



## Help Your Students Develop a Winning Mindset

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Your profession allows you the incredible opportunity to not only teach technical riding skills, but to also empower your students with a transformative mindset. By incorporating mindset training into your lessons, you can give your students the mental edge they need to achieve their equestrian dreams. When your students learn to approach challenges with enthusiasm, focus, and self-belief, they'll be unstoppable in the saddle.

There are two main types of mindsets: a limiting mindset and a growth mindset. A limiting mindset is stocked with beliefs that hold you back from growing. They don't

serve you in any way; there's a ceiling on the amount of growth you can experience. On the flip side, there's the growth mindset. People with a growth mindset have beliefs that expand their full potential, and they know there is no limit to what can be achieved.

*"Whether you believe you can or whether you believe you can't, you're right."*

*~ Henry Ford*

Get your students fired up about developing a winning mindset with goal-setting, maintaining a positive mindset, visualization, self-talk, challenging limiting beliefs, developing

mental toughness and living a balanced lifestyle. Teach them how to manage nerves, bounce back from setbacks, use self-talk to their advantage, develop mental toughness and focus on performing at their personal best. By prioritizing mindset development alongside physical training, equestrian athletes can optimize their abilities to perform under pressure, make quick decisions, and create a harmonious partnership with their equine counterparts. With your guidance, they'll develop a champion's mindset that will serve them well both in the saddle and in life—and the rewards will spill over into your personal and professional life as well.

## How Mindset Training Benefits Equestrian Athletes

### • **Enhanced Focus and Concentration:**

In the fast-paced world of equestrian sports, maintaining focus is crucial.

• **Increased Confidence:** Confidence is key in any sport; this confidence translates into improved performance and a stronger connection with our horses.

• **Effective Goal Setting:** Setting clear, achievable goals is fundamental to success in equestrian sports. By breaking down long-term aspirations into manageable steps, riders can track progress and stay motivated on their journey.

• **Resilience and Mental Toughness:** Equestrian sports are filled with challenges, from unexpected falls to disappointing results. Mindset training equips riders with the tools to bounce back from setbacks and maintain a positive mindset throughout their equestrian journey.

• **Improved Visualization Skills:** Visualization is a powerful tool used by many elite athletes. Equestrians learn to visualize themselves successfully navigating a course, flawlessly executing a dressage test, or conquering a challenging jump.

## What is Mindset Training?

The core premise of mindset training is that our thoughts and beliefs directly influence our emotions, behaviors, and ultimately, our results. Techniques such as visualization, goal-setting, and positive self-talk can help riders approach competition and training with a centered, empowered focus.

## Tips for Helping Your Students Use Mindset Training

Now that you understand the importance and benefits of mindset training, let's explore some practical tips for incorporating it into your students' athletic routine to achieve success:



• **Set Clear and Realistic Goals:** Goal-setting is a fundamental aspect of mindset training. Students should set specific, measurable and achievable goals for athletic performance, and regularly review and adjust them as needed. In my book, "The Power to Win," I explain how to design a peak performance plan by formulating a schedule they will enjoy executing on a daily and weekly basis.

While winning competitions is undoubtedly exciting, focusing solely on outcomes can lead to undue pressure. Instead, set process-oriented goals that focus on aspects of riding that can be controlled, such as improving position, mastering a particular skill, or enhancing communication with the horse.

• **Cultivate a Positive Mindset:** Many athletes indulge in self-criticism and negative self-judgement. Remember that mistakes don't reflect on you as a person or an athlete – the way you respond to them does. Not only should you remind your students that mistakes are essential to progress, be sure to model that behavior yourself and provide real-life examples of a positive mindset.

• **Visualize Success:** Help students understand how to take time to visualize themselves performing at their best while flawlessly executing skills and working seamlessly with their horses. Visualization can help build confidence and prepare the mind for competition. I like to have my cli-

ents visualize themselves riding their horses successfully to each fence, executing a flying change, or nailing a perfect sliding stop in a balanced and relaxed manner.

• Help them become aware of the internal dialogue running through their mind. Replace negative thoughts with encouraging, empowering statements that build you up rather than tear you down.

Positive self-talk is a powerful tool for improving mindset and achieving goals, and by consciously replacing negative thoughts with encouraging, uplifting statements, a mindset of confidence, resilience and determination can be cultivated to help achieve peak performance.

This mental training can be just as important as physical preparation, as it allows you to approach obstacles and setbacks with a constructive, problem-solving attitude. Incorporating positive self-talk into a daily routine, whether through affirmations, visualization, or simply reframing your inner dialogue, can have a profound impact on overall well-being and the ability to perform at one's best.

• **Challenge Limiting Beliefs:** We all have inner critics that can undermine our confidence and performance. Help your students identify any negative or limiting beliefs they hold about themselves as riders and challenge them with evidence to the contrary.

- **Develop Mental Toughness:** Mental toughness is a crucial component of mindset training. Embrace challenges, learn from failures, and develop resilience in the face of adversity.

- **Focus on the process, not just the outcome:** Mindset training encourages athletes to focus on the steps toward improvement rather than solely fixating on the end result to develop a more resilient and adaptable mindset.

- **Develop Pre-Ride and Pre-Competition Routines:** Establishing a consistent pre-ride routine can help set the tone for a successful training session or competition. Including elements such as deep breathing exercises, visualization, and positive self-talk can help you and your students center mentally and emotionally before getting in the saddle. Include relaxation techniques, and specific warm-up routines tailored to individual preferences.

- **Work with a Certified Hypnotist or Mental Coach:** Seeking guidance from a certified hypnotist, mental coach or sports psychologist can provide athletes with personalized strategies and support to enhance their mental skills. These professionals can offer valuable insights, techniques, and tools to optimize mental performance.

For athletes and others seeking to optimize their mindset, hypnosis can be a powerful tool. Research has shown that hypnosis can help improve your mental mindset, confidence, focus and resilience – all critical components of peak performance. Many top competitors incorporate hypnosis into their regular mindset training routines.

During hypnosis, the conscious, analytical mind takes a backseat, allowing the subconscious to be more receptive to suggestion. A skilled hypnotherapist can then guide the individual to visualize success, affirm their abilities, and cultivate the mental state needed for peak performance. Contact me if you are

interested in hypnosis to help you and your students achieve a winning mindset.

- **Reflect and Learn:** Regularly reflecting on performance, identifying areas for improvement, and learning from experiences is a critical aspect of mindset training. After each training session or competition, take time to reflect on what went well and areas for improvement. Use these reflections to adjust your mindset and training approach accordingly. Every experience, whether positive or negative, is an opportunity to learn. By embracing a growth mindset, athletes can refine their mental approach and enhance their performance.

- **Maintain Balance:** Make time for priorities and activities outside of equestrian training to balance life and prevent burnout. In my book, “Figuring It Out, Balancing Your Wheel of Life,” I help guide you through the steps to figure out your personal plan to balance what I call the “Wheel of Life.” It depicts the eight parts of our lives that need tending in order to live a balanced life; Family, Fun and Happiness, Health, Purpose/Meaning, Lifelong Learning, Relationships, Finances, and Position in Life/Career. With consistent practice, you can develop healthy habits of mind and body.

- **Nourish your mind and body** through proper rest, nutrition, and stress management. And don’t forget to get enough protein in your diet to fuel your body and your mind.

- **Manage Stress and Anxiety:** Stress and anxiety can significantly impact athletic performance. Mindfulness techniques, deep breathing exercises, meditation, muscle relaxation and other strategies can help athletes manage stress and maintain composure during high-pressure situations.

In conclusion, mindset training is a game-changer for equestrian athletes looking to unlock their full potential. By developing and practicing mental skills, riders can elevate their performance, deepen their bond

with their horses, and achieve their equestrian goals. Incorporate my practical tips into your training regimen and watch as your students’ mindset transforms their riding experience for the better.

Remember: life is messy, and learning is messy and there is so much you can’t control. That makes what you *can* control – your mindset, your self-talk, your decision-making, your planning, the people you surround yourself with, and your daily habits – crucial to your well-being, happiness and success.

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#### About the author:

**Laura King** is the Director and Founder of Summit Hypnosis and Wellness and is a Certified Hypnotist, NLP Practitioner, Life Coach, and Sports Performance Coach. Laura has written and published several books and workbooks, including “Power To Win” for equestrians and “Perfect Enough,” a guide to help you evaluate your perceptions and experiences around vital areas of your life.