

de-escalating ANXIOUS HORSES

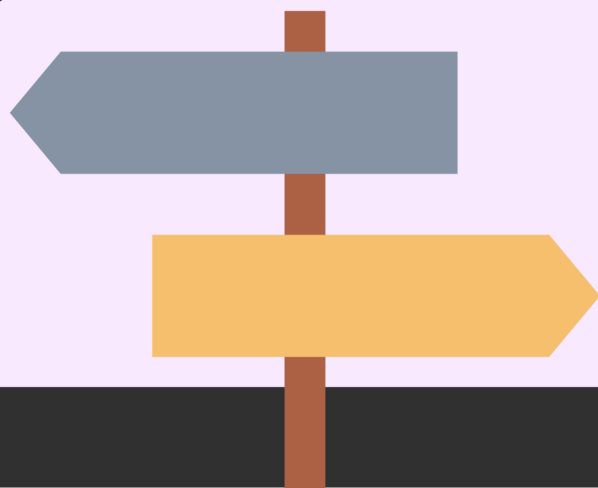
Environment

Set your horse up for success. A skill learned at home may not hold in a new place. Train first in familiar settings, then introduce change gradually. Don't test what hasn't been reinforced.
Confidence grows through preparation.



Choice

Let the horse choose when to engage. Reward the smallest try.
Use feel, not force!



Co-regulation

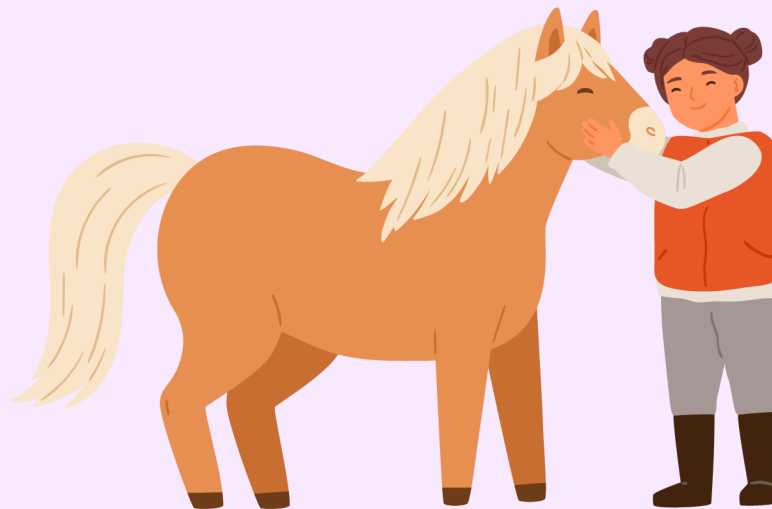
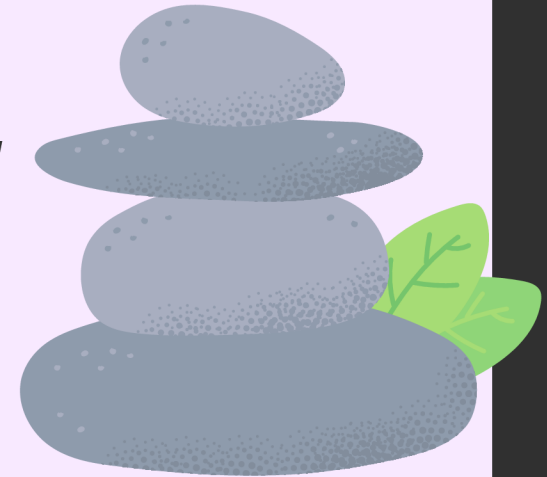
Your horse can't relax if you're holding tension. Breathe, soften, and ground yourself. The more regulated you are, the safer they feel.
Do the work! It matters.

Training Relaxation

Introduce calming patterns like hindquarter yields or small circles when your horse is relaxed. These become anchors in anxious moments.

Trained patterns should be rehearsed in safety, not introduced in stress.

Practice shifting nervous states to build self-regulation. ***Reward curiosity, not just calm.***



Empathy

Recognize and respect signs of stress. Don't force engagement. Listen through observation and wait for a shift before proceeding. ***Let them say no without consequence. It's the first step to yes.***

Re-direct attention

Use trained patterns to keep the horse's mind engaged without overload. When anxiety spikes, interrupt with a surprise sound or movement, then offer your calm presence to help them reset and reconnect.
Don't punish the reaction. Interrupt the spiral, then return to connection.