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Reiki & HORSE RESCUE:

by Kathleen Prasad

Healing, Gratitude & New Beginnings

Kamali, a rescued horse at BrightHaven Sanctuary, approaches during a Reiki session.



Photo: Kathleen Prasad

Animal Reiki, a meditation system that creates relaxation and stress-relief, is a wonderful way to support the healing journey of rescued horses and to support ourselves as we walk this path with them. The name Reiki, pronounced “ray-key,” comes from the Japanese words “rei” meaning spirit and “ki” meaning energy. It is usually translated as “universal life energy.” Reiki is a meditative practice that helps us to hold a space of balance

within ourselves, even in the midst of a chaotic or troublesome situation. If we can practice maintaining this kind of inner balance and calm in our own lives, we will see a ripple effect in all that we do. In working with rescued horses, we can see them responding to our inner state of balance in a positive way, becoming calmer and more peaceful. This space of peace is the first step of healing and new beginnings for the rescued horse.

THE FIVE PRECEPTS

Reiki as a healing modality is a meditative art. It is simply about focusing one’s compassionate intention to support another being. When using Reiki to help a horse, for example, the practitioner focuses on a Reiki meditation, and in doing so, creates an energetic space of peace and compassion. The horse can sense this space of balance and well-being and will be drawn to it.



Asia and Joannie, connecting heart to heart in the Reiki space, at BrightHaven Sanctuary in California.

Standing with a horse in this way, with openness, acceptance and compassion, and without our own personal agenda, is a very powerful way to build trust. Even if the horse has been through something very difficult at the hands of humans, he can very quickly learn to trust again when we spend time in this balanced “Reiki space” with him.

Reiki is ideal for use with rescued horses because effectiveness is not dependent upon physical contact. The horse leads each session, connecting with the human practitioner in the ways that are most comfortable, either hands-on or from a distance, or a combination of the two. The most important connection that Reiki creates is one of heart meeting heart, and physical contact is not necessary for this to take place.

The most important way for us as humans to prepare to share Reiki with a rescued horse is to cultivate an inner space of balance. The Reiki precepts are our guides:

The five Reiki precepts for balanced living, taught by the founder of the system, Mikao Usui, are as follows:

- Just for today ...
- Do not anger.
- Do not worry.
- Be grateful.
- Practice diligently.
- Show compassion to yourself and others.

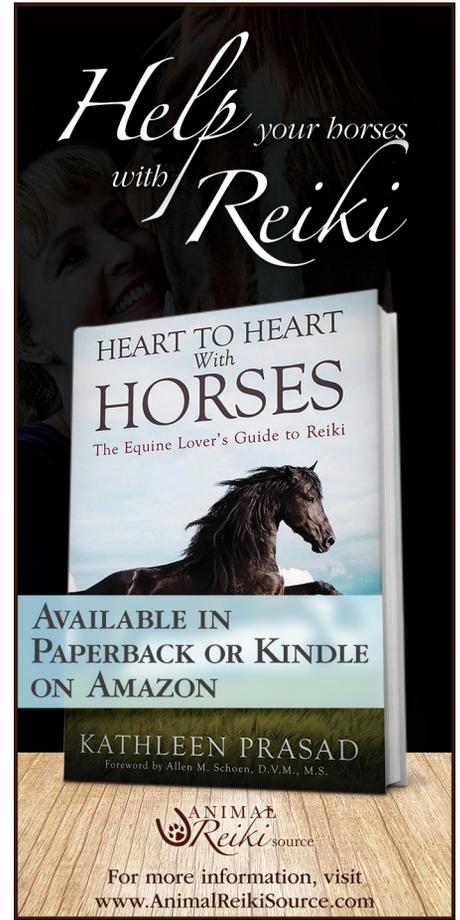
1 Just for today do not anger. Working with rescued horses can be very difficult when we see the results of past abuse or neglect. We can begin to feel ourselves becoming very angry about how the horse was treated, what he had to go through and so on. This anger at the horse’s past can spiral into anger about the world as a whole and anger toward humanity’s

treatment of horses in general. Pretty soon we can find ourselves angry, through and through. In reality, this anger will only distract us from our primary goal, which is to help the horse. If we are angry, the horse will sense that and not want to connect with us. They may even feel fearful of us because our inner anger (which they can sense from us from quite a distance) feels like something negative they have experienced in the past. If we can focus instead on our desire to help the horse, our anger can be mitigated by our compassion.

It can also help us to see the horse with our hearts instead of our eyes. If we can see deeper into the very essence and spirit of the horse—see that beautiful, hidden inner light just waiting to shine out—it will be easier to work through any difficulties we face with patience and calmness. When we approach our rescued horse with this kind of inner peace, everything will flow much more easily toward healing, trust and positivity.

2 Just for today do not worry. When working with a rescued horse, we can find ourselves dealing with many health problems, both physical and emotional. As we nurture the horse toward healing, we may find ourselves worrying: worrying about other problems that might manifest, about how and if the horse will be able to fully heal from illness and injury and so on. Worrying and fretting about things beyond our control is not helpful for us, or the horse.

If we can again look deeper into the heart and spirit of the horse to see him as already healed, we can help our horse find the hope and courage to get better. We can, for example, see how shiny their coat must have once been, how they would look with proper weight on their bones. We can imagine they are running with strength and vigor across the pasture. When we begin to



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look at the horse for who he really is, for his inner, beautiful potential, he will sense this and our relationship can deepen. And in that deepening of trust, the healing of the heart begins. This is where all healing starts for the rescued horse—with healing of the heart.

3 Be grateful. Working with a rescued horse can remind us of all our blessings that we might often take for granted. Things like clean water, plentiful hay and a safe shelter might be normal in our world, but might be completely new for the horse. Seeing their appreciation of all these things can help us awaken to a new level of gratitude. Awareness of the healing potential that this new beginning will bring (where the horse is now safe, respected and cared for) can inspire us to be our best self! We might have thought initially we were the one



Photo: Leah D'Ambrosio

Kathleen with Reiki friend May, a rescued gypsy horse, at Remus Memorial Horse Sanctuary in Essex, England.

doing the “rescuing”—and yet as we create a new relationship with this horse, we might find that our lives are forever changed for the better. We may find our hearts opening more than we had ever thought possible. In working through difficulties with a rescued horse, we can learn about ourselves and in so doing, find that we are better people for it. What an inspiration it is, to witness their capacity to heal and forgive, to let go of the past, and to move forward into a new future with courage and joy.

4 Practice diligently. Working with a rescued horse isn't easy. There will be ups and downs, and we might sometimes feel we

are going two steps back and one forward. This is why it's so important to remember to let go of our anger and worry and to practice gratitude again and again, especially when times get tough. When we work with a rescued horse, we are helping him to heal, nurturing him physically and emotionally, providing exercise, food and attention, and helping him to reach his potential. What a sacred and humbling journey. It is in this daily, diligent inner practice of letting go of anger and worry and being grateful, that can make all the difference in the horse's progress. Horses are so sensitive to our inner state of mind and heart; we owe it to them to stay balanced and peaceful as much as possible when we are with them.

5 Show compassion to yourself and others. Helping a rescued horse is a very compassionate action, which I believe has a ripple effect out into the world. By working with rescued horses in your life, you are not only helping that individual horse, but also making the world a better place by being a model for others. So first and foremost, be kind and gentle to yourself. In following your heart for the horses who need you, you will develop and nurture the compassionate spirit within you.

USING REIKI IN HORSE RESCUE

If you are a trained professional or volunteer involved in horse rescue, you may find yourself

in unexpected situations with extreme stress and sometimes, even danger. This can take a toll on your body, mind, emotions and spirit. Images and memories of what you have seen may stay with you long after you have left the scene. Here are some ways Reiki can help support rescuers' health and the horses being rescued:

Preparing to go to the scene of the rescue and arriving on the scene:

Breathe. Picture a calm and peaceful place in your mind. Keep this place with you in your heart as you go about your work.

Rescuing horses from the scene:

Whatever conditions you find the horses in, stay positive. Find affirmations to hold in your mind and heart depending on the horse. For example, for a very fearful horse, you might use the affirmation courage. For a horse that has been neglected, you might use the affirmation love. The horses will pick up on the affirmations as positive energy, and they will be very comforting for them.

After the rescue:

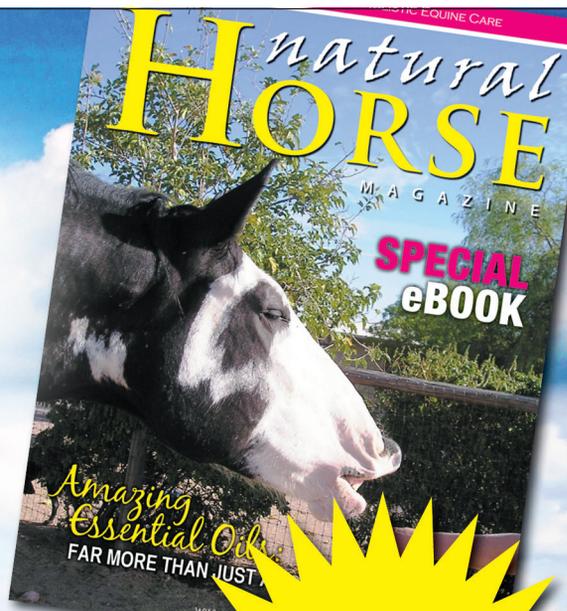
Imagine you can breathe earth energy up from ground and into your heart. As you speak to the horse and spend time with him, see him with your heart instead of your eyes—see through to his spirit and imagine he is already healed.

Many of us aren't professional rescue workers, but choose instead to support rescue efforts by

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"I feel gratitude; each day is a precious gift."

adopting a rescued horse. Here are some ways Reiki can support adopters and the rescued horses in their new homes:

Preparing to go to a sanctuary or rescue to adopt a horse: Set your intention that your heart is open to find the perfect horse for you and your family. Breathe earth energy into your heart to help you to stay grounded and centered. Try to listen to and see with your heart as you meet the horse. Feel for that special heart connection—and remember that this horse will also be your teacher!

Bringing your new horse home: Your role will be to assist your horse in healing old wounds and creating new beginnings. Use affirmations to help the energy stay positive and supportive as your horse adjusts and begins his new life. Remember to always see your horse as you know he is at his very essence—as perfectly in balance. Anything outwardly out of balance (illness, injury, behavior problems and so on) is simply a manifestation of old wounds that you will help him to heal. In seeing and

believing in his healing potential, you will help him to reach it.

Reiki teaches us that our role in horse rescue is not only an outward physical “doing” of the rescue. We can also nurture the healing of the horse’s body, mind and spirit by focusing our compassionate intention in a positive direction. Through the Reiki techniques of staying mindful of the precepts, remembering to connect to the earth and ground ourselves, using affirmations and seeing with our hearts, we are better able to stay in balance. And when we ourselves are in balance, we are better able to help horses.

EXERCISE TO TRY: Reiki Gratitude Practice

Stand nearby the horse with your hands at your sides. Invite him to share the beautiful space of light that you will create through this practice. Repeat as a mantra, in your mind, the affirmation, “I feel gratitude; each day is a precious gift.” Imagine the truth of this affirmation can fill your whole heart with a beautiful, bright light. This light can radiate through your entire body, and beyond into the space around you. As you repeat the affirmation, allow your mind to think about all the people, animals, places and situations in your life for which you are grateful. Alternately, you can focus on the experiences you’ve had with the horse for which you are grateful, or all the parts of

his or her unique being for which you are thankful. Feel the meaning and truth of *gratitude* permeate your whole being: body, mind, emotions and spirit. Notice how the horse responds to your mind and heart filled with gratitude. Signs of peace and relaxation will indicate that he or she is sharing the space with you. ☺

Watch a sneak peek into one of Kathleen’s Reiki classes—horses love chanting! Check out the interest from horses and ponies as students chant the first Reiki mantra while walking through the beautiful property of Remus Horse Sanctuary in England.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y005CMxEnFM>

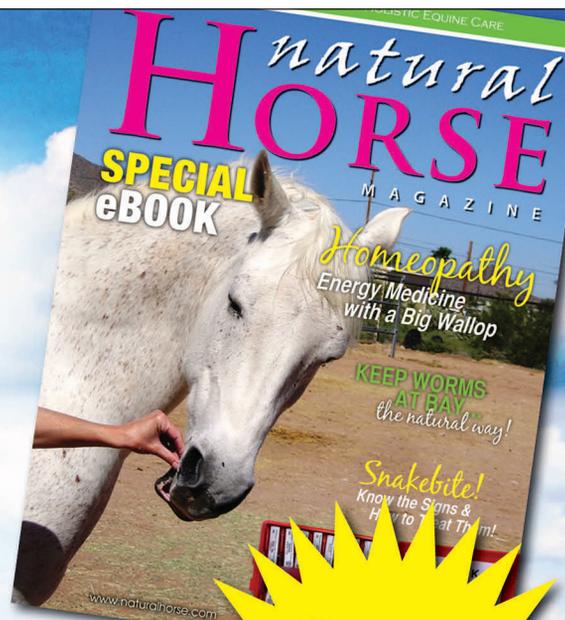
About the author:

Kathleen Prasad is founder of Animal Reiki Source and president of the Shelter Animal Reiki Association (SARA). A Reiki Practitioner since 1998, she has taught Reiki to the staff and volunteers of organizations such as BrightHaven, Best Friends Animal Society, the San Francisco SPCA, Guide Dogs for the Blind, The C.A.R.E. Foundation, The Elephant Sanctuary® and Remus Memorial Horse Sanctuary. Kathleen is the author of *Everything Animal Reiki*, *Reiki for Dogs*, and *Heart To Heart With Horses*. For more information please visit www.AnimalReikiSource.com or www.ShelterAnimalReikiAssociation.org.

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