

When I was a little walk- trotter; my trainer required my friends and me to have a huge smile as we were showing in the arena. As little ten year- olds, my friends and I loved the idea of showing off ours smiles in the arena! When we were little, showing was so laid back and enjoyable, we didn't care about the color of the ribbon. We felt lucky to be able to experience what it was like to show; if we messed up, oh well!

As my friends and I got older, we stopped smiling in the show ring and even while schooling. No more walk/ trot meant no more smile in our eyes! What had really happened was that the competitiveness had taken over. Riding was no longer fun; it was only for the trophies and ribbons. I will be the first one to admit that I, too, was becoming a monster. Friends were no longer friends; they were becoming enemies. We fought to ride and show our trainer's best horses, and disrespected our parents. When we lost our smile, we lost the true meaning of riding.

At fourteen years- old, I realized that the pressure I was feeling was not how horseback riding should feel. I decided at that point, I was no longer going to act like that spoiled bratty kid I was becoming. I was taking everything for granted and not enjoying the moment.

As I have gotten older, I have learned that competitions can be just as fun as they were when I was a walk- trotter. If you do not enjoy what you do, then you shouldn't do it. Every person's needs and desires vary, do what makes you happy.

Nobody is ever too good to smile! Smiles are infectious, they spread like a disease. Be happy while on a horses back, they know and can feel your mood. The horse world is one of many ups and downs. Smile because you love what you are doing and the journey that goes along with it!