

## **RISKS OF NEGLECTING GOOD POSTURE**

MEREDITH HODGES - LUCKY THREE RANCH

- We don't usually pay close enough attention to our Good Posture and often take it for granted
- Important for both two-legged humans and four-legged equines
- We get used to working in Comfortable Environments and don't realize the importance of how we are traveling until we are challenged with different situations
- Cindy tells her story about what was required at the Pageant and how she had to compensate when walking on heels on the unusually flat stage
- She realized it takes TIME to cultivate really Good Posture
- When we are in Good Posture and pay attention to it throughout all that we do, our daily tasks become Beneficial Postural Exercises
- Core Elements are strengthened in an Ideal Balance and performance is enhanced
- Soreness and Compromised Movement are no longer at risk
- Meredith tells the story of Walking with *Allie* who had not practiced her Postural Leading Exercises for 16 years
- Meredith was unable to walk in sync with *Allie's* gait
- In the halt, it was clear that *Allie's* spine was misaligned. She could not Square Up with the hind feet in line with her front feet. Her pelvis was torqued, causing her toes to point to the side.
- Dr. Haussler examined *Rock* when he got *Laminitis*. He expected *Rock's* spine to be irregularly bent from his ears to his tail, but it wasn't. This was due to the Postural Core Leading Exercises he had been doing
- As we age, we are more vulnerable to *arthritis, bone injuries and joint injuries* if we do not continually "Practice" Good Posture.
- Treat ailments with Natural Methods and avoid drugs and surgeries whenever possible
- Have Regular Team Checkups with the Vet, Chiropractor and Massage Therapist for good health.
- Make sure exercise is Appropriate for Performance and not overdone
- Excessive Exercise (Drilling) does nothing more than exhaust the body

- Increased Performance and Ability is inhibited when overdone
- Therapy Equines can do a better job when they are in Good Posture
- Saddle Mules in Good Posture are *safer* on the Trail
- All Equines are less compromised and will gain Longevity of Use
- Healthy Feeding and \Exercise can prevent *obesity* and other related problems...lower Vet bills and nearly no incidence of *colic* and *founder*
- Organs in the body are able to function in a healthy manner
- Riders are less likely to experience Losses of Balance, Vertigo and Falls
- Overall Health & Performance in both equines and riders is enhanced.

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Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

The mules are in the corral. Welcome to Mule Talk and I'm Cindy K. Roberts, your host.

And author, TV personality, and world-renowned mule trainer, Meredith Hodges, of the Lucky Three Ranch.

All right, we are back on and happy Cinco de Mayo, Meredith.

Meredith Hodges:

Happy Cinco de Mayo to you too, Cindy. We have a lot of friends that are celebrating today.

When I was younger, I used to like to go out and participate in public celebrations. As I evolved and became an elder, I opened my eyes to the value of accepting God and all the things that He said in the 10 Commandments. In the beginning I didn't really understand the things that Jesus taught when he was here among us. It didn't make much sense to me back then.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith Hodges:

I was more into going out and partying and I was looking at Trail Riding as a way to just have fun. I would take beer with me and drink because I thought it was *cooler* to be high while I was doing it. But now I don't think I never really knew what I was missing.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right. Yes, exactly.

Meredith Hodges:

With life's experiences you do start to realize the values of things and then you realize how much more there is to learn. For instance, when I was in school, I didn't understand the relevance of Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Science and History. I really hated history.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Really?

Meredith Hodges:

When I started my life with mules in 1973 and learned about how badly Longears were treated and it finally dawned on me how important it was to pay attention to History.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Sure. Right.

Meredith Hodges:

Mules and donkeys helped to Build this Country in so many different ways. Their contributions around the world have been numerous. And what was the result of that? People are always gossiping about how bad mules and donkeys are.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Yeah. Right.

Meredith Hodges:

And they are such wonderful animals. When I finally paid attention, I realized how important my Approach to Training was going to have to be. It wasn't fun to me anymore to just get *high* and ride through the woods. I began to think about how my mule must feel and gave more attention to observing the reaction of my animal in the environment I created for him. I began thinking about the spacious and Wild Environment that equines used to enjoy. The environment that they have now does not afford as much space as they had way back then. I thought about how they were used and abused throughout history and the work that went with it. I thought about how we take so many things for granted these days. And probably one of the most important things is Good Posture.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Oh, you bet. Yes.

Meredith Hodges:

What can you do if you don't have Good Posture? You take it for granted and then you take it for granted in your animal? ***No living creature is born with Good Posture.*** Good Posture is something that everyone including equines need to learn to be happy and healthy. Good Posture is Standing Up Straight Using Strong Back and Core Muscles in an Ideal Body Alignment with legs squared, feet firmly planted, in Balance, Comfortable, and Confident. What we do physically affects the way we *feel* about things.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith Hodges:

If we are not paying attention to our Good Posture, then we will have days where we're sore and cranky and not appreciating life and all the wonderful things that life has to offer. ***We don't stop to smell the roses.*** We're just thinking about the next way we can *anesthetize* ourselves from any kind of pain.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith Hodges:

The best way to *anesthetize* yourself from any kind of pain is to do the exercises that it takes and eat in a healthy way so that your body will feel good. You won't always be tired and feel worn out. The way you are feeling will always transfer to your animal. If you're only doing training so you can ride them and you don't consider how your riding affects their body, then you have a long string of issues that will arise in the future. The first will start with mounting. When you put your foot in the stirrup and try to mount, you pull the saddle over sideways. You knock them off balance and they can't stand still. Then you cuss at them for not standing still!

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith Hodges:

The same thing happens when you're just leading them. If you've got that Lead Rope in your hand and you're pulling them forward, you're putting tension on the Lead Rope in an irregular fashion because you're probably not in Good Posture either. So with every step that you take, you're throwing their head and neck off to one side or the other, which is throwing them off balance. It's also throwing *you* off balance because you're probably not walking straight. One of the clearest examples happens when we are nervous. If the cops pull you over and they make you walk a straight line, it's hard enough to walk a straight line even when you're not drinking.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Okay. Not good.

Meredith Hodges:

You will realize that you need to have practice walking in Good Posture for that to be cultivated and become habitual in not only your body, but your animal's body too. So when you teach your animal to walk in Good Posture correctly, it's important because it determines his Balance at the Core where the skeleton is being supported. His Good Posture and Balance will transfer erratic Body Carriage into a Solid Self-Carriage of his own.

That's why if leading your equine from the left side, you keep the Lead Rope in your left hand and you leave it hanging loose. Granted, he will wander if you don't give him some direction. That's why you put your right hand up and Point in the Direction of Travel.

In order to also keep your own Good Posture steady, Look and Point in the Direction of Travel. With that hand, you can block him from getting ahead or turning in front of you. It will Indicate Direction for him. It is a Physical Body Language way of directing him forward. Look down at his front legs and see what leg he's leading with and Match His Steps. First say his name to Command his Attention and then say, "*Walk on.*" To maintain your Good Posture position while you walk straight lines and gradual arcs.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith Hodges:

Walk in sync with him on straight lines and gradual arcs so that he can bring that front leg around onto the arc and then *bend through his rib cage*, instead of just doing an abrupt turn that will scramble all four feet. Teach him how to walk in Good Posture that way. You cannot affect Good Posture from his back in the beginning. This is important preparation before you ride.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Hmm. Right.

Meredith Hodges:

You have to prepare him to be ridden by first addressing his Core Strength in Good Posture with Leading Exercises in the *Elbow Pull* through the Hourglass Pattern and it takes 3-6 months to do that. So you need to be sure that you're willing to be patient and spend the time that it takes for you to cultivate Good Posture in yourself and in your animal. You cannot hurry through this. There is absolutely no way. I guess I'll tell my story first about how important Good Posture really is. We both have a story to tell about the importance of Good Posture. My ***Grandmother was Right when she said I would be a Sorry Old Woman if I didn't move in Good Posture and Learn Good Manners!***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

You bet.

Meredith Hodges:

Often, we take things for granted. I was doing training in Good Posture for a long time with a lot of animals. It became pretty easy to do with two years of practice with Groundwork using the *Elbow Pull* in the Hourglass Pattern at first during Leading Training. Then we added Obstacles at the end of the Leading Training after 3 to 6 months. When Good Posture became habitual, the equines graduated to the Round Pen for Lunging and Ground Driving.

They had done the prep work that would encourage them to stay in Good Posture and *bend through their torso* on the arcs of circles and turns instead of leaning like a motorcycle. When their consistent Good Posture was again habitual, they graduated to the Open Arena. It takes two years for habitual Good Posture and Balanced Core Strength to be established around the bones. Doing these Leading exercises is the **ONLY** way to be able to build Core Strength and Good Posture in both you and your animal. When I wasn't moving in Good Posture and I got sloppy, then they got sloppy. ***Core Strength is a Good Postural Balance that can only become habitual if you routinely do things exactly the same way ALL THE TIME!***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Oh, sure. Yeah.

Meredith Hodges:

I found this out when I went over to Hearts and Horses Therapeutic Riding Center to do an interview. They wanted to get some B-Roll of me walking with one of the mules I had donated 16 years ago. I had *Allie* for three months before I gave her to them. The first thing I had to do was go into the pen and retrieve *Allie*. I went into the pen. There were two horses in there with her. When we walked toward the gate, three people jumped ahead to open the gate for us. When they pulled the gate toward the inside of the pen, I shouted "*No, No, No. We need to do the gate ourselves!*" This should be done the same way with *Allie* as she had learned 16 years ago. What you do with your equine is always a lesson no matter what you're doing and ***Longears will NEVER forget!*** Horses sometimes do forget.

It was incorrect to pull the gate towards the inside of the pen and if they had opened the gate for us, the people would have been knocked out of the way and *Allie* and I would have been trapped between the gate and the latch post! I was watching the two horses that were watching the people running to *pull* the gate open for us. I could see the wheels turning in their brains. They were thinking, "*As soon as that gate gets wide enough, we're bolting out.*"

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Oh, you bet. Right.

Meredith Hodges:

So I told the people to just let me and *Allie* open the gate ourselves. We walked up to the gate. I pushed the gate away from me, at which point the horses said, "*Oh, well, there's no chance of us getting through an open space because Allie and Meredith are standing in it.*"

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

(Laughs) All right.

Meredith Hodges:

When *Allie* and I took control of the gate, the two horses walked away. *Allie* and I walked through the gate the way she had been taught to follow me. Then *Allie* started pulling on the Lead Rope and passed me. That action is the beginning of a *bolting mule*! You have the ability to stop it when they're on a short lead. Mules like it when you have purpose and structure in what you are doing with the leverage to follow through. Then they will comply.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Yes.

Meredith Hodges:

If you allow too much slack in the Lead Rope, they will definitely take advantage bolt and drag you. I kept the rope short and pulled *Allie* around abruptly. *Allie* just turned around, put her head at my shoulder, at which point I closed the gate, put the chain on it while she stood still and waited for me.

I went into my Leading Position, Pointing in the Direction of Travel, Looking in the Direction of Travel and I said, "Allie, Walk On." I tried to walk a straight line, but Allie was not walking a straight line. She was aggressively pulling me forward because she had not had this training for 16 years.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Oh my gosh. Huh.

Meredith Hodges:

I asked of the Volunteers that were standing there, "*Have you been consistently teaching all the Volunteers how to lead all the equines properly in Good Posture?*"

They replied, "*Oh yeah, yeah. We've been doing it.*"

I said, "*Allie's telling me you haven't because Allie is knocking me off sideways when I'm trying to go forward instead of staying obediently at my shoulder as she should.*"

Then I said to Allie, "*And Whoa.*" I had to jerk on the Lead Rope abruptly to get her to stop.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Okay.

Then I went ahead and tried to set her body up Four-Square. She could not get into proper alignment. Her hooves were pointed in different directions and not in line with her body. Her pelvis was twisted sideways. It reminded me that it took a whole year before Rock was able to walk in Good Posture back in 2010.

***If you would like to see a detailed documentary of how many things can go wrong when you don't teach your equine about Core Strength in a Balanced Posture, check out ROCK & ROLL: THE STORY OF A RESCUE offered on my website at [www.luckythreernch.com](http://www.luckythreernch.com) under TRAINING/VIDEO ON DEMAND/THOSE MAGNIFICENT MULES. .***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Mm, wow.

Meredith Hodges:

At one point *Rock* got *laminitis* and his balance was drastically shifting. We asked the whole team to come out, including our second Chiropractor from Colorado State University. When he came out, he looked at him and he said, "*Oh, it's laminitis. We're going to have to soak his feet for about 20 minutes in buckets three times a day for several days.*" Well, it was October and 20 degrees outside!

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Oh, wow.

Meredith Hodges:

The buckets I had were five gallon buckets. His right hind hip was shattered and he couldn't lift his foot that high. I said, "*NO WAY! That isn't going to happen.*" My Ranch Manager, Chad had a brilliant idea, "*Let's just dig a trench with the backhoe, line it with rubber so it can hold water and add Pea Gravel for traction. We'll fill it with water and get an Industrial Strength Ice Maker so we'll have plenty of ice. We'll excavate a ramp on both sides so he can walk into it and walk straight out of it.*" That worked just perfectly.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Oh, wow.

Meredith Hodges:

*Allie* would not even be able to do the Hourglass Pattern right now because she hadn't practiced it in 16 years. I was looking at her spine and thinking about what Dr. Haussler said when he was evaluating *Rock*, "*This guy is probably going to have an erratic line from his ears to his tail through his spine, because he's been shifting weight all over the place. And with his laminitis, he's been twisting his spine and throwing most of the weight forward to the opposite front foot from this lameness and pain that he's got in this hip.*"

I said to Dr. Haussler, "*Oh, okay. Go ahead and take a look. Get on the ladder.*"

He got up on the ladder and was astonished, "*I don't believe it. His spine is straight from head to tail. How did you do that?*"

I explained to him about the Postural Core Strength Exercises that I had been doing with all of my mules. He said, "*Well, this mule with this shattered hip has not been just transferring weight from the right hind to the left front. He has been transferring that pain to the other **three** legs. He's been dispersing it and he has not torqued his spine.*"

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Hmm. Wow.

Meredith Hodges:

These are the things you don't even think about until you have a situation like *Rock*. So here I am standing with *Allie*, and I know that these people have not been doing these Simple Leading Postural Exercises.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Yeah.

Meredith Hodges:

They're using her with Disabled People to help straighten *their* spines. Granted, Therapeutic Riding is extremely beneficial, but there's so much more that can happen when the animals have Core Strength in Good Posture. The equine's Good Posture will be transferred to the riders on their backs. This is *why Leading them specifically the way I describe ALL THE TIME is so vitally important!*

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith Hodges:

Another thing I noticed when I was at Hearts and Horses was a *GypsyVanner* horse standing in the Grooming Stanchion looking like he was going to fall sleep.

I asked, "*What's that you got on top of him?*"

And they say, "*Oh, it's a wonderful new thing. It's a massage blanket.*"

I said, "*Oh, is he done with his workout?*"

They said, "*No, he is just now going out, but we want him to be calm and comfortable.*"

I said, "*Uh, excuse me, you're putting him to sleep. Do you really want him to fall sleep and take a chance on him tripping or falling? He's not alert and in Good Posture.*"

They replied, "*Well he gets too spooky in the arena.*"

I said, "*What you do? There IS a purpose to my Leading Training Program. You should lead your him around the perimeter of the arena first and let him see it one direction, then turn around and lead him the other way.*

*"I know what you're going to say, 'He's been in this arena a thousand times. He knows there's nothing in here to spook at,' but let me tell you, **In a mule's world or a horse's world, every day is a new day.** So you should take those smaller steps, be considerate enough to go ahead and do those small inconsequential things in Good Posture to remind him every single day. Be Repetitive and Consistent in the way that you do things so his new Behavior becomes Habitual. When you do that, it lowers the anxiety level. That's how you calm him down for riding. He can enjoy his massage blanket AFTER his workout when he is more apt to be sore from the unbalanced rider."*

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith Hodges:

You don't put equines on a Lunge Line and try to wear them out or *build muscle* that way. Every time you try some new "gimmick" like that, you're one step closer to fostering *distrust* with them. So you want to make everything Consistent and Practical all the time, so it defines purpose and makes sense to him. You also need to do the same thing with yourself.

There are a lot of people that will go to the gym every day, or go running every day, or every other day and work with Artificial Machines. All they end up doing is making themselves tired and their muscles fatigued because it's like *drilling*. For example, when you roll over and turn off your alarm clock, don't just jump up and turn off the alarm. You're likely to twist or pinch something. We are surrounded in this world with numerous Physical Opportunities to keep our bodies fit if we just do what we would do normally, but do it in Good Posture! We're so used to the easy way of doing things that we neglect doing a little work toward healthy results.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Yes, you bet.

Meredith Hodges:

If you think about how you're getting out of bed and turn off the alarm clock, just stay straight in bed and roll over to the edge and then swing your legs down to the floor facing the bed. Use your Core Muscles behind your belly button and your legs to stand up. ***Learn to lift with your legs and not with your back.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Mm-hmm.

Meredith Hodges:

Think about your own Good Posture *EVERYTIME* you do anything. If you do that all day long, you don't need to go to the gym! Somebody once asked me, "*Well, what about the backs of your legs and stuff like that?*"

I said, "*Well, how about taking a walk and going up a hill backwards?*"

Remembering one's Good Posture and being willing to Pay Attention to it is how to get healthy and how we can easily make our animals happy and willing to comply with us.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right. Right.

At the Hearts and Horses Therapeutic Riding Center, it was a simple matter of reminding *Allie* about what she had learned with me before. It took a few minutes, but she did remember and complied for the video we wanted to shoot. Like I have said before, *mules and donkeys NEVER forget what they have learned if you are Patient, Consistent and Polite about the way you train them. Do NOT take them for granted!*

When you and I were talking, you told me that you realized that you needed more Practice with Good Posture before your Pageant where you were required to walk on a stage in high heels! Why don't you tell us a little bit about that?

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*Well, that was scary. That was the most challenging thing I had to do in a long while. I truly thought that I walked in high heels for a couple of afternoons, you know, around my piano, practiced for about 15, 20 minutes, and then I felt comfortable. I was like, "Wow, I got this." So when I went to the next rehearsal, it was clear, it was very obvious. I do not have this. I mean, you know...*

Meredith Hodges:

What happened to your body when you did that?

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*Well, it was outta sync and I was not confident. And I kept relating to our discussions about Good Posture.*

*And I thought, "Why can't I get this?" And it's clear. You have to work on it every day. It was a very different experience for me. So I kept working at it.*

*But even so, at the Pageant, when the judges were there, if you watch the video, I was acting like I had an attitude. It was so that I could cover up, that I could not walk in my high heels.*

Meredith Hodges:

You were compensating and you were acting, right?

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*That's right. That's right. There you go.*

Meredith Hodges:

Instead of walking on a straight line, you were just swinging your hips and pointing your fingers

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*Right.*

Meredith Hodges:

You were doing everything you could think of to cover up that you couldn't walk a straight line.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*There you go. So...*

Meredith Hodges:

But that's okay if you don't care about winning the Pageant. You had fun doing it.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*I did.*

Meredith Hodges:

You made the best of that situation. So you mustered up as much confidence as you could at the time.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*Sure.*

Meredith Hodges:

And it came across that you did have confidence. You didn't just let go and tell yourself, "*I can't do this*" which a lot of people would have done."

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*Right. Right.*

Meredith Hodges:

I've modeled too and had to do Pageants. I have to tell you, you didn't lose the competition because you didn't have talent. You didn't lose the competition because you weren't Animated and Enlivened and Miss Personality. You certainly had that going for you! And I didn't see the questions that were asked, but I can imagine your answers! You've never really had a problem with conversation either. So the only problem that you might have had was that you couldn't walk like a Barbie Doll!

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*There you go. It was obvious.*

Meredith Hodges:

Is that really a bad thing? Because if you're walking around like a Barbie Doll, what do you think your mule would think about you?

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*Well, exactly. My, my heart is with the mule. So that's, that's where I want and would rather be*

Meredith Hodges:

Well, right. And if you're paying attention throughout everything that you're doing while you're doing it, you learn a lot of new exercises that you and your mule can do together. Everything about you will be **Authentic, Genuine** and not **Staged!** **Mules can smell a FAKE a mile away!**

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith Hodges:

This only enhances the bond between you because it puts you in an ideal relaxed Balance for Performance. Soreness and compromised movements are no longer a risk. So you're just building your life around being healthy. At the same time, you're building all of those Internal Feelings that foster the Deep Bond that you can get with your equines. The awareness that you have in your environment you are teaching and sharing with your animals.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*Oh, yes.*

Meredith Hodges:

There is so much benefit that you get with establishing Postural Core Strength in a Good Balance. It's never too late to get started because as we age, we are more vulnerable to *arthritis, bone injuries, and joint injuries*. If we don't continually practice Good Posture, we can end up with these kinds of problems. If you go to the doctor to be treated for soreness, doctors these days are propagandized and indoctrinated to give you drugs and surgeries as a primary option. Consider how the Opioid crisis got started. Look how many knee and hip surgeries are performed every year without trying Postural Core Strength building first!

So I believe it's best to use more Natural Methods whenever possible. Only accept drugs and surgeries for you and your animals as a last resort after being extensively researched and investigated. There are so many equines out there between the ages of 20 and 25 that are having their joints injected for Osteo-pathologies. My 17 equines are mostly over 33 years old now and they look and act like they are in their mid-teens. Their use-life has been greatly extended.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*Oh, you bet. I know that.*

Meredith Hodges:

What you want to do is to realize how kind and considerate you are by doing exercises that your equine is able to do, in a step by step Logical Sequence with consideration to fatiguing his muscles. A lot of people would just say, "Well, I'm only going to go ride mine on the Trail and I can put miles on him to build up his muscles," but do you realize how dangerous and stressful Trail Riding can be in very rough terrain? Think about what *THAT* could do to an unconditioned equine body.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*Absolutely.*

Meredith Hodges:

It's *safer* for both of you when you're strong and solid in Good Posture. The equine will know where he's placing each foot and he's Totally Attentive to what he's doing at all times...more with Longears than with horses and ponies that engage in over-reactions! So, there are really no excuses for not going forward with Good Posture and Healthy Feeding and Management Practices that can prevent obesity, reduce colic and founder and lower your vet costs.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*Oh yes.*

Meredith Hodges:

When you practice Good Posture exercises, the organs in yours and your equine's bodies are able to function in a healthy way so they *stay* healthy. The rider is less likely to *experience losses of balance, vertigo, falls, organ compromises and failures*. These are very serious things to keep in mind.

My vet tells me every Spring when we do vaccinations, "*I've missed you.*"

"*Nobody's gotten sick?*"

And I say, "*Nope.*"

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*How funny. (Laughs) Yeah, you got it.*

Meredith Hodges:

A guy came over and told me that I should put my training on a Smart Phone. I told him it was a *dumb* idea! I think that might cause more problems than it would ever solve. People tell me, "*Oh, I gotta have my phone with me on the trail in case something happens.*" The first thing I think about is Murphy's Law: ***if you think it, it's going to happen, it probably WILL happen.*** If my mule was bolting from minimal stimulus around him, adding a Smart Phone doesn't make much sense at all. They tell me that you might need your phone to call for help. If you think you might need help, you should have been observing ***RULE #1 of Trail Riding Protocol: NEVER RIDE ALONE.*** And if you do ride alone anyway, chances are you won't get a signal in the places you like to ride, so the phone is virtually useless! I've ridden on lots of Trails for many years with no problems at all!

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right. Right.

Meredith Hodges:

Mules appreciate it when they know that you're thinking about their mind and body during training. It enhances the bond between you. Then you can do more things to challenge yourself in a myriad of ways. You are only limited by what you can imagine. That's why I say, ***If you can dream it, you can do it!***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

*Exactly. And in response to your statement about computers and how we're programmed into looking for answers there.*

*Studies show that people want to get away into an environment where it's peaceful and serene, and they don't have the internet. They're trying to reconnect with the environment.*

Meredith Hodges:

That's absolutely true. At first, it was a novel idea and everybody got excited about it. Computers were supposed to enhance Communication and provide Infinite Knowledge, but we have come to realize that isn't exactly true. People have become much more engrossed in their phones and are bombarded with a lot of inaccurate *bogus* misinformation about everything! You are thrown into *chaos* and you can't pull your face away from the phone. People that are walking down the street together are still texting each other even though they are standing right next to each other! How *dumb* is that!.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Oh, you bet. Sure.

Meredith Hodges:

People complain because, "*Oh my God, we need some more money from the government for getting for Daycare.*" Well, if your family was together and Mom was at home, she could be babysitting and telling stories about her life that would be priceless for her kids. Or if she couldn't be home with the kids, there's always Grandma! You could even pay her for it because you wouldn't have to pay for all the new expenses that come with computers!

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith Hodges:

If you don't have to work, that's all the better. But it's all a matter of scheduling time, scheduling purpose, scheduling things that are real learning experiences that do not confuse children. What more do kids need to learn in school other than Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Science and History. They can learn the rest of it by experience later. We wonder why people are depressed. Even Good Self-Esteem is gleaned through work and being proud of the things that we accomplish.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

You bet.

Meredith Hodges:

When you make training fun and interesting, you learn how to interact with each other and how to get the best out of life's precious moments. You can find the Silver Linings to those dark clouds every day so you can stay happy every day. When you have Group Lessons and not play favorites with your equines, they all know they will have their turn with you and pacing the fence or being herd bound fades away. ***You are ALL friends with no preferences to fight about.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith Hodges:

When I call my Longears, ***everybody*** comes up to me excited and enthusiastic with their ears perked up, "*Mom, what we gonna do today?*"

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right, right. I love it. I love it. Yeah. That's the way it is.

Meredith Hodges:

It IS the way it is. I guess it just takes our mules to bring us to our senses.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

You bet. I'm just so indebted to you

Meredith Hodges:

That goes both ways. And it's not that we're really indebted to each other as much as we're indebted to God for giving this opportunity to be friends and work together. God is the one that has brought us together, kept us together and keeps giving us new ideas for new things to enjoy together. So, don't just sit on your ass thinking about the things you *can't* do. Get on your ass and ride with wind! I'll be right there with you!

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Yes, absolutely.

Meredith Hodges:

Well, you hang in there and have a great day and we'll touch base again soon, I'm sure.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

You bet. Okay, Meredith.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Meredith Hodges has books and training videos available on her website. LuckyThreeRanch.com. You can call Meredith at +1 800-816-7566. You can email Meredith at Meredith@LuckyThreeRanch.com. She's also on social media and I can be reached through my website EveryCowgirlsDream.com.

Gotta go. My mule is looking for me.

**ANNOUNCER:**

Mule Talk is an Every Cowgirl's Dream production.

**RESOURCES:**

**WEBSITE at [www.LuckyThreeRanch.com](http://www.LuckyThreeRanch.com) /TRAINING:**

- 1) Another Augie & Spuds Adventure
- 2) Chasity's Challenges
- 3) Longears Music Videos
- 4) Mule Crossing Articles

- 5) Mule Facts
- 6) Podcast Appearances
- 7) Training Tips
- 8) Rock & Roll: Diary of a Rescue
- 9) What's New With Roll?
- 10) Video On Demand
- 11) Wrangler's Donkey Diary

### **BOOKS/VIDEOS IN THE STORE:**

- 1) Training Mules & Donkeys: A Logical Approach to Training
- 2) A Guide to Raising & Training Mules
- 3) Donkey Training
- 4) Training Without Resistance
- 5) Equine Management & Donkey Training
- 6) Equus Revisited Manual
- 7) Equus Revisited Video
- 8) Rock & Roll Documentary
- 9) Building the Jasper Carousel
- 10) LTR Hay Production
- 11) The Road to Bishop
- 12) The Bishop Experience
- 13) The Bishop All Stars
- 14) Walk On: Exploring Therapeutic Riding
- 15) Building of a Nation
- 16) Give Your Equine the Athletic Edge
- 17) For Children: [www.JasperTheMule.com](http://www.JasperTheMule.com) for books & videos