

From the ground up - the importance of grounding

Sunday, August 10, 2008

Author: Sally Swift

In the last four issues of the eBulletin, I have been reviewing the Four Basics of Centered Riding. The results you realize from using the Four Basics will be maximized by allowing yourself to become “grounded.” Grounding, just as it sounds, is a sensation of connection with the ground and offers you stability.

The story goes that I once looked up at my father and said “I may not go up as far as you do, but I go down just as far.” That connection with the ground will allow you to find your center, to breathe more easily, to use your soft eyes, to be balanced and to feel tall.

At one point after writing my book *Centered Riding*, I started to think that grounding should be the *fifth* basic, but my students objected saying “the Four Basics are ‘classic.’” After thinking on this, I realized that grounding was actually the foundation upon which the Four Basics depend.

Grounding is a feeling that your well-established center is dropping energy down through your legs and feet into the ground while the energy in the ground comes up through your feet. Grounding gives you increased stability.

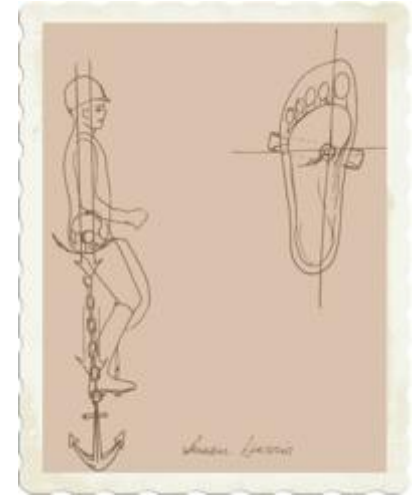
You can use imagery to help you feel grounded. I like the image of having your legs and feet sucked gently down and down, from your open hip joints into the ground where the soles of your feet are secured as if by magnets. The magical part is that even as the ground holds you, it can move with your feet anywhere you wish, giving you stability at all times. If you are grounded, you know that nothing and no one can knock you over. You can do this just as easily on your horse, even though your feet are not actually touching the ground.

One way to experience being grounded is to try the exercise called “Feet in the Sand,” described in my second book, *Centered Riding II – Further Explorations*. Stand with your feet not more than shoulder-width apart and become aware of the soles of your feet. Pretend you are standing on damp sand and making an imprint with each of your feet – not a deep hole, just a mark on the sand. Imagine equally imprinting each of your toes. The ball of your foot, the outside rim of your foot, and your entire heel, from the edge to the center, all leave their imprint. Notice how completely grounded you feel!

In my second book, I also talk about the “Bubbling Spring” – the balance point of the foot. (You can read how to find this part of your foot in my second book.) I once took a martial arts class where we were taught to let energy come up from the ground through the Bubbling Spring and how to release it down into the ground through that point.

Try standing again and do the “Feet in the Sand” exercise, but this time imagine energy from the ground coming up through your legs and into your body. As you stand there, find your center and feel the energy surging back and forth through your body. There are receptors in the bottom of your feet that trigger an automatic reflex throughout your body, which in turn, enables you to stand upright without tension and effort. You will find that the *building blocks* of your body will stack up automatically as you stand centered with your feet “open and receiving”. Your balance is easy and you should feel a definite connection with the ground.

When riding, you can ground different parts of your body – your feet, your knees and your seat. The sensation of grounding is just as easy when you are on your horse. Use it – it is a powerful tool to make you a better rider.



Drawings by Susan Harris, Sr. Level IV Clinician from Cortland, NY

