

Book Review

***Lead Like a Lead Mare*, Charlie Botting (published 2023). Reviewed May 3rd 2023 by Alice, UK**

Charlie Botting's concept of a Lead Mare is founded on the dynamics of a horse herd, where experienced female horses take turns in leading the herd in a calm, stable and reliable way which establishes trust and loyalty with the others. This concept is used as an analogy for empowered women who, if they take responsibility and initiative, can lead others by example in a collaborative and egalitarian way. This is the definition of a matriarchal system of leadership where authentic power comes from within and aims to empower others, as opposed to a patriarchal system of power over others, domination and competition.

Becoming a Lead Mare

The qualities and principles that make a Lead Mare include:

Conscious and Aware

Empowerment – Intellectually, financially, physically, emotionally and spiritually

Personal development

Personal responsibility

Initiative taking

Accountability

Getting out of her comfort zone

Positive mentality

Solution-oriented mindset

Commitment

Compassion, empathy and non-judgement

Contribution

Conservation

Nature connection

Spiritual growth

Appreciation

Calm, stable and reliable

Capable, independent and self-reliant

Flexible and adaptable

A Lead Mare-in-Training can study the teaches of multiple personal development books that will aid her in the development of the above qualities. See our book reviews of each of these books to find out more:

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Stephen Covey)

The 5 Levels of Leadership (John C Maxwell)

High Performance Habits (Brendon Burchard)

Braving the Wilderness (Brené Brown)

Remarkable! (Dr Randy Ross and David Salyers)

The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success (Deepak Chopra)

A New Earth (Eckhart Tolle)

Seat of the Soul (Gary Zukav)

Spiritual Partnerships (Gary Zukav)

The Conscious Parent (Shefali Tsabary)

Gerry, Get Your Gun (Gerry Bracewell)

Leading Like a Lead Mare

Once a Lead Mare-in-Training has reached a certain level of personal development in the areas previously stated, she is ready to begin practicing her leadership (although it's never too early to begin learning). Lead Mares will all have their own unique style of leadership which draws on their individual strengths and natural qualities, but the most experienced Lead Mares are comfortable using all of these strategies, either one at a time to fit appropriate situations or all at once:

Collaborative

No one person makes all the decisions. Everyone's contribution and opinions are valued and asked for. It is understood that each person has unique skills; these are leveraged and all are encouraged to take initiative and responsibility in leading in accordance with their strengths and mentoring others in skill development to empower themselves and others.

Empathic

Deeply understanding and caring for team members, and trusting that everyone always gives their best. Creating an appreciative team culture where time is taken to get to know people's interests, goals and purposes, and remaining humble as a leader by taking accountability for mistakes.

Mentoring

Creating a culture of learning where skill development and mentoring is available to everyone, for everyone. Encouraging people to take responsibility to teach others new skills, and involving as many people as possible in the shared learning process. Valuing new members for their new perspectives and unique skills.

Personal responsibility

Being a role model for the team with one's own behaviour. Assessing your own strengths and weaknesses and accepting responsibility when making mistakes, acting unconsciously or not following through on commitments. Also holding the team accountable in this way and ensuring appropriate levels of reciprocation, especially regarding nature conservation.

Lead From Behind

Leading from a calm, stable and reliable base without desire for the spotlight. Achieved by delegating and providing careful guidance to allow others to take initiative for leadership, while acting as their safety net.

Empowerment Cultures

An Empowerment Culture led by Lead Mares and Empowered Men – men who are comfortable with working side by side with women as equals and being mentored – is inherently matriarchal in nature. It is a communal environment which facilitates supporting each other through mentoring and sharing, as well as growing towards both the individual and collective interests, goals and purpose. This is an example of a Level 5 Leadership culture (John C. Maxwell's *The Five Levels of Leadership*) which seeks to constantly create new leaders and develop everyone in the community simultaneously.

An Empowerment Culture values the contribution of all members equally, recognises everyone's unique skills and perspectives, encourages people to take responsibility and initiative, and holds everyone accountable for their actions. The foundational values of such a community are intentional, purpose-driven work and an awareness of how Environmental

Social Governance (ESG) factors inform everyone's actions, in terms of impacting nature, empowering others, and aligning with established standards and values.

Botting refers to Gary Zukav's concept of spiritual partnerships as the foundation for (ideally all) a Lead Mare's relationships, as they form a stable base for building an Empowerment Culture. When people are not living and working in an Empowerment Culture or are in relationships not founded on a spiritual partnership with the intention of mutual growth, the unconscious members of both sexes can be resistant to Lead Mares. This may stem from subscribing to stereotypical gender perspectives, fearing any change from the patriarchal status quo, or having the mentality of 'If I can't have it, no one can'. These ideas may be driven by Eckhart Tolle's concepts of the Ego and Pain Body, and the triggering of their inner frightened parts.

Overcoming Resistance

In all situations where resistance to a Lead Mare's presence and/or growth is encountered, be it in the workplace, within her community, with family and friends, in her intimate relationship or in her role as a parent, a Lead Mare cannot undo her progress and so has to make a decision:

- 1) Finding like-minded people to introduce Lead Mare concepts to and begin building an Empowerment Culture with.
- 2) If the situation is temporary, accepting the situation for now, keeping relationships superficial and using the experience for as much growth as possible before moving on when the time is right.
- 3) Leaving the workplace, community or relationship.

Founding Relationships on Spiritual Partnerships

If, however, spiritual partnerships are established as the basis for a Lead Mare's relationships, then resistance and unhealthy dynamics – even in the event that they do surface – will not be perpetuated, as the partnership is entered into with the understanding that the relationship will only exist as long as each person takes responsibility for their own growth, and that challenges are necessary for evolvment. A spiritual partnership naturally dissolves amicably if one or both people have stopped growing or are unwilling to continue investing in their interests, goals and purpose.

Lead Mares in Intimate Relationships

For a Lead Mare to be truly empowered in her intimate relationships, she will likely progress through the following levels in order, attaining a spiritual partnership before starting a physical relationship.

1) Intellectual Relationship

Relationship level: Acquaintances

Involves: Getting to know who a person is, including their interests, goals and purpose. With a romantic interest, there may already be some physical attraction but it is not the time to act on physical impulses at this stage.

2) Emotional Relationship

Relationship level: Friends

Involves: Building an idea of each other's character and principles. Beginning to feel appreciation for time together.

3) Spiritual Relationship

Relationship level: Best friends

Involves: Developing a deep connection. Establishing a spiritual partnership as both people are committed to their personal development.

4) Physical Relationship

Relationship level: Intimate partners

Involves: Expressing a relationship physically as an extension to the deep intellectual, emotional and spiritual connection now established. Physical acts are used as an opportunity to further personal growth. Involves learning how to balance each person's biological and emotional needs, along with their chosen roles and skills in this longer-term partnership.

Our Community

The concept of a Lead Mare developed with our ranch community (human and non-human) as its basis, where Lead Mares-in-Training come to be challenged and mentored, and in turn mentor the next generation of Lead Mares. This furthers their own personal growth at the same time as creating a self-sustaining empowerment culture of Lead Mares and Empowered Men.

Every woman has the capacity to be a Lead Mare, and every man an Empowered Man. Which Lead Mares or Empowered Men can you look to as role models? How can you yourself be a role model, lead by example and mentor the next generation?