



Before she became a professional, Lindsay competed in A circuit hunter shows and Quarter Horse shows. For those interested in a career as a horse trainer, Lindsay recommends apprenticing with the most successful person you can find, in the discipline you would like to specialize in.

seems I'm always traveling. It could be a private farm where riders just want to get together and have all-day lessons, or it could be a riding club or a larger horse association. I teach at all levels, whether it's the recreational riders who just want to understand their horses more or competitive riders who want to get that extra edge in the show ring.

What is the most common training problem you've come across?

Confusion. The horse doesn't understand the rider's language, what the rider wants him to do, so they're not in sync, and in the end, the rider just gets frustrated. I really believe that a horse should be ridden like a musical instrument, so that they understand and respond to every cue. This confusion can be as simple as background noise. The horse is hearing "noisy" legs or "noisy" hands, and

Photo courtesy of Lindsay Grace



It's important to remember that the client is your customer, says Lindsay. The work that you do must be in service of their needs, not your own.

he doesn't understand what the rider is saying. Or it could be the wrong placement of the aids or just simply that the rider doesn't have a plan. I like to get the rider to really break down those cues and analyze them — to have them ask, "What am I doing here? The horse can't read my mind." The rider has to really think about what they're doing, and as long as the horse understands those cues — understands and receives them — then this light bulb goes on. It's really exciting to see when the rider has a plan, and the horse understands what's being asked of him.

When I'm training, I equate this to installing the buttons on the horse and teaching the rider how to push them. After I teach the horse what's expected, then I teach the rider to use their hands and legs so that their horse will understand. I find that it's the green horse/green rider or unsure horse/unsure rider combinations that keep on butting heads. So let's get the horse out of the situation, teach him the correct way, and then put the two back together again. This way you save both the rider's and horse's sanity. When we talk about animal cruelty, I think one of the cruelest things we can do is miscommunicate and confuse our horses.

What are the particular challenges in your profession?

Unfortunately, what I see as a trend amongst professional trainers is the lack of good customer service. People get deeply defensive about their methods of training and forget that their students are their customers. I'm very careful to listen to them and to remember that I do ultimately serve them as their advisor. Another challenge within this profession is that coaches can get caught up in their teaching where they do a lot of yelling or belittling. Now

Photo courtesy of Lindsay Grace



In addition to clinics, lessons, and judging, Lindsay also shares her expertise by giving seminars.

this hasn't been a challenge for me, but it has been quite a common problem in this industry. There's a lot of pride and an "it's my way or the highway" mentality, and we have to remember that we're providing a service to the customer.

Through my years of learning, I received a fair amount of so-called "bad coaching" where I had coaches that didn't explain things very well, and I was very confused, which resulted in some yelling. And it was because of this that I was determined not to teach that way. There's something wrong with the program if the students come off crying.

As for myself, the biggest challenge I find is dealing with cancellations. When I get my schedule lined up and I know where and when I'm traveling, a last minute cancellation can certainly throw a problem into the works.

What are the unique aspects to your profession?

I love to see my students make progress and overcome their fears and doubts through showing and competition, to see them really enjoy their horses and have their horses meet their individual needs. I also love to see what riding and training can teach people about character, perseverance, and goal setting. Competing with horses can be really beneficial to a person, as it teaches us about character and about winning and losing graciously. I've also seen that go too far in the other direction, where ambition gets in the way and priorities get mixed up. I can also see how too much can be all consuming and become too high a focus in our lives. I've learned to prioritize my career with family, and love to help people learn to prioritize and balance their lives, and to recognize what sacrifices they will have to make. Life isn't about the next trophy or the next red ribbon, but they can be a wonderful addition to our lives.