

Training for Courage - Tying, Part 2

By Paul Dufresne

The last article on tying depicted getting the horse to feel good, yields in all directions, ground tying, then progression to actual preparation with a flexible tie on a large post. You could also do a similar progression on a good tie rail suspended from preferably a little higher than the chest but no higher than the wither.



So-She brings stressor of bag of tin cans



So-She again with stressor closer, different directions

Like the tie post, it is even better if it is a smooth pipe or post. For a post I like about 8 inches; for a tie rail I like 3-4 inches, very well secured or larger (preferably steel). A horse pulling back not only has all of its weight but can almost double it with pulling power. If they break loose tied to a rail or post the results could be catastrophic. If I am using a rail, I use a full wrap of the lead line and leave it loose, so if the horse pulls it will resist but slide slowly off allowing the horse to back away (losing leverage) but also losing fear of not being able to get further away from it. A longer line is always a good idea in teaching to tie as it will allow you to get a hold of it further away from the rail or post so you don't break it as the horse pulls, as it may catch you by surprise. Remember if you are still in doubt you should go back to doing the yields and ground-tying.

When it comes to tying on or in a trailer, you need a proper set-up to teach tying at the trailer. The horse should never be tied inside the trailer until it knows how to tie safely outside the trailer. The horse should also not be tied in the trailer until it knows how to load safely and calmly in the trailer and understands the responsibility to wait. Trailer loading is another topic in itself. If the trailer has

a post or bar at the back that I can do a single wrap on, I would practice like I did at the post. The trailer is usually a stressor so it is a tougher challenge than just at a post.

A high-line type of tie is a natural progression to actually tying a horse and leaving it (but still keeping an eye on it). It is best hanging from above and I love the one on a big tree branch because if a horse leans on them they will bend somewhat and the horse will find it difficult to stay braced - similar to a sliding single wrap on a post that can move if the horse really braces, but then fixes once the horse quits leaning heavily.

Another of my favourite methods of preparing horses to yield to forward pressure on a line is to pony them with another good riding horse. I use a good western saddle with a very stable and calm horse. I use a longer line that I put a single wrap around the saddle horn. I have my riding horse first back up pulling the training horse and then from the side on a circle making it harder for them to plant and resist. Horses are also inclined to follow another horse so this is a great way to help them understand giving to pressure.

Bombproofing the horse to all phases of tying (yields, ground-tie, true ties,



Eros tied single wrap steel rail

trailer ties) is not understood unless you have taught the horse to understand that no harm will come to it and it does not need to panic and run away while being tied. Any commotion we add to the exercise should never be directed at the horse but around it (directing it at the horse is the last phase that is very valuable in working horses i.e. police horse or stock horse). If we stare at the horse and add energy to the experience with a scary prop we are setting up the horse for failure. Get a friend to make a noise at a distance. If your horse gets worried, calm it (quite easy to do with endotapping) then continue with the stressor (bag of

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tin cans, banging whip, tarp, bat, other horses riding by, busting balloons, be creative). Remember that as you build this up you need to be ready to give the horse some space to move away from the stressor. Using a sliding single wrap allows you to give the horse space if it feels overly threatened.

Once it backs off and realizes it hasn't died, you can ask the horse to come forward again to a shorter line while never having truly released the horse.

Once the horse understands the basic premise of tying, you should leave the horse tied while going a bit further away every time, but be prepared to go help the horse immediately if it can't cope with it. If you do all of the stages above you will seldom see horses really panic. I always make sure the horse understands to stand there and to stay...and I will be back.

Tying is the horse's responsibility to wait for me patiently until I come back. The tying process can always be facilitated with the help of company from another horse that understand tying responsibility.

Hobbling is also another progression of tying, but also implies we need to prepare proper yields to pressure on the legs...another topic in itself but very related.

When in doubt as to whether your horse is really ready to tie, you can always over-prepare! You can never be too good



Bala single wrap outside trailer with tarp stressor



Bala tied outside trailer with dragging pool stressor

at tying. Keeping a knife handy or having a quick release lead line could be useful if your horse was ever to get hung up because you misjudged how ready they were. Horses that can't tie safely are also the horses that will run through your reins when faced with a strong stressor. Good tying skills will improve your horse's riding. You should also remember that the last thing you do before stopping is the behaviour you are rewarding so watch what you reward. Good preparation!

Paul Dufresne is a writer, performer, trainer and clinician in Kelowna, BC, who educates in Natural Horsemanship, Classical Arts, Liberty and Circensic Dressage. He teaches people to understand horses, but more importantly how to tap into their relaxation reflexes in ways seldom seen in North America. In doing so, he is able to guide people in creative experiences where the human learns to be an effective, safe leader. The horse learns to be more emotionally secure and will respectfully follow while developing athleticism in a mutually courageous manner by having a deeper understanding of how they affect each other.



Bala endotapping; regaining relaxed emotional state



High-line tree branch tie with hanging tarp stressor