



# FLYING HORSE FOUNDATION

## SAMPLE LESSON PLANS

# Lesson 4: Mindful Grooming

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## C.A.R.E.S. HIGHLIGHT: SELF-REGULATION AND EMPATHY

**How? Mindfulness** (a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations) can be used as a therapeutic technique. It is a useful way to help students become aware of what state they are in and how to regulate themselves to change this state (for example, it can bring up a mood or calm a feeling). When practicing mindfulness, students can start to recognize how their state impacts the horse's state. Students will begin to see how they can impact others and begin to empathize with the horses in this, which eventually will transition to other situations. Remember to allow certain moments to speak for themselves.

## ON-BOARD

**Review non-verbal communication:** how do our horses communicate to us when we are with them?

### Discuss mindfulness:

- ✦ Defined as *"a state of active, open attention to the present. This state is described as observing one's thoughts and feelings without judging them as good or bad"* (Psychology Today).
- ✦ Awareness of ourselves and our surroundings.
- ✦ Check their energy with (5-4-3-2-1) body scan, deep breathing, matching our breath to the horses, etc.

### Teach about different tools for grooming using mindfulness to examine each tool:

- ✦ Begin with standard FHF groom box; feel with hands/on skin, look at, smell
- ✦ Discuss additional tools and why we choose not to use them (i.e. stiff brush, hard curry comb, shedding blade when horses are not shedding).

### Discuss why grooming is helpful:

- ✦ Grooming can help look for any cuts or scrapes on the horses, ticks or fly bites, find health issues, etc.
- ✦ Horses do not care about being clean, but being free from dirt/debris is necessary for riding, removing caked-on dirt is healthy for the skin, cleaning hooves to keep them free from rocks and packed dirt.
- ✦ Identify areas of the body where the horse might be sensitive (i.e. face, withers, flanks) and how we handle grooming there.

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## **ACTIVITY:**

### **Bring horses into**

#### **Present the activity of mindful grooming:**

- Using hands or the soft brush to help students not become focused on the outcome of using all brushes correctly or having the horse "perfectly" cleaned.

#### **Remind to watch for signals from horses:**

- The facilitator may point out or be curious about how the student thinks the horse is feeling based on non-verbal cues. What does the horse seem to enjoy? Does the horse respond better to light touch or firmer grooming? Why might this be?

#### **Remind students to practice mindfulness techniques while grooming.**

## **ADDITIONAL TEACHING POINTS**

**What did you notice about how your energy affected the horse?**

**Did you catch yourself matching your breath to the horses?**

**What cues did you notice from the horse?**

**How can you use these techniques at home or at school?**

**Why does it help to pay attention and focus on breathing,  
and what happens in the body?**

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