

Chapter Nine

Buck Up

*“All problems become smaller
if you don’t dodge them,
but confront them.”*

William F. Halsey

”*Yes*, but . . .,” I hear from Jill, a Brilliance Unbridled retreat client.

For the past 30 minutes, I’ve been watching her interact with Chester, one of our program horses. The exercise I gave her was simple but carefully designed to model a client’s decisiveness and conviction, what’s often called authenticity.

At the start of the exercise, I asked her what decision or declaration she wanted to make regarding her business. She only took a few seconds before declaring, “I want to grow my business by at least double in the next year.” While her words were clear and decisive, I noticed that her voice lacked a tone of authority. “Hmmm,” I thought. “We’ll see if that declaration is what she *really* wants.”

“Okay,” I said. “Let’s see how you can put energy and life into that decision.” Then I guided her to step into the round pen with Chester, who was free of any halter or lead rope, and ask him to

move around her in a wide circle, first at a walk, then at a trot.

Chester is a large Warmblood standing nearly 17 hands at the shoulder (that's almost 5' 8") and weighing in at about 1400 pounds. He's a Canadian Sport Horse with bright red coloring from top to bottom, including his eyelashes and whiskers.

Chester's sensitive, poised, attentive demeanor—combined with his size and stature—make him a retreat favorite. Oddly enough, I have often been asked if people are intimidated by Chester's size. On the contrary, I explain, his proportions and carriage usually imbue clients with a sense of strength and confidence.

Jill stood in the middle of the round pen, one hip cocked, arms hanging loosely at her side.

"Whenever you're ready, go ahead and ask him to move out as if he were your decision moving into action," I encouraged her.

She paused, then began to half-heartedly wave one arm up and down.

"Okay, Chester, let's go!" Jill commanded. Chester stood quietly by the arena rail, turning his stately head to look at her.

Jill stepped toward Chester, a little threateningly, and he began to walk off. Then she stopped moving. Chester echoed her motion, stopped, and once again turned to her for direction. Clearly confused, he had no idea what she wanted him to do.

Jill gave a small, nervous laugh and looked to me for help. I began to coach her, letting her know first that despite his size, Chester is extremely sensitive and willing. Normally, to get him to move out at any gait—walk, trot, or canter—all I have to do is flick my hand toward his hip and energize my body in a quick but subtle forward motion. I knew that if Chester wasn't moving, it was because Jill wasn't convinced of her own decision. Knowing there were many possibilities for what might be going on for her, I checked in with my own instinct. Suddenly I had a clear image of what could be standing in her way.

“What would it mean for you to double the size of your business in the next year?” I asked her.

“It would mean I wouldn’t be able to spend time with my family,” she answered. “My daughter is just starting high school and I really want to spend as much time with her as possible before she goes off to college. These last few years with her at home are really important to me.” Her voice was quiet as she spoke, but clear and congruent.

I watched Chester begin to lick his lips and chew, a sure sign that he was accepting the authenticity of Jill’s words.

With one eye still on Chester, I dropped my voice to match hers, cocked my head, and looked her in the eyes. I asked, “Then what is it that you need to face up to here, Jill?”

Tears sprang to her eyes and she answered, “That I can’t have both—a bigger business and enough time with my family. I guess I have to face up to the fact that there’s nothing wrong with me for wanting to step off the fast track for a while. But it’s hard because everyone tells me I have so much going for me and I don’t want to let my family, or myself, down.”

I nodded appreciatively.

Then I softly asked her, “So what would it be like if you just bucked up to the fact that time with your daughter is the most important thing right now—and to heck with what other people think?!”

She laughed, only this time the sound rang true with amusement. “It would be a huge relief!” she said.

At precisely that moment, Chester swung his great head and neck around, and purposefully walked over to stand in front of Jill. She rubbed the front of his face as he lowered his head, licking and chewing, then letting out a deep sigh.

“Why don’t you see if he’ll walk with you—only this time, instead of trying to drive him around you, just stay connected with

him as you walk together around the arena.”

Jill stepped off with Chester following. Together, in perfect harmony, they walked several laps around the arena, changed direction, then continued on in a playful zigzag pattern. Chester kept his nose at the back of Jill’s shoulder every step of the way. By the end of their walk, Jill was laughing.

“What does this experience tell you that you need to do?” I asked her. She thought for a moment, idly scratching Chester’s neck as he waited patiently with her. “It tells me that when I stand up for what I know is right for me, everything falls into place and flows effortlessly.”

I pointed out that before, she couldn’t get Chester to even move. Now he was following her around, connected exclusively to the power of her decision and its rightness for her. I also let her know that it takes courage to face up to what has to be done. “You have to do what needs to be done and say what needs to be said,” I said. “This is the essence of buck up.”

“Buck up” means facing facts, speaking the plain truth—first to yourself and then to whomever may need to hear it—and taking action. It does *not* mean “sucking it up.” That phrase means to put up with, or make do with something that’s distasteful or unwanted. “Buck up” is exactly the opposite. It means it’s time to stop putting up with what isn’t right for us.

Buck up comes into play around the notion that “we can have it all.” If we buck up, face facts, and say what needs to be said, then it’s clear that, no, we can’t have it all. At least, we can’t “have *all* of the all.”

By that I mean if we try to have it all—a family, a thriving business, hobbies, a social life, our kid’s social life, time for our mate, time to have fun, time for ourselves—we end up just skimming the surface. There just simply isn’t enough time to have the depth, richness, and high-quality experience we want in every aspect of our life if it’s that full. Skimming is like eating from a buffet that has nothing

but appetizers; they're filling for a short while, but not satisfying over the expanse of the evening.

We have to buck up.

We have to face the facts, do what needs to be done, and say what needs to be said.

Which means that either we decide to skim the surface, passing by every person and activity in our life, breathless and always in a hurry, offering nothing more than a flicker of our time, or . . .

. . . we make choices.

The notion of "balance," as in work/life balance, is often over-rated. Our culture is obsessed with finding balance because we think it will be a magic wand that once waved, somehow makes it possible to indeed, have "all of the all."

We have to buck up and face the fact that we can't have it all. We won't have it all. We never could.

If we try to gain balance by making do with a little less here and there, we achieve nothing but mediocrity. It's like adjusting something being weighed on a store's scale, taking a little off one side and adding it to the other so both sides measure an equal amount. That works fine for weighing flour or beans, but falls short when it comes to measuring passion.

Besides, mediocrity isn't brilliance. How could it be? You can't dole out your passion a little here and a little there.

Passion is demanding, like a jealous horse that bites other horses because they are getting their turn being ridden.

Passion is uncompromising, as well it should be. Passion is no-holds-barred, with the truth that's held deep within our hearts finally being released.

Passion is the juice behind buck up, making it obvious what needs to be done and what needs to be said.

That day in the round pen with Chester, Jill discovered the

power and passion behind bucking up. The idea of trying to balance having time with her daughter while expanding her business had left her feeling stuck. Once she faced the facts (thanks to Chester's honest, authentic response), she felt completely free to pursue her passion.

Did she give up on her business? No. In fact, she continued to use the buck up philosophy to pursue more lucrative clients, raise her rates, and set a clear boundary on her time. Over the next couple of years, Jill earned significantly more money and worked less, loving every moment she had being part of her daughter's life.

Even though her life and her business looked very different than she had originally pictured, did she now feel like she "had it all?" You betcha!

Making choices about how we spend our time isn't the only area in our lives that can benefit from the attitude of buck up. It can certainly galvanize us into action when we're struggling with just about anything.

The nature of struggle reveals a conflict between competing priorities and values. When we buck up and say what needs to be said and do what needs to be done, we clear a path that makes traveling down the road of life free of brambles, stickers, and thorns.

Each time I coach clients on the topic of buck up, I usually hear "Yes, but . . ." come right on the heels of their declaring exactly what they want. In their initial moment of clarity and decisiveness, they had no hesitation saying, "This is it!"

But then fear sets in, and out pops the ubiquitous "Yes, but . . ." protest that arrives as they stand at the crossroads of making a change. If we stop at the point of protest, nothing shifts and we stay stuck. If we move past the "Yes, but . . ." we end up with a life-changing moment, which stays etched in our minds as the time we faced the plain truth with courage and conviction, saying what needed to be said, and doing what needed to be done.

The "Yes, but . . ." is nothing more than our trying to make

everything okay for everyone. Something I bucked up to a while ago is that it's not my job to try to make things okay for everyone—nor is it even possible.

In fact, trying to make it all okay denies the plain truth. Somehow, those around us sense this, even if they can't quite put a finger on it. I've come to realize that if I say what needs to be said and do what needs to be done, people around me will not only be just fine, they'll perhaps be even better than if I had remained silent or stayed behind at that crossroad. A buck up attitude inspires others to face the plain facts within their own life as well. It infuses them with the same sense of courage we are illustrating so brilliantly for them.

Buck Up

Start here . . . Start now . . .

In what area are you standing at a crossroad feeling hesitant or indecisive about something that is important to you? Pick up a pen as you think of being at this crossroad. Gently invite a conversation with yourself in which the truth can be plainly spoken as you complete these sentences:

The truth is, I: _____

The truth is, I: _____

The truth is, I: _____

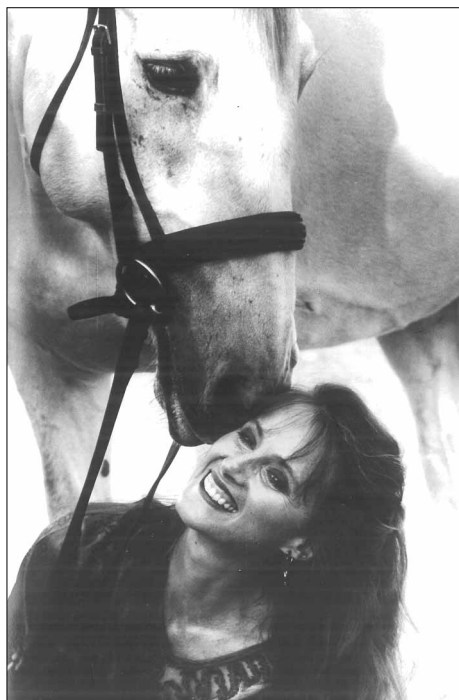
What have you just bucked up to?

What is the “Yes, but . . .” that undoubtedly sprung forward as soon as you heard yourself saying what needs to be said—even just to yourself? Stay focused on what is true for you and “Yes, but...” won’t have any power over you.

It's time to quit hiding out, afraid to let your brilliance shine for fear of seeming too big or too powerful, and buck up to the plain truth of your own Brilliance Unbridled.



Photo credit: Sasha Rose Herbert



Kendall and Jaguar. This photo clearly shows the special connection between the two of them!