

MALE stands for Masculine Authority Lovingly Expressed.

by Chris Irwin



Last year I worked with an aspiring Equine Assisted coach, a kind and lovely woman who wanted to facilitate women's workshops with mares. Her goal, in her words, was to "help women understand, appreciate and become more balanced with their female energy." But the irony, the lie hidden within her denial that I was obligated to point out to her, was that her personal horse is a gelding.

Can we be real? How come the vast majority of "good horses" are geldings? How is it we live in an age where people use the word "natural" so much but there is nothing natural about the fact that so few people truly know how to work with the true nature of stallions and alpha-mares?

It's a fact that our culture does not intuitively, naturally, know how to manage and lead the intense biology, physiology and behavior in the upper echelon of alpha beings. So very few male animals live a natural life "intact," without being castrated, and so few alpha-mares are handled by humans who can provide for them a life of emotional balance and well-being. It's a sad irony how many times I've heard women say they don't like working with mares.



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A regular occurrence in my profession is that I'm called in to work with the "rogue stallions" and the "crazy mares." I'm hired to go into the stall with the stallion that viciously attacks anyone who enters its space. I'm asked to trailer load the alpha mares who rear, jump, kick, bite, buck, run backwards, do anything other than calmly walk into the box.

The main message here is that what both difficult stallions and alpha mares need from their leader-trainer is a presence of profoundly powerful but peaceful male energy. The only being an intense stallion or alpha mare respects and trusts is a clearly dominant male force that is nothing to be afraid of. Truly balanced male energy is like being a good cop who uses his or her power to protect combined with the compassion and empathy of a priest who desires to be of service to the soul.

Please note that I said "male" and not "man." We all have both male and female DNA and we all have both male and female energy. Once upon a time it was true to say that men were too rough and aggressive with horses, but now the obvious fact is that most men and women are not comfortable with summoning the strong male energy needed to show assertive strength and determination to the stallions and alpha-mares.



Strong male energy leadership is in desperately short supply. We castrate our horses and dogs because we either don't know how or we can't be bothered to deal with the authentic male energy in them. And in our culture it is true that so many young children are lost and confused because they do not have a strong and positive male influence in their life. It's not just with the horses, I believe that so many of our society ills are the symptom of a short supply of strong but kind male energy appropriately mentoring sons and daughters.

I believe that what is way out of balance in the horse industry is the distinction between male and female energy. It is rare that I meet students who do not have enough love, nurturing, compassion or empathy for their horses. More often than not the issues people need to work on with their horses are their own consistency of personal boundaries, determined focus, resiliency, remaining calm, expressing appropriate assertiveness when being aggressively challenged, and an acceptance to be at peace with the natural process that conflict is growth

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trying to happen.

One of the psychological principles that is counter-intuitive to people living in our age of technology is that a horse can't trust you just because you're nice. In the natural world of survival of the fittest, a horse needs to know that its leader has the power to protect it. This does not mean that our horses need to literally see us fight off predators but it does mean that when they see us as too soft and cuddly, always being sweet and nice and too forgiving, then they will have contempt and resentment for us because they know that nice and soft can't protect them.

My last statement is absolutely not to justify aggression or abuse. Just the opposite, it is a clarion call to people to dig deep and summon from within the ability to be strongly assertive but never aggressive. Yes, at times we must be patient and sensitive but true empathy for the horse is balanced with decisiveness and determination.

There is more than enough Yin in the horse industry. For peace of mind, body and spirit in both our horses and ourselves I believe now we must evolve into a balanced expression of Yang. Let's discover how to be calm while courageous, both soft and strong, so even the most intense mares and stallions can trust that our power can truly protect and serve their vulnerability.

Author Chris Irwin is an internationally renowned horseman, best-selling author and a leading pioneer in the equine assisted movement. It was discovering how to transform BLM wild Mustangs into 18 calm and collected U.S. National Champions in english, western and driving competitions, that first showed Chris his greatest insights into learning how to learn. To connect with Chris Irwin visit his website at www.chrisirwin.com.