

Influence & Improve Balance in Non-habitual Ways

Chest line driving

Those of you familiar with the TTEAM Work for horses know that we, regularly, use chest line driving with horses. Several years ago in England I had a lovely German Shephard who was very anxious when asked to walk beside someone on a leash. He was very strong and pulled very hard and would get stressed and jump up on his person. Off leash he could manage to stay with her as long as he had a ball or something as a distracter.

I thought that it may help if we could give him the experience of walking on a loose leash with all four feet on the ground. We used a step-in harness and ran a driving line through one of the side rings, across his chest through the loop on the harness and back through the other side rings so that both ends were behind the dog. With the dog in Homing Pigeon from the flat collar, the intention is that the people in homing pigeon stay at the dog's head and keep a nice distance from the dog and they only guide to make turns and NEVER pull back on their leads. It is the person at the back of the dog, with the driving lines, who influences the speed of the dog, stopping and keeping the dog in balance.

The driving lines are held with the palm up and the index finger in between the two lines. I use a stroking motion to slow the dog down. As I reach up the lines with my right hand I allow my right shoulder to follow to help keep from bracing through my hips or back and stay in neutral. My right hand slides towards my body, I then reach up with my left hand/shoulder and repeat this motion with my left hand.

When you ask the dog to stop be sure to avoid the water ski position and keep your upper body neutral and hips softened. 'Meet' the contact to signal a stop and then very, very slowly melt (rather than release) so the dog can come back into balance in the stop, but does not get dropped

Uses of the chest line:

- Leash pulling – especially if the dogs are severe pullers
- Dogs nervous of things behind them
- Shy dogs – be sure to give them enough room behind
- Dogs that jump up on people
- Dog and handler that need the experience of walking with a loose leash

Things to remember

Handlers at dog's head:

- May use HP but not necessary
- Most important that the handlers do not give a backward signal on the collar
- If dog leaps on people then using the butterfly configuration of HP helps keep the dog more balanced



Photo 1: Kitchi is a rescue dog brought by Ann Cassidy (with hat). Kitchi was nervous about strangers and this helped her get used to things around her but still gave her space. Ideally the leash handlers would be more forward even with her head. Tamryn, holding the ropes, is a good distance behind her and is standing with the lines in neutral, so there is slack.



Photo 2: Shows configuration of rope through the rings and front loop of step-in harness. Handler at front show a double leash connection - very important that front person only indicates direction and otherwise keeps a loose leash.



Photo 3: Shows Edie Jane walking behind with Christine at the dog's head with a loose leash.



Photo 4: Shows Jill Kolar (left) and Kathy Crane (right) using the 'butterfly' connection of the leashes - one end on the collar and the other on the side ring of the step in - this gives lateral influence and turning - never a backward signal. Jacynthe Pelletier is behind the dog and she will stroke the lines to regulate the forward movement of the dog.



Photo 5: This dog had started out very forward on the leash and is now standing in balance. The leash handlers, left Suzanne Rossignol and right Lucie LaPointe are at the dog's head and there is no backward direction in their leashes - this is where they will ideally stay when walking. On turns the outside person can move their hand forward to keep from having a backward pull. Anne Meylan is holding the lines as they discuss where to go next.



Photo 6: Photos 4-6 are with the sled dogs and were taken at Lynn Bedbrook's in Rupert where we went as part of the Advanced Training. Even though these dogs are used to pulling the chest line does not trigger the opposition reflex because there is never a constant pull on the chest. These dogs are rarely walked on a leash and yet as long as the handlers were paying attention to what 'they' were doing (remember 75-25) in terms of position and posture - the dogs responded very well and were amazing teachers.



Photo 7: This photo shows the leash handlers in a good forward position but the rope handler is a little too close - this is easy to happen and can make some dogs nervous.

Clothesline – (aka Washing line in the UK)

This configuration was first used at a Practitioner training in Coburg, Ontario when we were doing a session at the Port Hope shelter with a 12 week old German Shepherd puppy who had an injury to her neck and was quite concerned about being handled around the collar. Carol Rochaix-Wright and Susan Assad came up with this brilliant tool.

They ran a light clothesline rope through the ring on the step-in harness and basically followed the puppy rather than really guiding her. They did their best to stay at her head and across from each other but really gave her a positive experience of containment versus restraint while on the lead. The next day the shelter staff noticed that this puppy was much less concerned about being handled around the collar. She was adopted the next morning.

Since then I have used this successfully with a variety of issues. Dogs who cling on their owners benefit because it allows them

the freedom to choose where they walk. Often when you give animals freedom they feel safer and will generally start walking further away from their person. It also prevents anyone from pulling on the leash (rope).

Puppies or dogs who are not leash trained generally respond very well to the clothesline, once again because it just doesn't work to pull on it. When they don't have resistance they stop resisting. It is all part of the opposition reflex.

The same goes for dogs who freeze and I have some other techniques I use in conjunction when the clothesline alone doesn't work. One thing to do with any dogs, but especially with one that freezes is to stop, do a big audible exhale and look where you want the dog to go (just in front of the dog's front legs) – rather than staring at the dog. Remember to initiate the movement from your feet, instead of leading with your hands pulling forward.

Uses: Dogs with separation issues

Puppies (or older dogs) learning to go on leash

Dogs who freeze

Giving humans a totally non-habitual experience – you can only turn if you use your body, communicate with your partner and pay attention to what YOU are doing.

Some dogs who go into major fool around but you should be familiar with doing this technique before using it

The clothesline is not usually suitable for dogs that are hard pullers – I would generally use the chest line for those dogs. However, I have on occasion changed the clothesline slightly and had it work. Run one end of the line through the ring on the back of the harness and then back through the front loop – one handler will have the two ends of the line and the other handler holds the middle of the rope in two hands.

Technique: Handlers aim to stay across from each other with the line running straight through the harness ring.

To turn – the outside person lifts up on the rope and the inside person strokes the line, looks where she wants to go and rotates her body in that direction.

To stop – quarter turn towards the dog and both handlers can give an upward (not backward) signal and slowly melt to release.

You have to take care that both handlers are keeping the same connection on the rope – or one will keep pulling until the other has no rope left in their hands – stroking the rope can help.

Helpful hints: Tie knots in either end of the rope so that if one person should let go then the rope will not just slide through the harness rings which would leave the dog is totally free.

Adam Rogers summed up the use of the clothesline when he asked “Why on earth would you use this, you don't have any control?” – and then he suddenly got it – that was the point – giving up control gave the dog more possibility to choose.

Both of these techniques take some practice but do a great

deal to help the handler have more finesse as the dog is allowed to learn about finding his/her own balance. At clinics I work a great deal with people to teach them these concepts of ‘neutral pelvis’. Not only is it beneficial for these exercises but also to help anyone who suffers from a sore back when working with their dogs or in everyday life. These techniques of ‘neutral pelvis’ come from Peggy Cummings and Connected Riding and have their initial roots in the Alexander technique.



Photo 1: I don't have any really clear photos of this configuration but here the rope is run through the top ring of the step-in harness (you can run it through the side rings as well but it does not slide as freely and may press down on the dog's back).

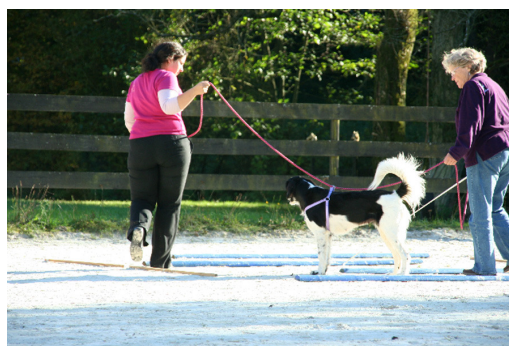


Photo 2: When making a turn, the person on the outside of the turn can lift her hand and moves forward to give the dog the direction of the turn. The person on the inside looks where the dog's feet should move to

and may find stroking the line or using the wand helpful to indicate direction.



Photo 3: Kathy Crane and Susanne Rossignol with one of Kathy's Italian Greyhounds using the clothesline in the labyrinth.

Beeline

By Robyn Hood

One of values of working with many species is that it opens your mind to new possibilities. The 'Beeline' (originally known as clothesline or washing line) was first used with puppies to allow them freedom while learning to walk on a leash. It is very helpful with dogs, I am still in the early stages of using it with horses.



Suzy is staying well forward on the outside of the turn, if you get behind the horse you can just move your inside arm forward, rather than a reflexive pull back.

Beeline is a variety of Homing Pigeon - a person on either side of the horse - like wings of a bird. The difference is that no leads are attached to the halter but we have a single rope, run through the lower halter ring that gives the horse the freedom to move from side to side and cannot be pulled to the side by the handlers. The handlers should stay in front of the horse's head, so they can see each other in front of the horse.



On the ground Twist had a tendency to fall forward, having more freedom allowed him to find his own balance and he was stopping much easier.



To stop, both handlers quarter turn towards Twist and Steve brings the wand towards the horses chest to reinforce the halt.



Steve has stepped forward on the outside of the turn and Suzy rotated her body to indicate how much of a turn there would be. They did a great job with communication and avoiding pulling back on the rope.

The handlers organize themselves to give Twist direction for the turn into the labyrinth - Suzy stepped forward & guided Twist around the corner with her wand and movement.

If you try this, start with a quiet horse in an enclosed arena.