



Horse Heart Coherence: The Connection Between Horses & Humans

Has the relationship with your heart horse been proven scientifically? Learn more about horse heart coherence [here](#).

Sometimes, it's not the obvious things that make a horse great, like lineage or conformation. While all of those factors help define what makes a horse great, there is one thing that elevates what might appear to be an average or even 'underdog' horse and make them great – their heart. It's the ultimate x-factor that defies the odds.

Successful horse and rider combinations from all over the world many times credit their success by defining that horse as their "heart horse."

At the end of the day, it was the heart the horse had and the connection they built with their rider that set them apart and contributed to their success.

The Heart-Horse Connection

"There is no secret so close as that between a rider and his horse." – Robert Smith Surtees.

This is something riders who have experienced a connection with a heart horse will understand completely. Horses, especially those we connect with when working them closely on the ground or in the saddle, seemingly have a direct connection with our souls.

It's evident after a long day when we spend time with our horses – we are a different person after we leave the barn. We are a better version of ourselves. We breathe a little easier and the stress of our everyday lives temporarily lifts away.

Horses are emotional creatures, which makes the relationship between a horse and its person so deep. They can also intuitively read our body language and emotions, even when we don't think we are deliberately trying to communicate with them this way.

Horses have been used for so many jobs, from competing in the upper levels of various disciplines to being therapy horses for soldiers with PTSD or children who have disabilities. Horses have a special way of healing our body, heart, and soul. Horses have changed the lives of so many people for the better in so many ways.

But that connection we feel with horses isn't just good for our mental health – it's scientific too.

Cardiac Coherence and the Horse Human Heart Connection

We hear so often that horses can sense when you're afraid, so if you stay calm, they stay calm. This is also true of other emotions humans have like appreciation and love.

Studies have been done to understand the connection between horses and their people, including a preliminary study at the University of Pisa Department of Veterinary Sciences in Italy. It's been concluded there is a physiological response to the emotional stimulation we have with our horses. In this study, they found that humans tended to do something called 'coupling their HRV' with horses. HRV, or heart rate variability, is the slight change in heart rate from beat to beat. This indicated to scientists that there is an interspecific emotional transfer between horse and human. A horse's heart rhythms have also been scientifically proven to reflect how they're feeling. Other similar studies have been done as well where electrocardiogram (ECG) recorders were placed on both horse and human that captures this heart rate variability.

HRV, as mentioned above, not only detects this heart rate change, but it's also sensitive to changes in emotion. This is shown by certain patterns shown on the ECG.

One of the techniques performed during this study was a type of *HeartMath* called **Heart Lock-In**, where the person focused on feelings like appreciation and love directed towards her horse. What they found was that not only did the humans HRV change, but the horses did as well. This indicated that the horse was able to sense and respond to the emotional information that was carried by the energetic field of the human's heart. This experiment has since been replicated successfully.

In follow up studies, researchers also found increases in human and horse VLF (very low frequency) rhythms during their interactions. VLF is generated by the intrinsic nervous system and a network of thousands of neurons also known as the "**heart brain**" which plays an important role in our wellbeing and overall health.

When VLF is reduced, it can help reduce risk of some major health challenges. Interestingly, this increase in VLF didn't occur during human-to-human interaction, further proving the unique connection horses and humans have.

Oddly enough, the **human heart sends more information to the brain** than the brain does to the heart. The heart even has long and short-term memory neurons. This means the heart neurons send messages to our brains that affect our emotional experiences.

Cardiac coherence, also known as physiological coherence, is the way we measure the stability, order, and harmony that comes with regulated heart rate and how it relates to our emotions. For example, when you're around a herd of horses, the coherence they generate is extremely powerful, and almost immediate, because of their strong, multiplied electromagnetic field. In turn, we are in coherence and in harmony with them and ourselves, since our own electromagnetic field is so heavily affected.

Many people say they feel a deep sensation and emotional feeling that can bring the release of hidden emotions when around horses.

Improving Your Relationship and Connection With Your Horse

With some horses, we feel an almost instantaneous connection with them. It's almost like a "heart horse at first sight."

But just because we don't have that instantaneous heart-horse connection with a horse doesn't mean a horse can't turn into a heart horse with some relationship building, bonding, and time. First, you need to have a mindset that focuses on actively wanting to improve that connection with your horse and be willing to keep at it. Sometimes the process can seem slow, but each time you actively try and improve this connection, it will build on itself.

As mentioned above, the emotions you are feeling, the energy you are emitting, and your subtle body language shifts will be picked up by your horse, so be mindful of this anytime you spend time with them.

A great example of this is how you react when a horse misbehaves or spooks. Stay patient, don't get overemotional, and repeat the tasks that help them use their [minds](#) instead of their emotions. This builds trust, and trust is one of the most important factors of a horse-human relationship. Sometimes we have a limited time we can spend with our horses, and this can put additional pressure on trying to accomplish something specific in their training for whatever our next goal is. Just be sure to make time for building that relationship too, since that's equally, if not more important, than the training we want to do with them.

Take a few extra minutes when you're grooming and really connect with them or let them loose in an arena or round pen and just spend some relaxed time with them. When they are out in the pasture, try going out there and just be present with them and sit with them as they graze. At the end of the day, it's the heart that horse has and their connection to you that might just make the difference the next time you step into the show ring, onto the trail, or whenever you want to accomplish something challenging with them in the future.



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Heart Lock-In® Technique

The Heart Lock-In Technique helps you accumulate energy and renew and recharge your emotional system with these steps:

- Step 1. Focus** your attention in the area of the heart. Imagine your breath is flowing in and out of your heart or chest area, breathing a little slower and deeper than usual.
- Step 2. Activate** and sustain a regenerative feeling such as appreciation, care or compassion.
- Step 3. Radiate** Radiate that renewing feeling to yourself and others.

This benefits them and especially helps recharge and balance your own system.

When you catch your mind wandering, simply refocus your attention on the heart area and reconnect with feelings of care or appreciation. After you're finished, sincerely sustain your feelings of care and appreciation as long as you can.

Once you have become familiar with these steps, use the quick steps:

- Heart-Focused Breathing
- Activate a regenerative feeling
- Radiate

Heart Lock-In Basics

The Heart Lock-In Technique is considered an emotional restructuring technique because it helps you instate or lock in new patterns. With practice, you'll learn how to sustain coherence for longer periods of time, making the coherent state your new reference point. Achieving coherence becomes more automatic and creates a cushion against recurring stress or other depleting emotions.

Most people find that practicing the Heart Lock-In Technique in a quiet place for five minutes or more a couple times a day helps to accumulate energy and recharge their emotional system. This cushions the impact of day-to-day stress or anxiety and other depleting emotions. When stressful feelings come up, many find a lock-in helps them maintain focus, make clearer decisions and dramatically reduce personal energy drain. It helps bring about more balance in your system. Sometimes more balance provides an energy boost and other times it helps slow down your system so that you are calmer and better able to relax

Feelings or attitudes you would like to radiate toward yourself or others

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If you are having difficulty feeling and sustaining a positive emotion, use the Quick Coherence® or Freeze Frame® techniques to help you identify perceptions or ideas that will help you increase positive feelings. Some find listening to background music that lifts your spirit can increase the Heart Lock-In's positive effects.

Additional Instructions: _____

Heart Lock-In® Personal Practice Log

Track your Heart Lock-In practice sessions.

Date	Time of Day	Observations before	Length	Observations after	Coherence Ratios (optional)
					L M H
					L M H
					L M H
					L M H
					L M H
					L M H
					L M H
					L M H
					L M H
					L M H

Write down anything you want to remember or other observations from your practice.

What successes are you having with your practice?

What challenges are you having with your practice?
