

## WAYS I CAN HELP

### Individual sessions in person, at your yard:

- Equine Bowen Therapy
- Human Bowen Therapy
- Quad X Method Coaching

### Group sessions in person, at your yard:

- In-hand rehabilitation exercises for prevention of injury
  - 'Pilates' – a formal, structured session, with theory
  - 'Medley' – a more informal session

### Online live group sessions:

Fit Together – Complete Workshop – 9 hours plus use of app – 18 weeks  
Delivered on Zoom  
Dates and Tickets: use the QR code  
or TryBooking link below



### Mobile App Tasters and PDF Downloads:

Scan the QR code or use the TryBooking link to find  
exercise challenges to get you started.  
From £15.

**If you are not sure which is the best option for you and your horse,  
please feel free to get in touch.**

TryBooking link:

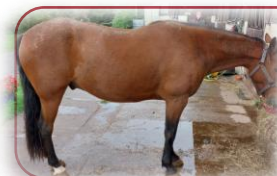
[www.trybooking.com/uk/events/eventlist/eventListingAccount/equinetherapy](http://www.trybooking.com/uk/events/eventlist/eventListingAccount/equinetherapy)

[www.susanryrie.co.uk](http://www.susanryrie.co.uk)

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## NEWSLETTER SPRING 2023



Does your horse have ... **WEAK ABS?**

Improve their strength and protect their back →

Supporting horse owners to keep their horses in the best physical  
condition, to benefit both horse and rider.

Equine Bowen  
Therapy

Fit Together

Quad X Method  
Coaching

A bodywork  
therapy  
renowned for its  
gentle, relaxing,  
yet powerful  
benefits.

Bowen can  
release muscle  
tension and  
spasm, relieve  
aches and pain,  
improve posture  
and gait.

A collection of  
online resources  
that will help you  
expand your  
knowledge and  
understanding of  
your horse's  
musculoskeletal  
system.

These resources  
will guide you to  
improving  
exercise strategy  
for better health.

Professionally  
chosen exercises  
that will  
progressively  
strengthening  
your horse's  
core, and other  
muscles,  
improving  
posture and gait,  
and reducing risk  
of injury.

For 'pre-hab' or  
for rehabilitation.

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### Why are the abdominal muscles important?

The abdominal muscles, or 'abs', are those that lie at the front of the abdomen. They are the 'belly' muscles. They play a very important role in supporting the pelvis and the main trunk of the body in its correct position. When they are weak, the belly will sag. This pulls the back into an exaggerated hollowed posture, placing strain on other muscle groups, and potentially leading to back pain. In the most serious cases it could be a factor in the development of 'kissing spines'.

For ridden horses, the weight of the rider adds to the difficulty of a sagging belly, pulling the back into an even *more* exaggerated hollowed posture. The abdominals are the only muscle group that are able to counteract this. They need to be strong to pull the belly in, raising the back, and carrying the weight. When a horse has a saggy belly unmounted, it suggests the abdominals are not strong enough to do their job of carrying even the natural weight of the horse's torso, and gives a strong warning sign that they are unlikely to be sufficiently strong to carry a rider in addition.

### How can you improve the strength of your horse's abdominal muscles?

Every horse should have the benefit of exercises that are focussed on the abdominal muscles. These are very easy to incorporate into your daily routine. Dynamic Mobilisation Exercises aka Carrot Stretches, should be done 5 days per week; ideally use a minimum of 5 different head positions, hold each position for 5 seconds, and repeat each position 5 times.

Ground pole exercises of any form will encourage your horse to engage the abdominal muscles and lift the back. Aim for at least 15 crossings of individual poles, or if you are working with a grid, aim for 10 repetitions of the grid. The benefits are increased if you initially carry this out in-hand, since it gives the horse the best opportunity of using the muscles to raise its back; after perhaps a month, do the same exercises ridden.

### Why does my horse not seem to improve?

Weakness of the abdominal muscles may not be the whole story.

Poor habits of movement often develop where there is muscle weakness. Habits can be difficult to correct without a structured approach. This could be one reason why you fail to see progress.

Muscle tension, even muscle spasm, is another difficulty that can accompany muscle weakness. This sometimes resolves naturally with rest and exercise. However, it is more likely to need professional intervention; perhaps the use of prescribed pain killers, or muscle release therapy from a bodywork specialist.

Lack of progress might also indicate a more serious injury, and if at any time you are concerned that your horse may be in pain or discomfort, you should always seek advice from your vet.



They say a camera never lies. However, it can mislead and you should be careful what you believe... but the improvement with this pony was real.

The picture on the left was taken before he started an exercise regime designed to improve abdominal and core strength. The picture on the right was taken only 10 days later, and the belly is noticeably less 'saggy'. This change is from an improvement in muscle control; continued work will lead to gains in strength.