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Acupointers

High Touch® Jin Shin - Energy Balancing for Your Horse

By Nancy Camp

While working as a veterinary assistant I understood many owner's feelings of helplessness and their desires to do more for their horses than the prescribed treatments. Jin Shin is an energetic healing art. It is in no way meant to replace the role of your veterinarian, but it can serve as a helpful complement to standard medical treatments and allow for involvement in the healing process for those horse owners who choose to do more. It is so rewarding to be able to offer comfort to your horse and know you are promoting wellness with your touch. If Jin Shin did nothing more than relax a distressed, ill or tired horse, it would be worthwhile. And it can accomplish so much more than that. I invite you to join me in my journey, using Jin Shin to foster well being in the horses we honor and with whom we share our lives.

Jin Shin is a noninvasive oriental energy art that shares many of the underlying concepts of acupuncture. It respects the idea that life's energy, the Qi (pronounced "chee"), flows through all things. Like acupuncture, Jin Shin employs the reading of energetic pulses to target imbalances in a body's energy patterns. When the Qi moves freely throughout the body, the body is in harmony. Should an energy pathway become blocked, physical, mental, or emotional disharmony, or "dis-ease", arises. The goal of a Jin Shin session is to maintain or re-establish the balance of Qi energy in the body. The touch for Jin Shin is light yet penetrating and supports the natural flow of the body's energy. Jin Shin utilizes the life force that emanates from our fingertips. The practitioner merely touches, or connects, two of the twenty-six energy release points and waits for the energy flow to correct itself. Jin Shin recognizes organ flows, related to organ systems as defined in eastern medical tradition, number flows, related to specific energy release points, and eight depths in the body's energy cycles. As the energy cycles in through these depths it clears obstructions, and as it cycles back out it supports a state of well-being. Jin Shin promotes spiritual, emotional, and physical balance.

Jin Shin is a healing art that was known in ancient Japan. A folk tradition of healing, it was nearly lost to the modern world. Rediscovered in Japan by Jiro Murai in the early twentieth century, brought to the United States by Mary Burmeister and called Jin Shin Jyutsu?, this healing art has enjoyed growing popularity in recent years. The form of High Touch? Jin Shin is taught and promoted by Betsy Dayton, now living on San Juan Island in Washington State.

As a trainer, I find one of the most beneficial aspects of Jin Shin is that it provides an avenue for dealing with stress in horses. Domestication has taken the horse away from his natural state. Nearly all horses are forced to cope in the best way that they can with living situations that are less than ideal. Even the lucky horses that share their lives with people who seek to provide the best saddle fit, proper dental maintenance, adequate hoof care, and fair training methods or competition schedules are still separated from their natural state of existence. Like people, horses experience worry,



ILLUSTRATION #1: The practitioner connects Energy Release Point #4, located behind the jugular process of the occipital bone of the skull, with Energy Release Point #11 on the trapezius cervicis muscle in front of the scapula. This hold releases tension in the cervical vertebrae and helps relax the poll.

fear, anger, boredom, anxiety, and sorrow. And, like people, the manifestations of these emotional stresses are individual and complex. Ideally the source of stress is identified and dealt with, such as saddle, dental, hoof care and training issues, but things are not always that simple. And while the source may not be easily found the manifestations of the stress is easy enough to find. Through energetic pulse assessment, areas of concern can be revealed that might not arise out of an analytical train of thought.

Whatever the cause, stress creates tension that can manifest as changes in muscular postures and patterns of use. Stress compromises the body's ability to relax and taxes the entire nervous system. Tense muscles retain metabolic wastes and when asked to work, experience localized lack of oxygen resulting in diminished blood flow. Stress patterns also affect the connective tissue and bind the fascia. This in turn has a negative effect on muscles, nerves, blood vessels and the lymph system. This scenario is not beneficial to any horse whether he is asked to go casually down the trail or excel in a high performance sport like racing, cutting, jumping or dressage. The alleviation of stress is critical to furthering a horse's training.

Jin Shin practice can also help horse handlers deal with emotional imbalances in their horses. Emotional issues so often manifest as behavioral and are all too commonly misinterpreted by horse handlers as bad acting. Horses are not vindictive, conniving, or scheming by nature. It may take some unraveling to get to the core of an issue but nearly without exception the root of a 'behavioral' problem will be found in a response to pain, stress, or fear. It is important to remember that horses are tuned into their owner's emotional and physical states and are greatly affected by their owner's state of well-being. Jin Shin offers access to channels for change by

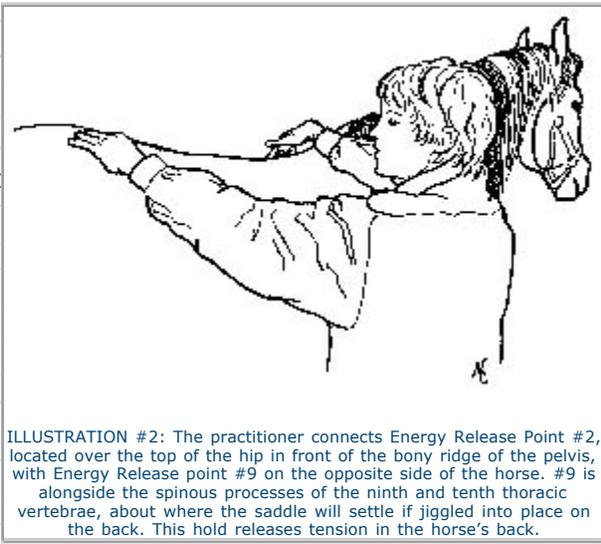


ILLUSTRATION #2: The practitioner connects Energy Release Point #2, located over the top of the hip in front of the bony ridge of the pelvis, with Energy Release point #9 on the opposite side of the horse. #9 is alongside the spinous processes of the ninth and tenth thoracic vertebrae, about where the saddle will settle if jiggled into place on the back. This hold releases tension in the horse's back.

providing a way for horses to release emotional tension. Often, by learning to help their horses, owners discover how beneficial Jin Shin is for them, which in turn benefits the horse even more. Almost immediately upon being touched with intent, horses will usually go deep within themselves and focus on the flow of energy. They show visible signs of releasing tension including yawns, half closed eyes, sighs, changes in breathing patterns or stretching, to name a few. All of these signs of releasing indicate that blocked energy is beginning to flow because the energy release points are opening. Don't expect miracles. It takes the energy twenty-four hours to flow through all of the meridians and you may not see immediate results. It is not your place to 'make it happen'; just stand by as a witness to the process and know how effective this work really is for your horse and for you.

Finally, Jin Shin provides avenues for affecting the physical state of your horse. If your horse has been given a vaccination or has been diagnosed with an infection and is on antibiotics, you can do flows to strengthen the immune system. If he or she is stressed after a hard ride, competition or trailering experience, Jin Shin can help your horse relax and rest peacefully. If your chiropractor treats for a stiff neck or sore back, there are Jin Shin flows that can support your horse between treatments by releasing tension in problem areas of your horse's body. Energy flows can support internal organs such as the heart, lungs, liver or kidneys that may be stressed or malfunctioning and can be

employed concurrently with medications or recommendations your veterinarian may have prescribed. It is also safe to do Jin Shin on a horse with an acute injury where conventional massage techniques are contraindicated.

Best of all, Jin Shin is easy to learn and offers immediate gratification for beginning practitioners. I'd like to share two releases. If you have time it's great to do these both before and after you ride or even on a day you may not ride at all and simply wish to spend some quality time with your horse. First, here's the touching technique in a nutshell.

Traditionally, the basic explanation of how your hands work is that your left hand has a drawing effect while your right hand has a sending effect. But don't get too mental in this process, just connect the points and imagine the energy flowing within the horse's body between the two points of contact. When you hold two points, one will usually feel different than the other. With practice, you will feel a pulsing under your hands at the points of contact. This is not a blood pulse; it is an energetic pulse. One may feel denser, hotter, colder, or have a strong pulse or no pulse at all. Hold the points until you feel the energy equalize. No need to press or 'do' anything. You are merely bringing an awareness of the flow of Qi to the horse and inviting the Qi to equalize itself. While you are learning, hold until you feel even temperature and/or pulse in both points. As your skills develop you will be able to feel the energy cycle in and back out all eight of the energetic depths. If you don't feel anything, just stay in place for two to three minutes and watch your horse for signs of release.

I've been shown three ways of placing my hands on the horse to conduct energy flows and I know others exist in different disciplines. You will find the one or a combination of techniques that works best for you. The first is to place the palms of your hands on the horse, lightly covering the release points, and think of the energy flowing through the centers of your hands. When holding your hands in this way you will often feel heat is being generated. The second is to place the pads of your index, middle and ring fingers lightly on the points. The pads of the fingers are sensitive to 'listening to' or receiving information from the body you are touching. The third method is to direct your fingertips lightly over the points. This method is most effective for sending or moving stuck energy.

Always maintain a mindful connection. As you first begin working with your horse, you may find yourself easily distracted. Any number of things may clutter your mind. To leave distractions behind, focus on your breath. Being conscious of your breath will restore balance and a sense of well being to yourself that will transfer to the horse you are working with as confidence and trust. Surrender to the power and wisdom of the Qi that flows through his body and yours. As you connect with your horse, you will become acutely aware of the life energy that flows through all things.

NECK RELEASE: Place one hand at the base of your horse's skull, behind his or her ear, about where the crownpiece of a bridle sits. Place your other hand about three inches from the top of his or her neck in front of the withers over the trapezius cervicus muscle, in the so-called 'shot triangle' as shown in illustration #1. Do both sides of the neck.

Keep your touch gentle and light, not so light as to be ticklish but there is no need to press. Watch that you don't allow the weight of your arms to make your connection heavy. It's best to lighten your touch before lifting your hands off the point of contact. Too abrupt a disconnection feels rude and can be disconcerting to the horse. Connecting these points will facilitate the release of neck tension by promoting the energy flow in the neck.

BACK RELEASE: Place one hand just back from the withers about where the saddle

settles onto your horse's back. Place the other hand across the horse's back, up over the point of the hip on the flat of the loin as shown in illustration #2. Do this from both sides.

I hope you enjoy your first foray into the magical world of Jin Shin for horses. I encourage you to practice these releases and add them to your regular routine. 🙏

About the author:

Nancy Camp has been involved in the equine industry since attending the Horsemaster's Course at the Potomac Horse Center in 1973. She is a trainer and certified Connected Riding® instructor. She specializes in rehabilitating horses that are breaking down within the paradigm of traditional horse management. Her training in Jin Shin is through the High Touch® Network headed by Betsy Dayton in Friday Harbor, WA. She teaches classes in Equine Energy Balancing and High Touch® Jin Shin. For information about Nancy's classes contact her at 208-823-4116 or visit her website at www.wholehorsetraining.bizhosting.com, for more information about the High Touch? network see www.hightouchnet.com.



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