

## **Beginnings, Middles, and Ends**

We all know that learning can sometimes be uncomfortable. There will be parts of your horsemanship journey that will be fun and parts that will require a bit of “stick-to-it-ness.” Sometimes knowing ahead of time which parts are difficult and which parts will be enjoyable for you helps to lessen the extremes. Peaks and valleys are to be expected, but we can reduce the distance between the valley and your next peak and keep the overall path going in an upward direction with just a little bit of knowledge.

What you have most likely already discovered is that each Level and Savvy has its own unique challenges and rewards. As learners, we will cycle through three parts of your horsemanship journey again and again. But, we can keep that in an upward empowering spiral rather than a downward spiral of despair. Those three parts are beginnings, middles, and ends. In Level 1, you may have gone through the cycle so quickly that you did not notice. However, as you embark in Level 2, you will find that the learning curve gets a bit steeper. It will get steeper still in Level 3, and even more steep in Level 4. Most humans have an easier time overcoming challenges if they know what to expect ahead of time.

If you are the kind of person who is easily bored and looks forward to change, then you are probably pretty excited about beginnings. This type of learner likes to try new things, but might find it a bit challenging to stick to a program long enough that your horse can absorb the information. In an effort to relieve your boredom, you might look to skip ahead to the more exciting tasks and patterns. While there is nothing wrong with that, be sure that you are disciplining yourself to put your horse's needs as a learner first. Understand that anytime you skip ahead in your play sessions, you will be leaving a hole in both you and your horse's education. This will come back to bite you later on and will require you to have to retrace your steps and fill in the holes. Variety is the spice of life, but sometimes your horse needs a bit of consistency to learn new concepts.

If you are the type of learner that enjoys some consistency and appreciates the opportunity to repeat lessons until you feel comfortable with them, then you are going to LOVE Level 2! Level 2 is where you are going to begin to experience some longer “middles.” Middles can be a spot where you are going to need to take a leap of faith and trust that, if you just stick with it long enough, you and your horse will get better. This is where it might be helpful for you to seek out some support. Share your experiences on the Savvy Club forums. Get together with your Savvy Circle for a playday. Email an instructor for advice. Whatever you do, do not suffer in silence. The Parelli Program is designed to give you lots of different types of support, all you have to do is take advantage of it.

Finally, if you are the type of person who likes to tick off the boxes in our checklists, then you are an endings kind of learner. This type of learner can often struggle with middles as well. If you feel this is the type of learner you are, then it might be helpful for you to make your own check lists that have smaller more regularly achievable tasks to help keep you motivated to keep working toward the next task or pattern.

No matter what kind of learner you are, Parelli is a program that evaluates our success by your success. If you are not succeeding, then neither are we.

## **Determine Where You Thrive and Where You Struggle as a Learner – Journal Time!**

1. What feels most comfortable to you: Starting new things, working through projects, or finishing projects?
2. What do you find the most difficult among those three? Is learning new skills scary? Is it hard for you to muddle through the middle of a project? Does wrapping up and finishing a goal come with a struggle (or do you just tend to not finish things, at all)?
3. Once you know where you thrive and where you struggle as a learner, you can be prepared for the emotions that come with those sections of the program for you. When you feel those emotions coming up, acknowledge them, and do what you need to do in order to stay focused and move toward your goal.

### **Strategies for Surviving Beginnings as a Learner**

By now you will have significantly advanced your learning and horse psychology savvy. You will have focused on reading your horse and using yourself and your tools in a more savvy way. These are critical steps to have taken before you begin the Level 2 Programs for On Line and Liberty.

Because the Level 2 journey is a long one for many people, we knew we had to expose you to the concepts of learning related to “beginnings,” “middles,” and “ends.” People have different preferences for different stages of the learning process. This critical understanding may be what keeps you in the game of Level 2!

One of the greatest tools of the human mind is our imagination. If you are not moving through the Levels Program quickly enough to satisfy your needs for new beginnings, use your imagination to visualize it. It is best to imagine your desired results just before bed. This allows it to get into the subconscious. Each night before you go to bed, visualize what it will feel like when you achieve your next milestone. Visualize it very specifically and vividly. This will provide some positive reinforcement to you for your efforts and help you to stick to it long enough to achieve your desired results.

### **Strategies for Surviving Middles as a Learner**

Middles are the most common struggle for the majority of learners out there. It is important to understand that your brain appreciates the same kind of training as your horse’s in that you need positive reinforcement to keep you motivated as well as an understanding of what it will cost you if you don’t continue to take action. Developing a relationship with a study buddy can really help. Declare your goals to someone who is not going to let you off the hook. Tell a friend that will ask you regularly how it’s going and who will not be receptive to excuses. If you want something bad enough you will find a way. Have a “why” for your horsemanship journey that will get you up early and keep you up late.

### **Strategies for Surviving Endings as a Learner**

If you struggle with endings it is most likely because you move on to the next beginning before fully completing the lesson. It is important that you understand that this will cause your horse’s foundation to be unstable. The higher your goals are the more likely you will end up having to go back and fill in the holes and by doing so delay the next beginning. This is one of the greatest aspects to submitting an Audition. Make a commitment to fully passing an Audition before

getting too focused on the next Level. Know what the next Level looks like, but stay with your horse's needs until you have fully developed their understanding. Again, support through this process from a study buddy, supportive friend or instructor will ensure success.

## **JOURNAL AGAIN!**

Return to your journaling entry from above. Now that you know what kind of learner you are, write several strategies you will use to help yourself as a learner.

What things do you tend to do with your horse that are negative? Can you use your new understanding of beginning, middle, and ending to improve your relationship with your horse? If so, journal some new approaches that you will bring to your horse.

Play with your horse for several sessions On Line and then come back and journal about your new outlook using the strategies you journaled about above.

### **Tips:**

- If you get stuck in the beginning, middle, or end, get help! Get inspiration from the Library on the Parelli Savvy Club, start a thread in the Forum for support from peers, or ask an instructor for help.
- Beginner strugglers can use your imagination to experience the satisfaction of each achievement to help have a positive association with learning.
- Middle strugglers need some form of accountability. It can come from a study buddy, a supportive friend, or an instructor.
- People who struggle with endings will benefit from committing to the Audition process.

### **Troubleshooting:**

- **I struggle with beginnings, and this is a beginning!** Just because something is difficult doesn't mean you can't do it. Do whatever you need to get excited about this next step in your horsemanship journey! That may be writing down your goals for the end of Level 2 or outlining the problems you want to solve by the end of Level 2. You may enjoy sending in an official Audition for Level 1 On Line so you can get feedback from an instructor on what your focus needs to be as you continue into Level 2 On Line. Get together with other Parelli students to have a playday and grow together. Take a lesson from an instructor so you can have more individual guidance to get you through the beginning. Learn what works for you and use that knowledge to make beginnings more fun for you. Most of all, remember that if you are uncomfortable, you are probably learning, which is exactly what you need to be doing in the beginning!
- **I struggle with middles, so now I have written some strategies down but don't think I will follow through!** Find a friend or study buddy to keep you accountable. You may also want to find a Parelli Professional to help you with setting goals and then making sure you are progressing forwards instead of getting or feeling stuck.
- **I struggle with endings... now what?** You should feel really comfortable right now! Congratulations on finishing Level 1... celebrate that for a few minutes! You might consider auditioning for your Level 1 On Line or start planning now for your Level 1 and

2 On Line Audition — look ahead and start setting goal posts so you can keep on track to audition as you get close to completing this level.

**Pitfalls:**

- **Ignoring your emotions as a learner or just staying emotional** instead of getting in control and finding your focus.
- **Not spending a few minutes now to journal about your learning style, feelings, and plans.** If you take some time now to really look at yourself as a learner, you will be mentally and emotionally prepared for when you get frustrated or stuck.