

Over the course of my career, I have written countless scribbles of notes as I studied the intricate nature of the communicated equine. I recognized very early on that I could not distinguish the equestrian lexicon through the lens of human language as it is commonly understood. Horses demand that if we desire to up our horsemanship, we cannot be afraid to up our own game. These challenges, though often translated in-saddle, do not start there. Misguided physical interpretations of what we think we understand about their emotionally driven communication is often the great impediment of our growth.

Knowing full well that I could not apply human language to what I was observing, learning, discovering, and hope to complete even a part of the equestrian dialogue. I was left to submit myself to freedom of discovery by taking a view from the hoof and find the best ways I could to transcribe the horse's emotional communication through our written language. The glossary is presented here to serve as a guide to those translations and my effort to connect you with the horse through familiarity of terms and phrases. Those included represent what I feel are the most relevant selections to enhance your introduction to my work and research. It is my intention that these will serve as informative references in context for my past, current and future endeavors, including the several educational courses that are or will become available.

This is not the final list; I will leave the door open to add to these phrases and descriptions as I continue to learn and explore. Horses and humans, both driven by emotion, share the artistry of emotional communication which transcends time and species. Like the music of a song, we do not need to understand the lyrics to be moved by the melody, we only need to allow ourselves to feel beyond that which we see.
~Kerry M Thomas

Glossary of Terminology & Phrases

What are the Herd Dynamics? Herd dynamics are those naturally occurring traits, tendencies and characteristics that make up the individual psychology and where this places the horse in the hierarchy of herd structure. In short, herd dynamics are the operating system running the machine.

What is Sensory Soundness? The measure of an individual's capacity to harmonize with their environment, mitigate emotional stress and realize contentment through the efficiency of their sensory sequence: in short, it is the connection between the physical world and the emotional horse.

What is the Sensory Sequence? A 6-part sequencing process that blends the physical world with the emotional horse: ~1) Survey ~ 2) Orienting ~ 3) Investigatory ~ 4) Absorb ~ 5) Interpret ~6) Respond.

What is (SAZ) Standard Aspect Zone? A horse's sensory system is designed to absorb and observe a world experienced in a nearly circular view. In order to do this, the physical sensory system is compartmentalized into 6 independent SAZ's, each reliant upon a lead or Primary Sense and a secondary or Supporting Sense. These unique aspects are responsible for environmental awareness in their respective zones and psychologically have full sequencing capacity, though when incapable, interrupted or preferred, a Sensory Lead Change is triggered.

What is a Sensory Lead Change? The transition of environmental stimuli that has been identified in one standard aspect zone and transitioned (handed-off like a baton) to another to be distinguished for sequence completion. This psychological transaction happens between the primary sense of one zone and the supportive sense of another connected zone, and may or may not have 'Sensory Alignment' with standard zone markers.

What do you mean by Primary & Supporting senses? Optimal sensory efficiency in each independent zone relies upon two key senses; a primary sense acting as lead-sense and a secondary sense acting in support. Naturally occurring in the high-functioning herd dynamic, it represents “check-and-balances”.

What is the Egg? Egg is both Depth Perception Range and Scope of Emotional Self Awareness, ‘where am I relative to where you are?’ and is an essential component that allows for accurate interpretive ratio; ‘how fast are you or I, or you and I, moving relative to one another?’. Psychologically, ‘depth-perception’ is both in and out and up and down relative to the body. Important to note that psychologically, “Self-Perceived” is different than “Self-Aware”; one is an assumed position; the other is a known position.

What do you mean by Ratio? Ratio is the rate of interpretation (psychological) relative to actual pace (physical motion); how fast is information being processed compared to how fast the body is moving.

What do you mean by Outsource? When an individual cannot independently complete the sensory processes and is dependent upon another to fill in the “answer to the question” in one or more of the steps between 2 & 5, in order to complete sensory sequencing. Also called “bridging.”

What is a “Bridge”? A Bridge is when a horse has a successful outsourcing, or ‘external bridging’ experience helping them complete the sensory sequence with a purposeful and fluent response. Internal Bridging is a bridge-point taken from the associative aspect.

What is a “Block”? A Block is an unsuccessful outsourcing effort, leaving the horse with an interrupted sensory sequence, resulting in a reactive, non-fluent response. There are both internal and external blocks; internal blocks are emotionally biased and external blocks are a rebuffing from a viewed peer.

What is an Emotional Energy Leak? Emotional energy leaks are when a horse, either through natural tendency or human impulse, distributes their emotional energy erratically through disproportionate and unnecessary forms exertion to complete a task, resulting in an interruption of physical fluency.

What is Mental Fatigue? Mental fatigue; accumulative, unprocessed stresses that interrupt the ability for protracted focus on tasks resulting in the mitigation of physical talent.

What is Associative Aspect? The Associative Aspect is an emotionally driven influence on any one or all the Investigatory - Absorb - Interpretive processing portions of the sensory sequence based upon previous experiences which have altered normal response.

What is the Anticipatory Response Mechanism? The Anticipatory Response Mechanism, or A.R.M., is the inherent capacity of any horse to anticipate an outcome or required response based upon similarities of association. A.R.M. is responsible for learned-behavioral expressions in psychological growth patterns.

What is IHD? Individual Group Dynamic represents the portion of the horses’ psychology responsible for directing emotional energy upon singular targets either animate or inanimate. A one-to-one focus of linear expression; self to a singular point of focus be it A to B or from A to C, with B disregarded.

What is GHD? Group Herd Dynamic represents the portion of the horses’ psychology responsible for absorption in multiplicity, environmental or emotional, both within and without herd structure. From self to the simultaneous absorption of variable stimuli; the multitasking portion of the psychology is tasked with reading the room.

What do you mean by Independent Nature? Naturally a herd animal, among the most difficult things for any horse to do is operate independent of that nature. A term reserved for those small percentage of horses who can complete the sensory sequence in at least 4 of the 6 aspect zones without the necessity to outsource.

What is Mind To Body Fluency? The word “fluency” is used to express that which is fluid and smooth, be it interaction between horse and environment or horse and rider. Mind to body fluency is to experience an uninterrupted sequence between intention and result, represented as harmony with the environment and contentment with peers.

What does Intent-of-Purpose mean? Intent-of-Purpose is where the emotional intentions of the rider lead the purposeful movement of the horse and is the key to Riding With Fluency.

What does it mean to Ride With Fluency? To RWF is the capacity to lead the horse through the projection of strong intent without the horse experiencing emotional resistance or float.

What does it mean when a horse “floats”? Floating is when a horse in motion loses mental focus on the point of action and begins to lose physical pace and/or drifts off course.

What is Harmony & Contentment? Herd species by nature seek harmony & contentment as “reward.” A process of assimilation; Harmony is the experience of emotionally harmonizing with the rhythms of the physical environment; Contentment is the experience of finding emotional balance with one’s peers.

What does DTF stand for? DTF is short for Distance Target Focus and is used during the evaluation process to indicate the horses’ ability to stay locked-in on forward targets over extended distances while in motion.

What is T.I.M.? Time-In-Motion is the reference point that indicates the duration of time required to complete a physical task; a horse does not view distance as a physical reality but rather what we understand as distance is a measurement of time for the horse.

What does “Bumpy” mean? When a horse gets “bumpy” it means that they are having difficulty in staying focused and must constantly reacquire and re-interpret to complete the sensory sequence, disrupting mind-to-body fluency.

Smell & Touch: Two different sensations with similar functions; ordinary contact & scents are absorbed psychologically and evolve a conditioned response. Contact & scents marked with emotional triggers stimulate both immediate response and evolved associative markers. Each of these naturally self-serving sensations contribute to harmony and contentment and have similar provisions regarding their role in learned behaviors and psychological growth patterns. Smell assists with heightened interpretations within the egg, touch can be both hypersensitive and dull. Each are subject to the emotional state of the psychological environment.

What does Sensory Alignment mean? Sensory Alignment is the comparison of how well the horses psychosensory is fitted over the commonly available 6 standardized aspect zones. A proper fitting of these is considered “ideal” sensory soundness. When there are deficiencies in the Sensory Sequence or drag between SLC’s, the overlay does not align as the physical standard and psychosensory become askew. (Example, if you put these two maps on top of one another, aligned, then twist one, they are out of alignment.) Misalignment or an exaggeration of zone area in any aspect disrupts a horse’s ability to sustain harmony and contentment and contributes to accumulative stresses.

What are Psychosensory Zones? Representing the area of psychological sensitivity of primary and supporting senses, Psychosensory Zones indicate the degree of alignment communicated between the standard operating template and the actual operating system, affecting many things such as herd hierarchy and growth patterns. Unlike the 6 common SAZ’s, Psychosensory Zones can fluctuate in size and scope from 1 zone, the most askew, to the highest sensory soundness rating of 6 compatibly aligned zones.

Habitat Attachment Disorder, H.A.D. When any horse managing emotional isolation has learned to find harmony and contentment through and within a particular environment or pattern within that environment, the removal from or interruption of said environment causes behavioral disruptions. The strength or weakness of sensory soundness determines the degree and type of expression.

Simultaneous Recognition: A unique state of self-awareness defined by the naturally occurring ability to and capacity for processing short-term, hi-intensity turmoil. Engaged only on occasions of psychological isolation where the animal feels closed-in, is under conditions of extreme stress, or where visual acuity is compromised, it allows that moments of sensory overload do not distort sensory efficiency or disrupt purposeful expression. This instinctive collateral of self-preservation helps orient the horse during moments of chaos while maintaining accord between mind and body through their freedom of motion.

TIED, Training Induced Emotional Distress: The accumulation of psychological stresses brought on by the inability to freely distribute emotional energy as required for the horse to harmonize with the physical environment. Any condition that inhibits the capacity to physically express emotion, can, over a period of time, induce mental trauma. These conditions can set in motion a litany of sensory distortions that translate into erratic physical expression and cause long term associative issues. (Sensory deprivation equipment is interpreted by the horse as a physical impediment and causes the same form of accumulative stress even when the horse can freely move). Incorporating natural expression into a structured program, performance goal or having built-in sensory release points can help facilitate the diffusion of artificial stresses.

Equine Recency-Bias: A psychological phenomenon where the horse's associations are predicated upon that which has just happened; the carryover of immediate emotional stress disrupts the normal associative aspect. This is triggered by a defensive sensory posture and most common in horses that have experienced trauma, or are lower level on the natural herd structure due to corruptions along the sensory sequence.

Stress Carryover: The residual, unprocessed stress in one zone that is collateral to the transition of stimuli into another during a Sensory Lead Change, resulting in a coagulation of anxiety that delays the sensory lead change processes and is the basis for sticky, delayed responses within the sensory sequence.

Herd Adaptation: the process of change that befits at-large environmental conditions experienced by the collective group.

Horse Assimilation: the process of change befitting sudden, situational circumstances governed by the capacity to both determine and anticipate varying degrees of coercion, real or perceived.

Competitive Edge Rating: Is an evaluation of an athlete's ability to merge physical and psychological characteristics effectively, especially under pressure. This assessment considers individual strengths and weaknesses in sensory perception, athletic proficiency, and the capacity to handle competitive stress without succumbing to mental fatigue before physical exhaustion. The rating determines the likelihood of success against challenges such as time constraints or total duration of (distance), and environmental factors. Athletes are graded on a scale from E (lowest) to A+ (highest), reflecting their probability of success relative to both the demands of their environment and the performance standards of their peers in their respective disciplines.

