

Acupressure Methods *for* **Horses:**

**Calm Your Horse, Support Health,
and Improve Performance
with 8 Powerful Points**

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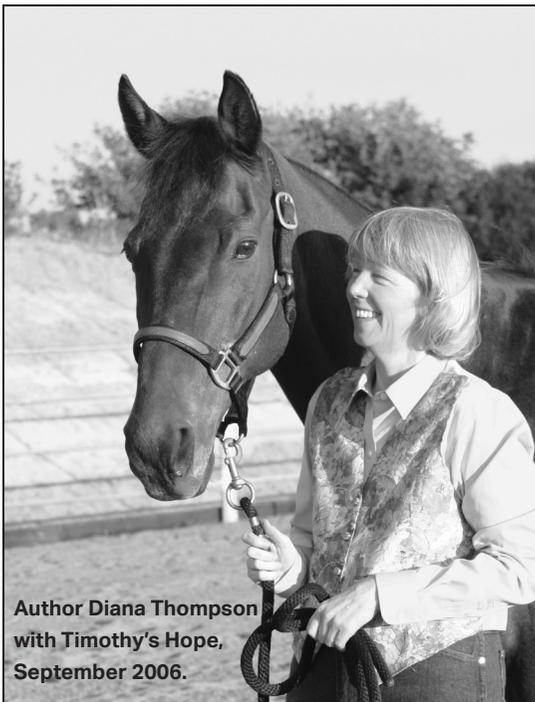
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Dedication

I dedicate this book to Timothy's Hope, my beloved Thoroughbred gelding, who passed away in 2012 at the age of 33. Timothy first came into my barn in the spring of 1985 after several rough years on the race track. He was a graceful, strong, injured fellow who challenged my training skills. As we worked together, Timothy completely captured my heart and I became devoted to his care. I searched for methods that would help him heal his physical and emotional wounds.

One of the methods Timothy loved was acupressure, and it dramatically improved his health. This success inspired me to deepen my study of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), where I found more ways to help Tim. In the process, I gained a comprehensive education that led me to become an international instructor and author of TCM as it applies to equine acupressure and wellness. These are gifts I will treasure forever. The eight points in this book include many of Timothy's favorites. I hope you will enjoy sharing them with your horse.



**Author Diana Thompson
with Timothy's Hope,
September 2006.**

Author's Note

I was introduced to acupressure more than 30 years ago by Dr. Bob Anderson, a veterinarian with training in acupuncture. He gave me brief instructions on how to find a few points and encouraged me to give acupressure a try. To my surprise, when I held my fingers on the points, the horses lowered their heads and became quite calm, even sleepy. When I used the points two or three times a week, many horses showed improvement in behavior and health.

Amazed and somewhat mystified by the positive results, I searched for more information. Equine veterinarians, practitioners of human health care, and many horses helped me refine my acupressure skills and expand my understanding.

An important part of my education came from the study of Traditional Chinese Medicine. This vast health care system provides the theory and core methods for applying acupressure. I learned the depth of each point's influence and a gentle, time-honored way of doing acupressure that most horses readily accept, if not immediately love.

Acupressure Benefits Horses in Many Situations

During the last three decades I've used acupressure to calm fearful horses and relax tense ones. It's helped me improve horse performance, learning ability, and endurance. I've also used it along with veterinary care to support horses who were ill, injured, or experiencing pain in their muscles and joints.

The remarkable results in the horses inspired me to teach the methods to horse owners. In my work as a college instructor and horse trainer, I've taught thousands of students how to use acupressure. They also report health-changing, even life-saving responses in their horses. Their accomplishments motivate me to continue spreading the word so even more horses can benefit. I wrote *Acupressure Methods for Horses* with this goal in mind.

The book is designed to teach you how to do acupressure safely and successfully with your horse. It includes step-by-step instructions in two proven methods and more than 50 photographs. The eight points featured in the book are easy to find and powerful in their influence. When acupressure is done on one or more of these points with the methods shown in the book, most horses relax into a peaceful state and positive changes take place in their bodies.

To make sure the contents of the book succeed in teaching acupressure, I sent an earlier draft to horse owners for a trial run. In order to truly test the material, I gave it to people I'd never met who didn't have experience with acupressure. They agreed to read the book and try the methods with their horses.

To my delight and relief, the book passed its evaluation. The horse owners were able to use the acupressure methods and points to calm their horses and address various issues. I asked the owners to share their experiences and give me input on what to improve. Their comments helped me polish the book into its final form and gave me confidence that you will be able to do acupressure successfully using the methods described in these pages.

Just Five to 10 Minutes of Acupressure Can Make a Difference

Acupressure is easy to add to your program. In less than 10 minutes you can touch one or two points, relaxing your horse's mind and his muscles. This process improves your horse's mental focus and his movement ability. In many situations, it brings about a positive change in your partnership, whether you're practicing ground handling, riding for pleasure, or performing in competition.

Acupressure is also used in longer sessions of three to eight points that are chosen for their ability to support a specific aspect of health. This type of session takes between 15 and 30 minutes and often yields deep, long-lasting benefits.

To help you try this approach, I've explained how to combine the points in the book into five combinations that address common emotional and physical problems.

I wish you the best as you add acupressure to your horse's life. It's an amazing feeling to use the gentle touch of your fingers to calm your horse, deepen your connection, and improve your performance.

Diana Thompson

Fulton, California

June, 2018



How to Use the Five Parts of the Book

Part One: Acupressure Methods

I use step-by-step instructions and photos of two hands-on methods to clearly show you how to do acupressure. I show you the changes in muscle tone and posture most horses experience during acupressure sessions. These details help you adjust your technique and point choices to meet your horse's needs.

Part One includes language and core concepts from Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). If you were raised with Western medicine, as I was, this information may be hard to understand. My advice is to be patient and persistent. Read the text, study the photos, and touch your horse. As you apply acupressure and see your horse's responses, I hope the remarkable benefits become clear.

Part Two: The Locations and Uses of Eight Points

Each point has a four-page layout. The first page features a large photo showing the point's location. The text on the next three pages includes instructions on how to find the point and describes its physical and emotional influences, wellness applications, support for medical situations, and TCM functions.

As you read through the uses of the eight points you'll find some wording that's repeated. This occurs when a point has one or more of the same uses as another point, such as calming the horse or relaxing tight muscles. ***For this book, I intentionally chose points that have similar uses.*** The overlap allows three or more points to be used in powerful, multiple-point sessions where the actions of one point reinforce the influence of another point.

This similarity also gives you a choice of places on the horse's body where you can work on points that have similar functions. For example, if your horse doesn't want you to touch his head, the location of several points with a calming influence, you can move to his front leg or chest, where two other points with calming functions are found.

Part Three: About Acupressure Sessions

I discuss which point to touch first during a session and the benefits of each point when used alone or in combination with other points. I also describe three situations where it's beneficial to use just one or two points in a short session.

Part Four: Point Combinations for Specific Issues

I explain how to use three to six points in longer, focused acupressure sessions. I provide five multiple-point combinations that deeply calm the horse, support good health, address physical issues, and improve performance. The routines are based on the Three Treasures of Health, a core principle of TCM.

Part Five: Success Stories, Charts, and Resources

This section contains six real-horse acupressure success stories, a photo chart of the eight points, a sample acupressure session form, and a two-page chart showing the uses of the eight points. It includes acknowledgments, photo credits, and resources. Additional educational materials are listed, including my online acupressure course and book, *Acupressure Point Charts for Horses*, which features the locations and uses of 128 equine acupressure points.

Additional Tips

When the name of an organ is capitalized, such as Heart, it's being mentioned as part of the broader TCM context. This includes the physical organ and functions within the body as well as its energetic influence, emotional connections, and other relationships. If the organ's name is printed in lower case, such as heart, it's being referred to in the Western medical context of the physical organ.

Contributions from Other Professionals

Sean Fannin is a practitioner of Chinese Medicine who's been my primary teacher for the past 18 years. He is the technical advisor for this book and a primary source of the information it contains. You will find quotes from Sean and references to him throughout the book. His contributions, background, and website resources are described on page 118.

Insights and quotes from veterinarians Dr. Kerry Ridgway, Dr. Peggy Fleming, Dr. Allen Schoen, and Dr. Are Thoresen add to the book. These practitioners are highly regarded for their expertise in acupuncture and Chinese Medicine. I took professional courses from Dr. Ridgway and Dr. Fleming and attended lectures given by Dr. Schoen. See page 118 for information on Dr. Ridgway and his contributions to my education and the book. Educational resources written by Dr. Fleming, Dr. Schoen, Dr. Thoresen, and others are listed on page 122.

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Max and Diana share a quiet moment as Diana applies acupressure to GV 24.

Acupressure Is a Safe, Gentle Method

Acupressure is carried out using the gentle pressure of your fingers or palm to stimulate the qi of an acupressure point. It does not involve heavy pressure of your hands, the insertion of needles, the use of magnets, or the use of machines such as lasers or light-emitting devices.

If you apply acupressure using the methods I describe in this book, it will bring about a positive change in most horses. If you apply poor technique or make an incorrect point selection there won't be any influence on the horse – positive or negative. If your horse has tension or pain, it may be hard for him to relax with acupressure. Tips for working with this type of horse are on pages 30-31.

Medical Disclaimer

This text, *Acupressure Methods For Horses*, is not a substitute for the medical advice of a licensed veterinarian. Readers should consult with a veterinarian regarding the health of their horse(s). If a horse shows signs of poor health, illness, or injury, call a veterinarian and follow his or her advice. Once medical help is on the way, use acupressure only as time and safety allows.

List of Cautions:

- ♦ Do not use acupressure on horses who have abscesses, tumors, or skin infections.
- ♦ Do not use acupressure in areas of the body that have open wounds, inflammation, or swelling.
- ♦ Acupressure should be carried out on a pregnant mare only under the supervision of a veterinarian trained in Traditional Chinese Medicine.
- ♦ For safety, keep a halter and lead rope on the horse while you carry out an acupressure session.

Traditional Chinese Medicine and Qi

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) refers to a group of health care methods that's at least 3,000 years old. Acupressure is one of the methods in this system, along with acupuncture, diet, herbs, massage, and movement exercises like tai chi. A primary goal of the methods is to prevent illness by creating the best possible health in each person or animal. This emphasis is found in writings that date back 2,300 years.

One concept that's fundamental to TCM and acupressure is the belief that within all living beings there's a life force energy called **qi** (chee). This energy:

- ◆ Activates bodily functions like the heartbeat, breathing, digestion, reproduction, temperature, and immune function.
- ◆ Creates full, developed muscles that move the horse forward at the walk, trot, and gallop with strength and grace.
- ◆ Fuels the ability to think clearly and make wise decisions.

The idea of an energy within us that activates our bodily functions is not unique to TCM. Practitioners who work with the health care system known as Ayurveda, which was developed in India, use the word prana to describe this energy. Chiropractic physicians in the United States and other countries use the phrase life force.

According to TCM principles, the correct movement of qi in the body creates good physical and emotional health by relaxing the muscles, moving the fluids, and keeping the internal functions operating smoothly. This optimum state of health is called the **correct flow of qi** or the **correct qi**. Acupressure brings about positive changes in the horse because it supports the correct flow of qi.

In contrast, an incorrect flow of qi in the body leads to poor physical or emotional health. This state is called an **incorrect flow of qi**, a **pattern of disharmony**, or just a **pattern**. Incorrect flows of qi leave the horse vulnerable to illness, injury, and emotional upset.

The horse's nutrition, exercise, training, and living situation influence the flow of qi in his body. These factors support the correct flow of qi or cause an incorrect flow. Practitioner Sean Fannin says: "In summary, if we have the right or correct movement of qi within the body then everything is going to function properly."

More About Qi

There are many types or qualities of qi energy at work within our bodies. For instance, the qi known as channel qi flows beneath the surface of the body in fairly set pathways, similar to water moving in a stream or river. These invisible flows are called meridians, channels, or vessels. Each channel is a concentration of qi with certain characteristics that give it the ability to influence specific organs and bodily functions. The approximate path of the Gall Bladder channel of energy is shown in the photo on page 15.

Acupressure Points

Acupressure points are small areas on the skin where the qi comes up to the surface of the body and concentrates.

Acupressure Definitions

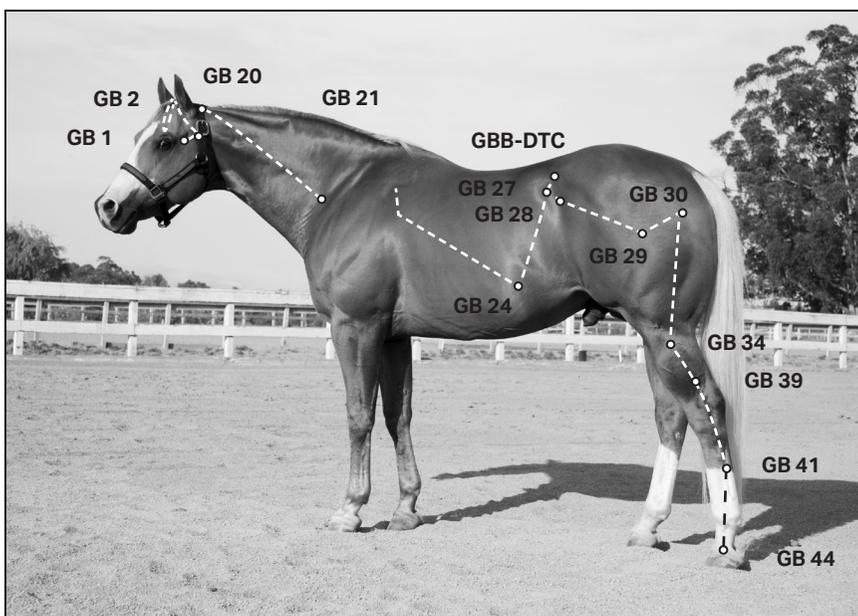
Acupressure is the art of placing your fingers or palm on a point in order to connect with the unique qi at its location. The connection of the energy of your body to the qi energy of the acupressure point increases the correct flow of qi at the area of the point. This improves the health of the tissues and structures in the area. It also strengthens the physical functions and the emotional states energized by that specific type or quality of qi.

When a point is activated with acupressure it has the ability to create one or more changes within the body. Here are some examples:

- ♦ **Local effect** – As stated above, acupressure increases the correct flow of qi to the area of the point. This improves the health of the tissues and structures in the area. For instance, Gall Bladder 21 (GB 21) is located at the base of the horse's neck in front of the shoulder (see the photos on page 15 and page 36). The local effect of acupressure on GB 21 creates relaxation of the muscles in the neck and shoulders.
- ♦ **Channel effect** – A point on a channel (meridian) can help problems in areas on the path of that channel. For example, Gall Bladder 41 (GB 41) is located on the lower hind leg near the end of the Gall Bladder channel (see the photo on page 15). This point is known to help relieve problems of the eyes, which are located near the beginning of the channel on the horse's head.
Note: Horses with eye problems should be examined by a veterinarian.

- ◆ **Internal influence** – Acupressure on some points influences the activity of a specific internal organ. It could also support the health of a type of tissue, such as the horse’s muscles, or one of the body substances, such as blood. A point’s internal influence is usually related to the energy of the channel where it’s located. For instance, since GB 21 is located on the Gall Bladder channel, acupressure on GB 21 stimulates the activity of Gall Bladder energy within the body.

The primary function of Gall Bladder energy is to support the TCM Liver in stimulating the correct flow of qi. This creates physical health by relaxing the horse’s muscles, tendons, and ligaments, moving the fluids, and keeping the internal process of the body operating smoothly. It also supports emotional health by relieving emotional tension, anger, irritability, and some forms of depression. These functions make GB 21 a valuable point for creating health. For a thorough discussion of the uses of this point see pages 36-39.



The white dotted line on this photo of Max shows the approximate route of the qi flowing in the Gall Bladder channel. The white dots are acupressure points where the Gall Bladder energy comes up to the surface and concentrates. GB 21, which is located at the base of the neck, is one of the eight points described in this book.