite the fact that she was looking for something 17hh she bought him with the intention of getting him in good condition and giving him a little bit of education and then selling him again. She kept him for 8 years!

This, I believe speaks volumes about his character, he is truly a gentle soul. If you had the time PJ would happily be groomed all day, he is a calm laid-back fellow who just goes along with pretty much anything you ask of him.

When I went to view him I asked if he was comfortable with being left alone if his paddock buddy went out for a ride and she was emphatic that he was fine. He moved in here and soon was sharing a paddock with my old QH/Connemara gelding, I believe they made a very strong bond and are very happy together.

When I first tried to take Oakey out for a ride PJ started to exhibit mild separation anxiety which gradually escalated from running up the fence line a couple of times and then just standing in one place and neighing a little to running the fence line or big circles in the paddock and screaming out as loud as he could.

It quickly got to the point that I feared he would injure himself as he started to lean over the fence or rear up in front of it as if he was trying to work out how to get over it or just work himself into a lather of sweat with the galloping around.

I came across Equine Breathing by doing a ‘Google’ search for separation anxiety in horses. As the only thing I had to lose was a bit of time, I thought I would give it a go and see if it would help.

The first time I did the 1N technique I noticed a marked change in PJ, he was noticeably calmer when I turned him out and took Oakey out of the paddock straight after. Over the next few days I continued and for the most part PJ accepted the sessions although he did resist and try to get my hand away every now and then, I noticed that this happened most on days when the weather was unsettling (ie: windy) or when he was bothered because Oakey was being taken out of the paddock.

When this happened I simply would attempt to maintain contact but if I lost it I would back him up or send him out in a circle of trot and then continue with 1N.

I have only been practising Equine Breathing for about two weeks so we are still having good days and bad days but if he has a moment when he thinks he can't cope about being left alone, I come back and do more 1N and then take Oakey away again and then he will stay calm and relaxed.

I have continued to practise Equine Breathing despite some not so good



Trudi on PJ

days when he would lapse back to running the fence or screaming out because when it is a good day the change is really quite profound and on the bad days the symptoms are greatly reduced.

I also think that the theory of why this method works (with humans and with horses) is logical and with the human trials has a well proven base. From a point of view of science they have proven the benefits of increased carbon dioxide in the human body so it makes logical sense that it would help a horse as well.

At this point, at around 2 weeks into the process I am very pleased with the results in PJ's behaviour and intend to continue to practise the 1N technique with the view of getting a lovely calm, relaxed horse who can be comfortable on his own so I can feel confident riding Oakey out and knowing that PJ is waiting calmly at the gate for us to return.

Equine Breathing is very easy to do and although a little time consuming it is certainly worth the wonderful change I see in PJ, after asking so many people what I could do to get him more relaxed and being told that you would never change a horse with separation anxiety.

I feel that it has made our bond a little stronger in the sense that the time spent doing 1N is a time when we are both calm and still and I think that it gives PJ more confidence around me. I got the distinct feeling that although he tolerated me being there, he was always not quite sure that he was okay with it, now he seems more relaxed and confident in my space which is very rewarding.

Yesterday (and the day before) I managed to do 30 minutes of 1N with him and then took Oakey for a little walk, PJ didn't make a sound and when I came back I could barely wake him as he rested at the gate!! He didn't greet Oakey as he normally does when he comes back into view or anything. **Quite amazing!**

Relaxing an anxious horse with 1N – example sessions

PJ's anxiety was such that Trudi had to apply 1N in a structured training session rather than simply standing still and doing 10 or 20 minutes of 1N. Trudi reports on one such session:

"I did 1N this morning and Craig took Oakey for a walk, PJ watched him go and certainly was less desperate.

I still lost contact with his nostril for a second (when PJ tossed his head up) and so sent him backwards (any control of movement exercise can be done at this point – Clare) then went back to 1N and stayed for another minute til he was calm.

I then did some ground work and he was trotting in a circle when Oakey came into view. He whinnied out but I quickly got him back looking and focusing on me.

I then took PJ for a quick walk and got him back to soft and relaxed. When he got to the edge of his comfort zone and neighed, I did 1N for a minute each side then did a little groundwork and then headed home when he was calm and relaxed.

I then did 1N for a minute or so on each side just outside of the gate before letting him go."

And the next day:

"Did some work with PJ this evening, didn't have a helper to take Oakey away so I took PJ out of the paddock. Walked to the edge of his comfort

zone (where he normally starts to focus behind him and try to look at home) and did 1N for 10 minutes.

Then went on away from home, groundwork, quarter yields, backing up and sending him in a circle at trot; walking or running forward and then stopping quickly and insisting he doesn't overtake me, sending him back if he did.

Got past the second place he sometimes get bothered and starts neighing and did 1N for about 3 or 4 minutes per side, weathered a couple of moments of him getting a bit fidgety and then headed home with more groundwork on the way.

He was quite calm and relaxed when I let him out in the paddock so I took Oakey and went for a short walk out of sight with him, PJ walked with us to the corner of the paddock and then walked (and a little trot) back to the gate and stood there for the whole time I was out of sight with only a couple of whinnies. He looked more 'parked' than he has for a while, brought Oakey back and let him off and then did 1N on PJ for a couple of minutes aside just to leave him calm and relaxed.

A pleasant result, oh, and I kept my mouth shut the whole time and used body language to direct him."

1 month later

Trudi can now leave PJ and go out for a proper ride on Oakey and PJ remains calm and untroubled on his own. When ridden PJ has none of his previous problems and is relaxed and freely forward going.

About Trudi

"I have owned horses for around 25 years, I started riding when I was twelve and have never had a year without a horse since then. I am 37 years old and work as an Office Clerk/Accounts Manager/Ski Hire manager in my father's Ski Hire business at a little Ski Resort called Mount Baw Baw which is approximately 170 kilometres east of Melbourne in Victoria, Australia.

I ride horses purely for pleasure although as a teenager I dabbled in dressage and even had some coaching from Clemens Dierks who was the Australian Dressage coach at the time, he actually offered to have me as a working pupil but I didn't take the opportunity (youthful stupidity, what can I say). I worked for three years taking people out on trail rides in the bush at a farm that had 65 horses at the time, I would lead the rides and do all the saddling up and unsaddling at the end of the rides. This was a fabulous experience as I got to ride so many different horses and had to learn to stick on some that at times could be a little unpredictable.

My philosophy with horses is very much based on similar grounds as Kelly Marks/Monty Roberts that is to use the best horsemanship possible to achieve fair treatment of horses."

If you have any queries or feedback I'll be pleased to hear from you at clare@equinebreathing.com

breathe easy, Clare