

Perspective

by: Linda Parelli

I don't know if I'd call it arrogance, but it's somewhere down the same path. It's the belief that people should think the same way as you do.

I had two major doses of reality one time, both within a month of each other. I'd already learned not to preach to people about the Parelli system, but I wasn't ready for the dose of disinterest and judgment that came my way. In my first encounter, I was riding my horse in the public arena not far from my stables. I liked to go there occasionally because it was really big, had rubber footing that made it feel like a trampoline to ride on and there were trails running all around it.

So here I was, playing with my horse and things were going so well that I pulled the bridle off and was riding with a Carrot Stick, practicing my flying lead changes, roll backs and throwing in a couple of jumps over barrels for good measure. I walked a woman on what looked like a fairly young horse. It had a snaffle and cross-over nose band on, with a martingale to keep its head down. This wasn't working that well as its head was up with excitement and eyes wide. The lady had both reins tight. Her eyes were stern and fearful, and she was struggling to keep the horse under control.

She was in one corner of the arena trying to trot circles and straight lines while I was cantering around having a great time, bridle-less, feeling the elation of having so much control of my formerly unstoppable horse. Every now and then I would look over at this poor woman struggling with frustration because her horse was jumping around and would not give her any attention or cooperation.

Suddenly, she called me over. Ah, I thought. She must be impressed by how calm, confident and cooperative my horse is. She's bound to want to know more about what I'm doing. "Hi!" I said with a smile. She didn't even bother to return the greeting.

"How long are you going to keep careening around like that?" she asked. "You're upsetting my horse!" "I've just finished," I said pleasantly, lying through my teeth. I was in shock. Couldn't she see the difference between us? Didn't she think maybe it had something to do with skills and knowledge that could produce results like this?

I left with a strange feeling in my belly, disappointed by the disapproval. But as I drove along with my horse in the trailer behind, I concluded that it was my arrogance that really was the problem.

I was showing off. I never gave a thought as to what the other woman's perspective might be, especially when she was feeling so fearful of her horse in that situation.

The second encounter was one I could actually laugh about. I was on a trail that only months before had been a terror to ride. My horse, Regalo, is 16 hands of maniac Thoroughbred, and the reason for me finding Pat's system.

We were sauntering along with just a halter and lead rope, and me enjoying the peace, the harmony and the sunshine. As I rode, I recalled all the nightmare rides with him along this trail and how close I had come to selling him to be rid of my problems.

Down the trail came another horse and rider. The tall grey was black with sweat. He had foam coming from every crease. The gag bit had pulled his lips half way up his face. The martingale was stretched taut. The nose band barely kept those gnashing teeth hidden under gaping lips as he pranced and snorted sideways toward me. The woman aboard had the reins in a vice-like grip, with gloves on to prevent the stoppers on the reins from slipping and giving her blisters. She did not look like she was having fun.

As she bore down on me, Regalo pricked his ears but never changed his pace or stiffened. "Wow," I thought. "That used to be me. How miserable she must feel, let alone the horse, and how jealous she will feel when she sees that I'm just riding in a halter."

Straining struggling against her horse, as she passed she looked at me and snorted, "That's dangerous!" I nearly choked. She thought I was the one in grave danger.

People make their own choices and arrive at the appropriate destinations. Am I to judge whether that's good or bad? Pat's

system is an education in remaining positive, patient and focused. Don't think that things aren't going to crop up to test your stamina.

Let that give me the peace of mind to continue to be a good example of Parelli Natural Horsemanship, and not need to have others change to what I think is right. What others think of us is none of our business.

I guess the one thing I still have some trouble getting over is when people see Pat performing some of the most incredible feats with horses and then sniff and turn away like it's not worth even finding out about!