

TOPLINE SYNDROME

WHY A PROBLEM WITH A HORSES BACK
IS JUST A SYMPTOM

Volume 1



BIRGIT VOLESKY



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HORSE ENERGY®



STOP!
THIS IS ABOUT YOU AND
YOUR HORSE.

Dear Reader

My book is not a comprehensive textbook, but rather a summary of my practical experience and of discussions with trainers, veterinary surgeons, horse owners and other horse lovers. I started off simply wanting to write a guide for my clients, because I pass on similar information every day. Now I have put it all together for the general public. Please look the contents as my humble offer to communicate this information. My aim is to build a network of horsey people who are interested in expanding their own knowledge.

This QR code takes you to a site where you can get in touch with me, give feedback, or pass on further information to me.



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FOREWORD

TOPLINE SYNDROME

Why a cold back in a horse is just a symptom.

The overbuilt horse, a severe ewe neck, pelvic obliquity, injuries to the suspensory ligament, kissing spines and many other issues may be present when a horse is suffering from a weak back. These symptoms are avoidable in most cases if they are dealt with early enough.

In this book, Birgit Volesky sums up her experience from over 10 years of practice in osteotherapy and with horses. These have led her to the understanding that 90% of horses have similar functional problems. If these problems are solved, then you can establish a basis from which you can make a sensitive start to working with the horse.

The objective of this book is to provide every horse owner with a tool that allows them to understand their horse and its behaviour patterns better for themselves. Anatomical backgrounds and chains of action illustrate the factors to which the horse owner needs to pay attention in order to prevent long-term problems with their equine partner.

Birgit Volesky is a German equine osteopath who specialises in topline syndrome. The aim of her work is to identify early on when a horse is having problems, because at this stage it is easy to deal with many potentially serious problems. The horse's well-being can be maintained.



INTRODUCTI ON



Dear Reader

Welcome! I am delighted that you are going to accompany me on this little journey, in which I would like to tell you about the experiences I have gathered in the course of the several thousand osteotherapeutic treatments I have carried out over the last 10 years. I am looking forward to telling you about my personal history with horses and the insights I have gained from all this.

The contents of this book are drawn exclusively from experience and insights gained from my practice. Because, after their training, every therapist starts off with a big case full of tools, even if they only truly learn which tool should be used for what purpose through many years of experience. My therapeutic eye, too, only started to focus properly with the passage of time. When I look back today, I have to smile: in the beginning I couldn't actually see a thing. My lack of experience saw me struggling through the treatments I carried out. At least I had kinesiological tests to help me to get a better picture.

That meant that at that stage I was able to provide the horses with some sort of help, but today I also aim to give them back their natural geometry, with the correct curve in their back line. I don't want simply to make a bit of a difference, but to take them back to square one - to return them to their original state, so to speak. I achieve this using gentle techniques based on the idea and the feel of sensitive riding. I call this the **HORSE ENERGYToplineRESET®**. This method of treatment results in horses having the chance to develop their full physical potential once again. Over the years I have got to know many wonderful horses and their worried owners, and these in-depth encounters have given me the incentive to publish

my experiences. I hope that as many horses as possible can be helped with my methods, because over and over and again, after the first treatment, I have heard the sentence, *"If only I had known that sooner"*.

Some of these owners burst into tears and sat next to me on the ground sobbing. They knew that their horse had a problem, but their attempts to help him had been fruitless. They were desperate.

Perhaps you're in a similar situation, which is why I want to tell you my own story here. I'm sure it will be of some consolation to you if you know that you are not alone in suffering from this plight.

I too have made plenty of mistakes when handling horses, and I still make them today. We always try to do our best, of course, but there are situations when we simply get stressed and behave unfairly towards our equine partners. But, drawing on my experience from all the encounters I have had with horses, I can confidently say that a horse will really look after us if it feels that we are trying to do our best, and when we are not just (mis)treating it as an item of sporting equipment that needs to work properly all the time, and when it's not just some bloody nag that won't do what we want when we want. But regardless, it is our job and our duty to work on ourselves every day so that we can improve. And we need to focus on our horse's true potential, not to follow a plan that isn't his plan.

There are, however, horses that follow a completely different plan. They have bigger plans, which we don't recognise at first. That's the way it was with the first horse I owned.

MY GREATEST TEACHER, NAVALL.

Even today I choke up when I think of Navall. Losing this great horse left a big hole in my life. Because it was when he came to me, as a five-year-old, and took me by the hand, that the path my life was going to take was determined.

Navall was up for sale on a yard in Zeulenroda in Thuringia, in the centre of Germany. I had only gone there with the riding teacher from my riding club to help her to buy a school horse. When we arrived at the yard there were several horses tied up outside. On the right-hand side, standing at a rail, was a huge, rangy chestnut. Head down, he looked nervously round to see who was coming. The yard owner said that he wasn't actually supposed to be a school horse, but because he was so good with children they had brought him out anyway. He had a few flaps of skin hanging down, the excuse for which being that he was only just being integrated into the herd at the yard. I can't remember any longer exactly what happened next, but anyway we went back there a few days later and I rode Navall to try him out. Then I was able to take him home to our stables for a two-week trial period. I still have pictures of him standing on the yard after he arrived, looking expectantly at his new home. Navall was a young horse and at that time I didn't have much idea about the interrelationships that are involved with riding. We had offers of help from lots of people. But the more Navall worked, and the stronger he got, the harder it got for us. Anyone who has bought a young horse will probably understand. I tried everything, bought every aid and listened to loads of people. It got a bit better, but not exactly good.

And then, through Navall, I met an excellent instructor who was new to the area. When we had our first lesson he

explained to me that my horse had blockages (Navall's stride was significantly shorter in the near hind than on the offside), and that these needed to be released if he was to have any real chance at proper training. After that an experienced acupuncturist visited us regularly from the Rhineland, and I was fascinated to see how he managed to release the tension my horse was suffering from. With the help of the trainer, Navall continued to get better and stronger. Over the next few years I learned a lot, my own interest in therapeutic approaches grew, and I started to educate myself - this was the beginning of my life as a therapist.



Navall and I tried several times to go to shows, but there was always a reason why we never managed to make it.

The last time I wanted to take him show jumping, and the week beforehand he suddenly developed a sand crack which restricted our exercise for a whole year. I finally understood: Navall did not want to compete. When I went into his box that evening it was obvious. And as that thought entered my head he gave a loud sigh. I suspect he was thinking, "She's got the message at last".

Why am I telling you all of this? Because I know how it feels to have a goal that you never achieve with the horse because life has other plans. I know, too, how it feels when you start behaving unfairly towards the horse because it isn't doing what it should. Yes, that is something I know only too well. I can only apologise to Navall from the bottom of my heart for all the many mistakes I made with him, and for being unfair to him at times. He always let me know that it was his job to help me to develop my strengths. I bow humbly to all the horses who take it upon themselves to make better people of us so that eventually the world can become a better place. I know now that Navall was there to open my eyes. He gave me the chance to grow from all these experiences, and to recognise that above all I needed to work on my personality so that I could improve my interaction with horses and become a good therapist. For that I would like to take this opportunity to thank him from the bottom of my heart.

To be a dependable partner in the eye of a horse is perhaps the best reward that we can get in life. Perhaps you, too, now realise what an opportunity your horse gives you.

Two days before Christmas 2019, after he had been with me for 15 years, Navall suffered an accident and broke his leg. We spent 10 intensive weeks together trying to save his life. It might sound strange, but I shall be eternally grateful for that time, in the course of which we did a lot of things, knowing it would probably be for the last time. In the many

hours we spent together I had lots of “conversations” with him. He told me that it was time I wrote about our experiences. It was his wish that all the insights he had triggered throughout his life should be passed on to as many people as possible. To people who are able to understand that issues such as a reluctance to be ridden, resistance, and problems with behaviour and handling are not due to malice but have a cause. Because that is just the conclusion that I have come to from these times:

There is always a cause!

