

[!\[\]\(666e09182d4cd268646ea700ea60dcdf_img.jpg\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/abesselink/53299111383) There are times when certain themes present themselves in our lives, repeat themselves, and make themselves readily apparent. It is almost like the theme is mocking you - hello, here I am, pay attention to me if you dare. Sometimes, you become acutely aware of these recurrent themes, especially when they appear across several layers of your existence. However, if you pay attention, you might learn something. That's where I am right now.

The recurrent theme coursing its way through my existence is summarized in a 12th-century metaphor: You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.

You can provide all the best guidance or wisdom or knowledge or expertise to that horse. It could be a family member, a student, a peer, or a patient. You put your best foot forward to give them the best of you, the best you have to offer. Why? Simple - because you care for their well-being, and you care for their success.

But the harsh reality is that all the best guidance in the world might never get that horse to drink. The horse might be thirsty, dehydrated, or need food and drink. However, they still won't drink. That same family member, student, peer, or patient might refuse all efforts and sometimes you, the self-appointed horse leader, just can't understand it.

Here's the problem - it all makes sense to the horse, not you. As the horse, they are going to do what they are going to do for whatever reasons they are going to do them, given the narrative that they've constructed for themselves. They draw upon their cognitive structure, experiences, and self-image. They will do whatever they can, more often than not, to remain within their comfort zones. They will operate from their System 1 thinking - fast, reflexive, experiential, and driven by intuition more than logic. And when they are led to water - what appears to be an obvious and perhaps even readily available solution to the thirst - they will push back. Hard. They will refuse to drink.

It is the refusal to drink that is difficult to watch and even more difficult to experience as the horse leader. Sometimes solutions are hard to find, sometimes they require more resources or expertise, and sometimes they are right before us. But we find them. It is the rejection of these solutions that proves challenging to the ever-supportive horse leader.

The horse will do whatever the horse will do, regardless of how we lead it, where we lead it, or even why we choose to lead it. In effect, it's not a reflection of the horse leader, their love or compassion, or a plethora of solutions. It's a reflection of the horse itself.

And you know what? Just that one simple realization is a big step towards internal peace and understanding.

The theme presented itself, and I heard it loud and clear. But now what? I'll expand on some thoughts in Part II.

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