

Road Map to Success— How to Achieve Your Goals

By Laura King

Illustration by Cori Trout

A goal without a plan is just a wish.

—Antoine de Saint-Exupery

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.

—Benjamin Franklin

If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else.

—Yogi Berra

THESSE ARE THREE of my favorite famous quotes about achieving your goals. There are many others, including this one from Abraham Lincoln, “Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the ax.”

Any good trainer will tell you that winning in competition takes months of preparation, dedication, and perseverance before you set foot in the ring. But what are you working on? Are your goals for your students aligned with their goals for themselves? If their goals are something vague, like “I want to win” or “I just don’t want to chip a fence,” all of your hard work may be for naught. It is important to communicate with your students to create common goals.

I created the **ACHIEVE** system to simplify outcome creation and achievement. It is simple, and a great system for you to use with your students. *Note:* As you and your student gain clarity during this process, you may find you have to revise the outcomes, so don’t get too attached to them.

The **ACHIEVE** System

A = Action

C = Create

H = Human

I = Identify

E = Energy

V = Visualize

E = Evaluate

Action: Action starts with deciding there are things about your riding that you need to change. This must happen prior to outcomes and plans. It is the pivotal moment because that decision is not meaningful until you take action.

Create: This is your starting point. Determine why you or your student needs to do this program. Write it out. Be completely honest here because this will allow you to develop the most effective and efficient plan for where you would like to go—to create the optimal affirmations and outcomes for yourself. Here’s an example from a client—let’s call her Debra:

“I’m performing poorly because I can’t get over that my husband wants a divorce. I’m

constantly thinking about it and I'm sure it's partially responsible for how badly I've been doing. And my previous trainer and I had a pretty bad falling out and I get so tense whenever she's around that I practically freeze up. I haven't improved at anything and I don't even enjoy riding anymore."

You can see Debra has plenty of reasons to want to improve. She was ready to walk away. The next step is examining your current state in these six areas. Read Debra's answers and then work on yours:

- 1 Your Physical State**—"I am afraid I'm going to see my old trainer, and she will laugh at me for trying to show."
- 2 Your Self-Talk**—"I can't ride well enough to show. I know I'll mess up when I see my old trainer. I can't really afford this with everything else going on."
- 3 Your Focus**—"I'm scattered every time I see all the other horses practicing and going in both directions. I have a hard time keeping my mind on what I'm doing... I keep thinking about what I need to do to get my divorce."
- 4 Your Emotional State**—"I get so anxious when I have to perform. I love riding and I want to show, but I get so worried and just can't imagine that I can really do it. I am so frustrated all the time and I cry at the drop of a hat. I guess I still love my husband in a way—we've been married 15 years. I worry too much about negative things happening."

5 Your Mental State—"I just left my husband after years of verbal abuse. Now I'm worried if I can afford to pay for my horse... but my horse is my lifeline, so I have to figure it out."

6 Your Expectations—"I am so fat, I'm sure I look terrible on my horse... I am just not good enough to be doing this. Everyone at the show is better than I am."

Human: Recognizing your humanity is essential to the process. As humans, we make mistakes. We have a tendency to be critical and hard on ourselves; and forgiveness of others' faults and even ourselves for our own is difficult. We also have a really hard time releasing bad memories.

Without delving into psychoanalysis of it, the fact is that much of how we act and react is formulated during childhood. Take a look at how your mother and father responded to life. How did they respond to adversity? Were they competitive? Were they hard on themselves or on you? When they did compete—with whom and why? How did they respond to others? Were they immediately trusting or not? What did winning mean to them? How did they feel about the person who cut ahead of them in line?

Look familiar? If you don't place as high as you wanted, whose fault is it? The judges, the horse, the golf cart that went by, a bird that swooped down, or was it just meant to happen the way it did? Are you seeing a pattern?

If you are, the first part of acknowledging your humanity is to Release and Clear, to let go of, whatever feeling you have about your parents and their influence on who you are today. Is there anything you can go back and do to change the past? NO! So allowing the past to affect your thoughts and your performance today isn't a very effective life strategy.

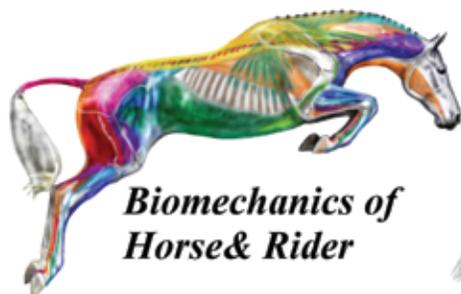
Now, reread your responses in the **Create** section and note if you are blaming anyone for anything or if you are concentrating on mistakes, bad relationships, or negative feelings from the past. In our example above, this client would want to forgive her soon-to-be ex-husband, her former trainer, and herself. Who do you need to forgive?

Every day of our lives we make choices. Choosing to be happy, to remain relaxed and calm, is one of those choices. Forgiveness is as well. I want to repeat that: forgiveness is a conscious decision. Happiness is a conscious decision. You are responsible for your own state of mind. Only *you* control it, even when you are allowing someone else to make you feel uncomfortable.

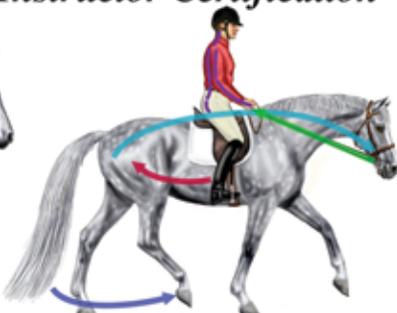
Identify: You have now laid the groundwork toward moving away from the past, and it is time to create the future. In this exercise you will identify the affirmations you'll be using to achieve your outcomes. Make sure they are written in the first person, in the present tense, and will help change your current state into one that will help you achieve your outcome. ►

Susan E. Harris

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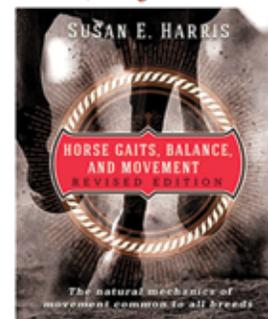


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Let's go back to Debra's example and see how to write affirmations:

1 Your Physical State: From Tension to Relaxation

"Every time I mount my horse at a show I am calm, I breathe freely and easily, and I am completely relaxed. Each time I see my former trainer I feel great about myself."

2 Self-Talk: From Negative to Positive, Empowering Self-Talk

"Every time I sit in my saddle I realize my natural talent and I ride well. I easily recall all of the details from all my practice sessions and my performance is flawless. I visualize myself doing the entire class exactly as it's supposed to be. I enjoy myself and my horse responds positively to everything I do."

3 Your Focus: From Scattered to Optimal Concentration

"Each time I see another horse in the practice area or in the show ring, my focus increases. I easily stay in the present and all of my concentration is on the task at hand."

Note: In this client's case, her initial attempt at creating an affirmation focused on helping her refrain from thinking about her divorce. When she was wording it, she quickly realized that it was impossible to create one that alluded to NOT thinking about her divorce without actually thinking about her impending divorce. Remember to stick with positive thoughts.

4 Your Emotional State: From Anxiety to the Zone

"I am positive and relaxed every time I perform and I easily and quickly reach the zone. I choose to be happy and look at life in a positive light."

5 Your Mental State: From Fearful to Fearless

"I am recognized as being great at my job and I am always well compensated for it. Money comes to me easily and I am fantastic at managing and growing my money. I am grateful for the abundance in my life."

6 Your Expectations: From Mistakes to Peak Performance

"I am slim, trim, and look fabulous on my horse. Every time I hold my reins, I am confident and self-assured that I can do anything I put my mind to."

Energy: To ride well, you need to have your body in optimal physical condition for you. Pay attention to your energy levels and what affects them. Do you get adequate rest? Do you eat a healthy diet? Are you getting plenty of exercise? Do you avoid negative people? Pay attention to how your body responds to your environment and react appropriately to the signals it sends to you. When you have complete body awareness, you are able to ride with more rhythm and fluidity.

Visualize: We have covered Theater of the Mind in past issues, and it is time to use this neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) technique. Create a movie in your mind about your outcome, from every angle, including panning around the environment and zooming on yourself as well as your horse. Pan and zoom in on all of the spectators as they are in awe of your performance and how fabulous you look on your horse. Feel the excitement of making every jump, clearing every barrel, or remembering every detail of your trail course.

Evaluate: Evaluation is a critical component to success. Schedule it into your plan to achieve peak performance, because this

will allow you to decide if the manner and direction in which you are progressing is acceptable to you. If it isn't, regroup and redirect. Chart a different course or use a different strategy and continue in the same direction.

This process is about creating a road map to achieve peak performance. Sometimes we have to take detours to get around closed roads or bridges. The process works when you work the process. Remember, without a map with a clear starting point, destination, and time line to achieve, you will likely "end up someplace else," as the inimitable Yogi Berra said!

Next issue we will look at tying it all together by integrating hypnosis and NLP. ■



Laura King, CHT*, NLP** & Life Coach, is the author of *The Power to Win*, *Perfect Enough*, and *Awesome Golf Now*. *The Power to Win* was written specifically for equestrians, and includes information about NLP and hypnosis techniques. The book, as well as self-hypnosis relaxation sessions for the equestrian, are available at www.laurakinghypnosis.com.

*CHT—Certified Hypnotherapist

** NLP—Neuro Linguistic Programming



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