

Learning and the Brain

Thursday, February 25, 2010



Sally Swift's teachings of Centered Riding are based on "The Four Basics" which are "Soft Eyes," "Breathing," "Centering" and "Building Blocks." Sally felt that the ability to successfully apply these four basics depended upon understanding the functions of our brain and learning.

Our brain is separated into two halves – the right and the left – which are connected by the corpus collosum. Each side of the brain has its own functions. The left side is the practical side of the brain. It handles things in a linear manner. It organizes and arranges details and likes to be rational, analytical, and verbal. The right side of the brain is the intuitive part and integrates and synthesizes things with imagery rather than words. It deals with things as "a whole" rather than in parts. For many riders, the left-brain interferes with their

riding.

In her book, "Centered Riding," Sally Swift tried to show readers that these two sides of our brain do not have to be in constant battle with each other. In fact, if used correctly, they can become equal halves, moving and molding against each other, much like oil and water in a glass bowl will change shape and mold and flow around each other yet stay the same in quantity. They can become un-opposing opposites working together as one. Sally suggested that riders should learn to use the right, intuitive, brain in a trusting, relaxed way. Riders should "learn to fight less and flow more" according to Sally.

Sally talked about the use of imagery to influence muscles and using an inner videotape to see, hear, and feel an entire movement or exercise before actually doing it. The videotape can then be "edited" with correct images and "replayed." Each time a rider does this, he or she is deleting from the right brain the "wrong" footage" and replacing it with what is correct.

Sally also mentions the importance of "concentrating like a child or puppy at play." This is a complete, relaxed and happy concentration. Children and animals have not overdeveloped the left brain and are able to concentrate without the left brain interfering. This is the goal for you as a rider.

In her book, "Centered Riding," Sally gives examples and exercises to help readers recognize the left- and right-brain approach to riding and how to synchronize these two areas to the betterment of your riding. If you haven't already read "Centered Riding," be sure to get a copy today. You can order "Centered Riding" or "Centered Riding 2- Further Explorations," both written by Sally Swift, by contacting our office at office@centeredriding.org