

BHA Lesson Two – Life Skills

Middle and High School

Lesson 2

Making Good Decisions

What we will explore with equines: thinking before doing, exploring options, managing risk, consider what we know and what we don't know, looking at the whole picture (our decision may affect others), making the "right choices"

Why Horses? Equines are very thoughtful in their decision making. They look at the whole picture/all those around them, learn well from past experiences & try to keep themselves safe. Equines also make sure they understand the herd rules and consequences of not following the rules.

Learning Objectives:

1. *The student will identify 3 times they used good decision-making techniques when working with their horses to insure they were making right choices.*
2. *The student will identify 1 time when they or someone they know:*
 - a. *made a good decision and what the results were*
 - b. *did not make a great decision and what they did not consider as they made the choice.*
 - c. *made a mistake that they learned from and what the "lesson" was.*
3. *Student will give one example of how using thoughtful decision-making could be helpful in school for students and teachers.*

12:30 Meet Students in Lobby – pair up students and volunteers and fit helmets

- **Educate:** Students receive a double sided hand-out. One side shows illustrations of equine body language to review and refer to. The other side is the "Activity: Go into the paddocks...making decisions that are:". Note: The second set of handouts "Making Decisions That Work" and the double sided hoof picking information will be given out later. Students will also have horse shoes to explore for the hoof picking activity.
- **Discuss:** Each student with their volunteer will discuss what goes into making decisions. Then share with the group.
- **Discuss:** Why horses? They are very thoughtful in their decision making, look at the whole picture/all those around them, learn well from past experiences, try to keep themselves safe.

12:45 Head out to the paddocks

Equine Observation Activity: After collecting halters, leads, and grooming boxes...**Observing horses being fed hay in the paddocks** as the horses communicate with each other, and make decisions based on the herd's previous experiences, "discussions" and decisions. Observe the attentiveness of the horses to each other's body language. Discuss what they see, what works and doesn't work.

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Discuss: making mistakes (it's going to happen...a lot) and ways to deal with mistakes (smile and learn vs feel bad and stop learning). Discuss how well horses ignore or forgive.

Equine Interaction Activity: Referring to the paddock activity handout, go into the paddocks approaching and spending time with different horses, reading body language, spending time with them, finding sweet spots, staying aware of each horse and others in the paddock, and making decisions that are:

Thoughtful (thinking before doing) OBSERVE

Smart (exploring options) READ BODY LANGUAGE (your own and the horses)

Safe (managing risk, what do you know/not know) LOOK AT THE WHOLE PICTURE

Wise (my decision may affect others) THIS INCLUDES ALL HORSES AND PEOPLE

Responsible (you and others live with the results) WHEN YOU MAKE A GOOD DECISION ENJOY!!!!

Equine Interaction Activity: Lead horse to the cross-ties and get their grooming boxes. Students will spend time finding their horse's sweet spot and making sure they and the horses are comfortable.

The students will be given the hand-out "Making Decisions That Work" and asked to read and discuss with their volunteer.

Note: Lead horses to the arena for this next activity. Students will be asked to form a circle around the instructor and then turn in towards her. This way all students will be able to see each other as they have discussions.

Equine Interaction Activity: Picking Hooves:

- The next activity has two purposes. The secondary objective is to learn to pick a horse's hoof. The main purpose of this activity is to discuss and practice ways to make a new, sometimes daunting, activity safe and do-able. The focus is not on learning to pick hooves as much as learning to make good decisions including understanding when they need more information and help to be able to make some good decisions and how to make an uncomfortable situation comfortable.
- The staging of this activity: The students will be given a hoof pick and asked to pick up each of their horse's legs and pick out their hooves, without help or input from their volunteers. No other information is given. This provides the opportunity for making good decisions. * *Volunteer note: instructor will stop any student if they are making an unsafe decision. But, please tell your student if you feel something is not safe.*
 - It is normal for people to be hesitant and even anxious of the whole process of asking a large animal to pick up its leg and keep it up, while using a pick on it. The students will be encouraged to note their own body language when asked to begin picking their horse's feet, and the body language of the other students. We will discuss what they are worried might happen and that it is o.k. and normal to be tentative. It is important to listen to our feelings because that is how we keep ourselves safe and make good decisions. We will brainstorm about ways to keep the activity safe for all. This may include asking for help, figuring out what we must do with our bodies to be effective and safe (i.e. keep feet clear of horse's feet) and watching the horse's body language to insure the horse is comfortable with what we are doing. If the horse feels safe/comfortable we can move forward. If the horse is not comfortable we need to change something or reassure until he/ she is. We will discuss ways to break the task into small manageable steps. We will be patient and thoughtful allowing time to stop and think. And we will celebrate our success!
 - Learn to pick the horse's hooves, focusing on both the hind end body language (tail and back legs) and on where their feet are in relation to the horse's feet. This will be referred to when leading in the next activity. Students will watch the hoof picking process being modeled by staff including watching for when the horse relaxes his leg. Students will then practice on their volunteers (asking them to raise their foot, wait for them to release and relax, and then lightly support the foot and

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“pick”). Students should be urged to do as much as they can on their own, to be patient, and to problem solve with volunteers (i.e. horse can't pick up right hind if left hind leg is bent/resting and not weight bearing). Once again, look for signs that the horse has relaxed his/her leg. This action communicates that the horse is ready to have his hoof picked. ****Note: It is normal for people to be hesitant and even fearful of the whole process of asking a large animal to pick up its leg and keep it up, while the use a pick on it. The students will be encouraged to discuss their fears as a group. It is o.k. to be afraid. It is important to listen to our fears. We should figure out what we are afraid of and ask for help. Problem-solve ways to stay safe i.e. keep feet clear of horse's feet and watch the horse's body language to insure the horse is comfortable. Discuss ways to break the task into small manageable steps. Be patient with ourselves as we try. Pat ourselves on the back!

- **Learning Objectives Assessment:** Throughout the class, volunteers will help students fill out portions of their Learning Objective Assessment. **Note: *These students may not write on their own in school and appreciate if the volunteer offers to scribe.***

Equine Interaction Activity: Practice leading horses in the arena through serpentines of cones. Some rows of cones will be set close together and some far apart. There will not be enough rows for each horse to have their own. This provides the need for more decision making.

- After watching a demonstration of correct leading techniques, students will make choices about which set of cones they will lead their horses through. They will need to discuss as a group so that they can decide what will work best for all of the horses, not just their own. For example; the cones that are the farthest apart might be best for the biggest horse while the mini's can easily manage the shorter spacing. Horses that are pastured together and therefore very comfortable with each other may safely be able to share rows of cones. They will also make decisions about where horses are in respect to each other so that all feel comfortable.
- Stop, look around and discuss what could happen if everyone wasn't making good choice and thinking of the effects of their choices on all those around them. Apply the circumstance to the school setting.
- **Generalization of Skills Learned to School Setting.** This part of the lesson objective assessment is explored as a group.

2:00 Return Horses to Paddocks and Head back to “EAL Room”

- **Learning Objectives Assessment:** Volunteers will help students finish their Learning Objective Assessment. **Note: *Some students may not write on their own in school and appreciate if the volunteer offers to scribe.***
- **Transfer of Skills Learned: This part of the lesson objective assessment may be explored as a group.**
Note: *Why we do this.*
It is extremely important to incorporate activities to make sure the students understand how they can take these new skills that they learned and practiced with the equines, and use them in their daily life.
- **Generalization of Skills Learned to School Setting. This part of the lesson objective assessment is explored as a group.**

2:30 Class Ends

***After the class the volunteers and staff will have a **De-briefing** on the class in general, including the students, horses, and activities, and suggestions for changes to the curriculum.

Making Decisions That Work

What can go into making Good Decisions?

- **Be thoughtful (slow down, thinking before doing)**
- **Be smart (you have choices, exploring options, ask for help, learn from other's mistakes & successes)**
- **Be safe (managing risk, what do you know/not know)**
- **Be responsible (I'm older now and know my decision may affect others)**
- **Be wise (you and others live with the results)**
- **What is the "right choice" for you?**
- **What else? _____**

Then:

- **Enjoy the benefits of good decisions.**

- **Learn from your mistakes, they are very valuable! Horse are great at this.**

Activity: Go into the paddocks approaching and spending time with different horses, reading body language, spending time with them, finding sweet spots, staying aware of each horse and others in the paddock, and making decisions that are:

Thoughtful (thinking before doing) **OBSERVE, BE AWARE**

Smart (exploring options) **READ BODY LANGUAGE** (your own and the horses)

Safe (managing risk, what do you know/not know) **LOOK AT THE WHOLE PICTURE**

Responsible (my decision may affect others) **THIS INCLUDES ALL HORSES AND PEOPLE**

Wise (you and others live with the results) **LEADS TO GOOD RESULTS FOR ALL.**

Good Decisions should be enjoyed. So ***ENJOY!!!!***

Volunteer Notes: As you and your student practice the above skills make sure to include the horses around you. What they are doing may affect the horse you are approaching or spending time with.