

2022 Testimonials for Katerina's Groundwork Clinics/Lessons

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Testimonial – Robyn

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For the past 2 months, I have been working with Katerina to train my newly acquired 12-year-old Quarter Horse/Morgan mare, who has spent her entire life as a trail/pleasure horse. It has been such a terrific learning experience for myself and my mare, Sierra.

Though very steady trotting through the woods and rarely spooking, Sierra had no prior ground training and had probably never worked in an outside ring or indoor arena. She had basically spent her life traveling in a straight line. She did not know how to lead or lunge. She carried her head high, hollowed her back, always trotted briskly with no moderation to her gait, and preferred to canter going up any inclines instead of using her hindquarters to propel her body forward. I have been playing polo for years and rode hunters and jumpers growing up but never had any natural horsemanship training so thought I would try it to teach my new mare how to use her body more comfortably and become more versatile.

Katerina started with the basics of how important it is to build a bond with your horse and to understand what your horse is trying to convey with certain behaviors. Once I realized that the point was to work cooperatively with my mare and create an experience we both enjoyed, everything Katerina began to demonstrate made perfect sense!

Starting groundwork with just small circles at the walk and trot, Katerina discussed the importance of proper head carriage, flexion, and engagement of the hindquarters - she immediately began to do simple lateral work with Sierra. To my surprise, after just a few sessions my mare learned and enjoyed executing shoulders in and out, half-passes, turn on the haunches and on the forehand. She began to anticipate when I gave the appropriate signal, and I could feel her begin to gather herself so that she could properly execute the commands.

Katerina [uses a combination of negative and positive reinforcement with an emphasis on listening to the horse] and I learned how to release when the mare had performed correctly. It was so encouraging to see how well Sierra responded to the positive encouragement, relaxing with “lick and chew” behavior, and even yawning to show her comfort level when we completed an exercise successfully.

After a few sessions of groundwork, we began executing lessons learned under saddle. Starting from not being able to trot in a small circle, (falling in or turning out) Sierra now takes up contact when asked and can trot along calmly with basic collection. To strengthen her hindquarters, Katerina is working on stretching out her inside hind legs at the trot and adding in lots of lateral moves, taking her off the wall and moving her back with lateral motion. Since my mare had no background in ring work, Katerina is especially attuned to helping her understand what is being asked by guiding her through her paces while I am in the saddle. That has worked remarkably well. Once the mare understands the move and basic signal, even if I do not execute the command 100% correctly, she tries to figure it out and respond accordingly because Katerina has shown her how to do it correctly.

The transformation in Sierra in just two months is fantastic. She walks across the paddock to greet me when I arrive. She is holding her head more vertical, flexing at the poll, and her hindquarters are beginning to round out and become more muscular.

Our training sessions with Katerina are focused, but relaxed and fun. It's obvious that Sierra looks forward to them and enjoys the challenge of learning new skills. Katerina provides extensive analysis of a horse's issues, ways to correct problems, and theory on why certain approaches work and others do not. I especially appreciate that she provides a check list of items for me to work on between our sessions. It is really a wonderful and productive learning experience for me and my mare.

Feb 1, 2022: Linda says:

[We] did a short mini lesson (about 40 minutes each) with our horses and we had a great time and saw immediate results from our horses which was fun to watch and learn. Katerina was very good at "hearing" what the horse was telling her and pointed out things to each owner that they may not have seen. She also helped each owner on their own way of handling the horse. It was fun also and [we] learned as we watched each other interact with our horses. After the lesson our horses were so relaxed and would have been great on the trail after, except we didn't have time to do it, but that would be another plus. What happens on the ground often transfers to the saddle. It was a very good experience.

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"I have taken lessons, audited, watched videos and read books on groundwork for years but never really "got it" until I took the clinic and now continuing lessons with Katerina. The bond I have developed with my young

thoroughbred mare through working with Katerina is phenomenal. The initial clinic was informative, clear and fun. During every successive lesson I am able to practice what I have learned, correct mistakes and then learn new things. Katerina walks us through the challenging exercises so we become successful and able to practice at home. Some successes I have had with Karry, my mare, since working with Katerina are going to activities in new places and having the tools to get her relaxed and focused; being more productive in my dressage and working equitation lessons, and having a pleasant horse to work around. She is a favorite with the staff at the barn because her ground manners have become so good. As someone who has attempted groundwork programs with other trainers I can say that I have only been truly successful with Katerina.”

Stephanie Nov 2021

“We love our horses! Bonding with them is a vital need in order to truly understand them and know they love being with us. I have an OTTB who was mistrusting and anxious. This blocked the desire to be close to me which was so important for my psyche as well. I happened upon a video of Ponti Kriti and immediately felt a connection with her and her methods..She allowed the horse to enter her bubble which in turn allowed her to enter theirs. Only positive reinforcement using the element of space, timing and observing the horses reactions and one’s own.

Ponti showed me how to maneuver my horse around the arena where my mare felt engaged, safe and free to think about her actions. It was enlightening to use Ponti’s methods and see them work and develop on my own time with my mare. We have bonded in a way I never imagined would develop. My horse looks to me for affection and direction. She now craves my attention and is moving in a positive light. This will translate into anything I want to do with her.

If you want to truly get to know your horse and be able to develop these methods on your own look to Ponti Kriti for the best direction you can ever acquire.”

MaryBeth May 2021

"It has been a lot of fun, and I'm looking forward to building a better relationship with [my horse] going forward. I'm learning a lot about myself in the process; things I'm doing well and 'lots' of things that I need to work on. ;) Your kind and insightful approach has been eye-opening. It's always helpful to see yourself through another lens."

Judy November 2021

Testimonials from Two-Day Clinic Participants Grove City, PA- October 16-17, 2021

When asked what she liked about the clinic: "You worked individually with us. You did not rush." And overall satisfaction?: "10" Excellent-- "I always love finding new ways to work with horses. You taught me many things. I can't wait to use this."

"What I learned from you will go a long way in helping me be the best I can be for my girls." "...you lift those around with your amazing energy."

Testimonials from Clinic Participants - March 20, 2021

"...this is the first time it all made sense."

"...I knew about acknowledging your horse's "feelings" (awareness) but didn't know how to put it into practice until the clinic..."

"Yesterday I spent about 30 minutes with the groundwork before riding-- amazing difference in our pre-ride relationship; worth the time and effort."

Testimonials from Clinic Participants - April 17, 2021

"...I feel I can really 'read' my horse, her feelings, moods..."

"I am seeing results every day!"

"There was helpful refinement on the timing of release of the 'ask'," and
"I have noticed a difference in our relationship after the 1st clinic a few weeks ago."