

Overcoming Show Anxiety

By Dr. Christine Woodford, VIPs

As many of you know, I am a veterinarian certified in animal chiropractic and acupuncture. I work on many performance animals in various disciplines. I can relate to my clients and their issues and concerns with their show horses, because I also compete with my horses. I try to have my own horses physically set up as best as possible to prepare for a show; however, sometimes when it comes down to the competition, it is my own anxiety and nervousness that gets in the way of my horse's performance. I have learned a new techniques to help overcome my show anxiety.

I first met Dr. Freya Schafer at an Iowa Pinto show at Kirkwood this summer. She shared with me her Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) that day. [See Dr. Schafer's article on next page. www.essentialclarity.com] She worked with me one on one, and then watched me ride my horse. The next day I implemented her techniques and had the BEST RIDE EVER on that horse, and ended up placing very well.

I have continued to work with Dr. Freya over the phone to overcome my show anxiety.

continued on page 34



Dr. Woodford and "Jackson" in SHOWMANSHIP class



*Our Animals Make Us Feel Better,
Let Me Help Them Feel The Best They Can!*



**Chiropractic • Acupuncture
Motion Analysis • Dentistry
Magna Wave Therapy**

Christine Woodford, DVM
**Certified in Chiropractic & Acupuncture
for Small Animals and Horses**

319-241-0530 • www.VIPsvet.net • Cedar Rapids, IA

“Overcoming Show Anxiety;” (Continued from page 22)

In late October, I was in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at the Color Breed Congress with my horse Jackson. This was my second time showing Jackson this year, after his stifle surgery in 2010 and a long rehabilitation process. He recovered well and we had been working hard at preparing for pattern classes.

Showmanship is an in-hand pattern class where one typically starts standing at a cone, with the horse set up square, waiting for the judges to nod to tell you it is time to start. In the past, when I was standing at the cone, I could almost feel my heart pound faster and faster. It felt like my heart could jump out of my chest. Typically, when the judge nodded, I felt as though a gun had fired off, and it was time to start the race. This quick jerk reaction caused my pattern to be rushed, and not smooth or fluid, as is the goal.

I explained all of this to Dr. Freya and she gave me some very good advice. The nod of the judges does not mean that I must start immediately. The nod simply means that the judges are now ready for me to begin; but not until I am ready. I still have time to take a deep breath, think, and then start my pattern. When it comes to showing, Dr. Freya pointed out that it is not about the judges; it is not about the people in the stands; it is about having a connection to your horse, trusting your horse and having fun.

These techniques, as well as other mind-body integrating

techniques which Dr. Freya showed me, paid off for me in Tulsa. When I took the time to connect to my horse, I gave him clear signals, and we performed well. We ended up reserve Congress Champions in the Showmanship and Trail classes. We were third in English Equitation, and sixth in Ideal Pinto English. Overall I felt I did my best job of showing, to date. I started strong by connecting to my horse right from the beginning, I continued to think through my patterns, and my horse seemed very happy to perform.

It is important to have fun when showing. However, it is easy to lose sight of the fun due to the stress and anxiety of being judged, remembering the pattern, and trying to be perfect. Learning and implementing Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), and other mind-body integrating techniques from Dr. Freya Schafer, has helped me to connect to my horse, overcome my show anxiety, and experience fun again in the show arena.

Need a holiday gift-giving idea? How about treating a friend to the gift of Chiropractic or Acupuncture for their horse or other companion animal? Gift certificates are available and would make great stocking-stuffers!

BELOW: Christine Woodford and “Jackson” shine at trail class, especially when show anxiety is not an issue.

