

## Equestrian Balancing Therapy Based on Zero-Balancing principles • by Ade Houghton



John demonstrating  
Equestrian Balancing  
Principles at Seacroft, York  
National, with Sarah  
Williams, author

Photo: Ade Houghton

My background is as a fully qualified riding instructor working in the country and abroad, training riders and horses for both competition and pleasure.

Since my first Zero-Balancing workshop four and a half years ago, I have been working on adapting the principles to help the mounted rider and the mounted horse in order to achieve a harmonious, efficient, precise dress and balance. One of the frustrations I had as a teacher was that a rider would be trying to achieve an improvement as fast as they could but, unfortunately, the degree of effort used often resulted in worse tension in their body. This, in turn, resulted in tension, physical strain and sometimes lost behaviour in the horse, as well as discomfort and pain in the rider. I came to find a way to help the rider to find their own individual position, which needed to be created without undue tension or effort.

With Zero-Balancing, I found the key. I was a massive thank to Trip Smith for the amazing

insight and inspiration in founding ZB and for his encouragement to go forward and explore his own unique insight to ZB. I realised that I could use the ZB principles and techniques, I could really help riders to achieve their aims more effectively than I had ever been able to do in the past. As I continued to develop this work, I realised that I needed to give the message a name of its own and called it Equestrian Balancing Therapy. As I worked with the riders, I noticed that the horse showed significant reactions and changes in its work. Having attended some wonderful courses given by Trip Smith, I had already learned a way to help the horse. I then started to work on both the horse and the rider with the rider focused, and found a remarkable improvement in the combination and in what they could now achieve, and, clearly, all my work has been with attached riders and horses. Clearly, but the work with some riders with discomfort and I have found the ZBT has helped each one of the people I have worked with to a far greater degree than could have been so.

### Case studies:

**I have worked with people with a number of ailments, including spine aches, head and spinal issues. I have included two alternative case studies.**

**Cardinal gaiting:** I was advised by Trip Smith (now it has become great benefit from ZBT). His specialty in the past is dressage, working far from being able to come up with it. He also had several problems and experienced increasingly lower pain, rapidly, because he could not strengthen his lines comfortably. With ZBT on a horse, within a month, he has been able to build his own strength, the a pain only in the arena. He can move freely with his upper body again to back. The muscle structure in his legs suffer so much, that he can sit with his feet below his eye for short periods of time. His rear leg muscles enough to allow him to stretch his leg down comfortably, to a correct sitting position. His lower abdominals have increased so that he no longer needs braces, and no longer experiences any pain from his back.

### September 2009 - Multiple ailments

I started working with Jane on a shoulder issue in September 2009. Jane was diagnosed with primary progressive multiple sclerosis but Jane has although she believes she has suffered from the condition for some years. She is badly affected in her lower back and is a lower degree throughout the rest of her body. She suffers with difficulty and with the act of a walk. Jane is uncomfortable the majority of the time, but the discomfort is obvious about one day in a week. She has trouble in standing and sleep and suffers from spasms, which do not occur when mounted. Jane has had her last horse for many years and she gave up riding in 2002, following which her condition deteriorated.

Jane had up disabled riding in early 2008, when she had worked together in September 2009. Jane's energy levels were really low and her balance was so poor that she could only suffer work for a few minutes before needing a break. Jane was not very effective with the horse at the time, because she was not strong enough

physically to be effective. Her muscle tone and balance have now greatly improved so that she can now ride for a full hour with a relaxing number of short breaks. She is also able to work the horse at a much higher standard and is now a very effective rider. As we have progressed, Jane has become more and more effective. When I see the ZBT techniques on her, Jane and her horse work away with Jane at much stronger balance and confidence, showing greatly improved posture and harmony, that she work increasingly better the ZBT session. The improvement that Jane experiences gradually, during the ZBT session, naturally continues to be effective to several days afterwards, helping her to walk more easily. She also finds Jane get more pleasure whenever enough of her work is complete successfully for the ZBT riding to the disabled.

### Jane's comments - Letter from Jane dated 10.09.09

Dear Ade,

Many thanks for the month mounted equestrian balancing sessions. As a primary progressive MS sufferer, I have been experiencing increased difficulty with my mobility, unfortunately, however physiotherapy over many months has done little to alleviate this. I am delighted to see that following your equestrian balancing therapy, that I have had a considerable improvement in my seat, confidence, balance, general effectiveness and strength both as a mounted rider and on the ground. Thank you also for a further improvement in muscle tone, particularly in my core muscles and lower limbs and the has been noted by my physiotherapist. Thank you very much for your help, I intend to continue with our sessions as I am confident that will continue to assist me in the improvement of my body awareness and balance, and in helping muscle spasticity/athetosis at times."

### Conclusion

Though the ZBT work started initially to help attached riders and their horses, it has been exciting and rewarding to see the massive improvements achieved when using ZBT with disabled riders. It has examples of which have been included here. It is wonderful to be able to help horses and their

to thank all the people who have given me great help, support and encouragement - David Barnard, John Cox, Elise Johns, Jane Houghton, Richard Mathers and many others. If any one is interested, I would be delighted to get more information about these case studies or ZBT generally.

John has articles in the October issue of Your Horse, and the October issue of EQUUS magazine magazine about her Equestrian Balancing Therapy work. Her web site address is [www.equestrianbalancing.com.au](http://www.equestrianbalancing.com.au)

It is with tremendous gratitude to Zero-Balancing, Trip Smith and my mentor, Sue Johns, that I have been able to develop this work. I would also like