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Thinking outside of the box! By Joann Long, Gentle Dove Farm

When I worked as a computer consultant long ago, there was a saying called 'shifting our paradigm' to find new opportunities or creative solutions. I'm not sure if the term is still used today, but it essentially means thinking outside of the box. I find great satisfaction in viewing things this way, doing things outside of my routine, and opening new doors. Let me explain.

I was thinking of attending an obstacle competition where the grand champion would be named for riding in both the English and Western divisions with a combined high score. Being primarily a western rider, with minimal English background, made the task of riding both disciplines an interesting competitive challenge for me. So for fun I borrowed an English saddle from a friend, ensured a proper fit, and entered the competition. Jumping was a mandatory obstacle in the English division and my horse enthusiastically sailed over the jump sporting his different tack. My willingness to do something new was invigorating and provided us with a new challenge and a sense of accomplishment. Doing something unusual and out of my comfort zone was fun and refreshing.



Many times we get stuck in our equine discipline of choice and forget that diversity may also bring us joy and insights. Not only will you have the challenge of new learning opportunities, but also your horse will benefit from the change in routine. We all get bored when doing something repetitively, so why not think out of the box? Try some obstacle training to improve confidence, communication, and partnership. That dressage course, stadium jump, or reining pattern may just

become more focused after diversifying some of your energy to obstacle instruction.

Come join us at a Gentle Dove Farm Mounted Police Style training to build on your individual success, learn to focus, and join in the fun at one of our upcoming obstacle clinics! FMI/registration visit www.GentleDoveFarm.com. Or, want to host your own Gentle Dove Farm Obstacle Clinic Mounted Police Style? Contact Joann at JKLong@rochester.rr.com.

Happy and safe riding! Joann and Dillon

