

A photograph of a rider in equestrian attire (dark jacket, light breeches, helmet) riding a dark brown horse in a grassy field. The horse is in motion, possibly a trot or canter. The background shows a line of trees and a fence under a clear sky.

My Journey: The Ultimate Success Story

By Caroline Hannah

My name is Caroline and I would like to tell you about my journey.

In 2003 my mum asked whether I would like to learn how to ride a horse. I had recently had a birthday party at a farm, so happily agreed. I started riding at an orthodox riding centre, and loved being around horses, but felt that I never fitted in with what the instructors were asking of me. A year later I bought a very green 14.2hh pony called Tye.

Tye was 7 and had spent his whole life wasting away in a paddock. When I went for a test ride he was drugged, so he appeared a perfect plodder. I found out later the person I

bought him off had only galloped him around a few times. She had claimed he was fully trained. I fell in love with him, bought him the next day, and then the drama started....

For the next year and a half I tried to work through all the bolting, bucking, shying, jumpy, disrespectful issues, plus ill fitting saddles, various bits, riders, instructors and of course a fall off almost every lesson. I rode at nothing faster than a slow trot in a small confined area because I was so scared of Tye. All I was ever told was to send him to the meat works or sell him. But I persevered.

In October 2005 a horse kicked Tye and fractured his back leg,

I was devastated. I turned him out to a small paddock - checking him every day - rain or shine. After a year he had an x-ray and was pronounced ready to bring slowly into work. It was a miracle that he made a full recovery.

Because of his past behavior, I decided to send him away to be trained. After four weeks training by a "professional" he was worse than ever! I didn't know what to do because I loved him.

I decided to try a different way, and sent Tye to another training facility. They took the bit out of his mouth, and after a couple of sessions in a round pen, his behavior started to improve.

I rode him in a rope halter, using energy to ask him to go forward. I also bought a Barefoot Cheyenne saddle. We'd gone through 3 top brand saddles previously which he was never comfortable in. From the first day using the Barefoot he was much happier. I slowly started to re-gain my confidence. After a month I was cantering in an open paddock bitless, either in my halter or the Dr. Cook cross-over bridle, doing cross country and show jumping.

I had been a member of a local pony club for the previous year or so. When I started to ride bitless, the pony club committee made it very clear that they didn't allow it, even though it wasn't stated in any rule book.



Tye was safer and happier, but it didn't seem to make a difference to them. People who I thought were my friends turned against me, and it was a very distressing time. After a couple of months, I moved, and it's amazing, but wherever you go, it seems some people are challenged by riding without a bit!

I then started to develop my own

ideas about how horses think, act and communicate, and decided to ride completely bridleless. I have been ever since.

When people who were more open to my way of riding started to see how I was able to jump and do everything with Tye bridleless, they started to ask how I did it. Since then I have been able to talk to people about

communicating with their horse and teaching them to do things differently for a better relationship – first with trust then connection and communication.

Here's what one of my client's said about me –

".....Caroline had Chief placidly walking along with her in a matter of minutes, something I had been struggling with for weeks....."

.....Caroline has a natural understanding of horses, unlimited patience, with a steady understanding way of guiding us both through each learning curve, explaining along the way why we are doing a certain

thing and what we are trying to achieve..... Kelly"

It's amazing to look back over the last 6 months and see how I've gone from being absolutely terrified of Tye, to having such a fun, loving and trusting relationship with him. I would never put a bit back in a horse's mouth or use force to 'control' them and feel very happy that I'm making a difference in horses and peoples lives. ☺☺



Caroline and Tye

About the author:

Caroline Hannah is 14 years old and lives in New Zealand with her mother, brother and two dogs, Taz and Buddy. She can be reached at jpurchase@xtra.co.nz.

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Caroline Hannah (age 14)
and her partner Tye
in their
Barefoot Cheyenne

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