



# Reclaim Your Confidence in the Saddle

*An Introduction to Integral Eye Movement Therapy  
for Equestrians*

by Rose Ferguson, C.Ht

# When Fear Takes the Reins

*Every detail tells a story*

The barn used to be your sanctuary. You'd arrive early just to spend extra time grooming, breathing in that familiar smell of hay and leather. You and your horse moved together, not always perfectly, but joyfully. There was trust. Flow. A quiet partnership that made everything else in life feel manageable.

And then something changed.

Maybe it was a bad fall. Or maybe it happened more gradually, a near-miss here, a bolt there, until one day you realized: the joy is gone.

Now there's just that tightness in your chest when you walk to the barn. The hesitation before you swing your leg over. The voice that whispers, "What if it happens again?"

Fear has a remarkable ability to linger long after the moment that caused it has passed. It can live quietly in the background of our thoughts, shaping our reactions and holding us back from the things we once loved. Even when we know a fear is irrational, our bodies tell a different story: tightness in the chest, a racing heart, or that familiar sense of dread.



# Why Fear Doesn't Fade When the Bruises Do

Here's what I've learned working with equestrians:

*The body remembers what the mind wants to forget.*

Even after the physical injuries heal, your nervous system holds onto that moment of panic. The sound of hooves slipping. The jolt of impact. The breath that never quite came back. Every time you approach your horse now, some part of you is scanning for danger, braced for the worst.

This isn't a weakness. This is your nervous system doing exactly what it was designed to do: protect you.

The problem is, that old protective response doesn't know the difference between a real threat and a remembered one. It treats every ride like the fall might happen again. And so you find yourself stuck between two impossible choices: push through the fear and risk freezing up, or step away from something you love.

## The Conflict Between Logic and Emotion

After a riding accident, it's common to feel torn between two truths: You want to ride again, yet your body resists.

You may picture yourself sitting calmly in the saddle, but as you approach the mounting block, your chest tightens, your breathing shortens, and the old fear floods back in. Fear resides within the body's memory network.

Every sensory detail of a traumatic experience: the sound of the wind, the smell of hay, or even the color of your riding gear, can become linked to the brain's danger response. That's why, even when you know intellectually that you're safe, your body reacts as though you're back in that moment.

*It's not resistance; it's a learned survival response.*

# What IEMT Does Differently

Integral Eye Movement Therapy (IEMT) offers a powerful, yet gentle, way to shift the emotional patterns that keep fear alive. It works directly with how your nervous system stores emotional memories

When we experience trauma (and yes, a bad fall absolutely counts as trauma) our brain can't always process the information properly. That unprocessed memory takes up bandwidth in your mind, creating an emotional template that colors every similar experience.

So now, instead of approaching your horse with curiosity and presence, you're approaching through the lens of that old fear. Your body is responding to the past, not the present moment.

IEMT helps your brain finally file that memory where it belongs: in the past. Not forgotten (you'll still remember what happened) but no longer carrying that overwhelming charge.

One client described it clearly after a session. She said that her life-threatening accident finally felt like a memory, rather than something her body and mind were still living through. The event was still accessible, but it no longer felt immediate or overwhelming.

## **That distinction matters.**

By accessing the neurological pattern linked to the fearful memory and guiding the eyes through specific movement sequences, IEMT allows the emotional charge to weaken or even dissolve, often within just a few sessions.

Here's what makes it especially powerful for riders:

**It's content-free.** You don't have to relive every detail of the fall or explain exactly what happened. You simply give the memory a label and a number (1-10), and we work from there. Many riders tell me this feels like a relief; they've been told to talk it out so many times, but rehashing the story never seemed to help.

**It's remarkably fast.** Often, just three sets of eye movements can significantly reduce the intensity of even the most challenging memories. We're talking 90 seconds at a time of focused work, not months or years of therapy.

**It addresses the nervous system directly.** This isn't about thinking more positively or being brave. It's about helping your body understand that you're safe now, so it can finally let go of that old protective pattern.

# The Journey Back to Joy

Sessions begin by gently exploring the past experiences that created fear, such as a fall, a horse bolting, or a moment of panic. Using precise eye movement patterns, we help the brain recode the way those memories are stored.

Once the emotional tension tied to those memories softens, we move on to the deeper layers: fear, anxiety, guilt, or even shame. As these emotional responses shift, riders often find themselves regaining balance, both mentally and physically.

Their posture relaxes, their communication with the horse improves, and the joy of riding naturally returns.

## What Riders Experience

Clients frequently describe feeling lighter, calmer, and more at ease in situations that once triggered intense anxiety. One client described it perfectly:

*"I didn't realize how much energy fear was taking until it was gone. Now I have room for joy again."*

Perhaps most importantly, riders become emotionally neutral about their past experiences. The memories remain, but their intensity fades. With emotional tension released, riders rediscover focus, fluidity, and trust—the hallmarks of confident horsemanship.

They move from hypervigilance (scanning for danger, braced for disaster) to calm readiness (aware, responsive, but not afraid). That's where your best riding happens: when your body is relaxed, your mind is clear, and your heart is open.





# Falling in Love with Horses Again

When fear no longer clouds the experience, something beautiful happens. Riders often tell me they're falling in love with horses all over again. Not in a dramatic, lightning-bolt way, but quietly, naturally. Like coming home.

They notice the rhythm again. The warmth of their horse's neck. The way the world feels bigger and quieter all at once when you're riding through the woods.

It's the feeling that first drew you to the barn: that sense of freedom and flow. Much like professional athletes who use hypnosis to reignite their passion for sport, equestrians who integrate IEMT often describe a deep, emotional shift. They move from trying not to fall to riding with heart.

# Freedom Lives in Trust

Let's be honest: horses are powerful, unpredictable creatures. True confidence doesn't come from pretending there's no risk. It comes from trusting your body, your instincts, and your partnership.

***Freedom isn't the absence of risk. It's the presence of trust.***

Fear keeps us small, rigid, disconnected. But when we release those old patterns, we can access something deeper: awareness. Calm readiness. The ability to respond rather than react. True healing isn't just the absence of fear. It's the restoration of connection: between rider and self, and between rider and horse. When your body feels safe again, your horse senses it. That shared sense of safety rebuilds mutual trust, allowing confidence and joy to return to every ride.

## Your Turn to Heal

If fear has been quietly shaping your choices, maybe keeping you out of the saddle, holding you back in lessons, or making you question your instincts, you're not alone. And you don't have to stay there.

Fear doesn't have to dictate your life or your time in the saddle. Through IEMT, it's possible to rewire your emotional responses and reconnect with the calm, confident version of yourself that's still there beneath the fear.

Whether you're returning to riding after a fall or facing fear in another part of life, remember this:

*Your past experiences do not define your future.  
Healing is not only possible, it's achievable,  
and often more quickly than you think.*



# Meet Rose

Rose Ferguson is a Certified IEMT Practitioner, Certified Hypnotherapist, and National Board Certified Health and Wellness Coach. She specializes in sports hypnosis, trauma recovery, anxiety, fears, and phobias.

Rose is passionate about helping people to release the fear that keeps them from pursuing the things they love and the beautiful life they deserve.

**Learn more about Rose at [integrativehypnotherapyva.com](https://integrativehypnotherapyva.com)**