

Seabiscuit Transcript

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Seabiscuit

This training is Identifying Symptoms: The Seabiscuit Case Study

We're about to watch a segment out of Seabiscuit and what we're going to do is we are going to treat this segment as a case study. So your job is to identify the person who has had a traumatic event and then also look at what symptoms they may have experienced and what were the reactions of the people around them.

Seabiscuit dialog

The first time he saw Seabiscuit, the colt was walking through the fog at five in the morning. Smith would say later that the horse looked right through him, as if to say "What the hell are you looking at? Who do you think you are?" He was a small horse, barely 15 hands. He was hurting too. There was a limp in his walk, a wheezing when he breathed. Smith didn't pay attention to that. He was looking the horse in the eye. He was the son of Hardtack sired by the mighty Man-of-War, but the breeding did little to impress anyone at Claiborne Farm.

"Get rid of him."

At six months he was shipped off the same as the legendary trainer of Sonny Fitzsimmons who, overtime, developed a similar opinion of him.

"Is that a race horse or a lead pony?"

The judgment wasn't helped by his gentle nature. Where his sire had been a fierce almost violent competitor, Seabiscuit took to sleeping for huge chunks of the day, enjoyed lolling for hours under the bows of the Juniper trees. His other great talent was eating. Though half the size of other colts, Seabiscuit could frequently eat twice as much. Fitzsimmons decided the horse was lazy and felt sure he could train the obstinance out of him.

"I want you to hit him as many times as you can over a quarter of a mile."

When he didn't improve, they decided the colt was incorrigible. They made him a training partner to better horses, forcing him to lose head to head duals to boost the confidence of the other animal. By the time he was three years old, Seabiscuit was struggling in two cheap claiming races a week. Soon he grew as bitter and angry as his sire Hardtack had been. He was sold for the rock bottom price of two thousand dollars. And, of course, it all made sense. Champions were large. They were sleek. They were

without imperfection. When they finally did race him, he did just what they had trained him to do. He lost.

“What exactly is it that you like?”

“He’s got spirit.”

“I’ll say.”

“Can he be ridden?”

“Oh, sure...eventually.”

“He can be a little touchy.”

“I got it.”

“No, really.”

“I’m fine.”

(As jockey approaches, horse rears up.)

JOCKEY: “That horse is nuts.”

(Owner sees the jockeys/boys wrestling and realizes something about the horse.)

NEW JOCKEY: (enters stall and slowly approaches horse) I’m not afraid of you. Sure, I know. I know what you’re all about. Are you hungry? (extends half an apple) Yeah, I bet you are. Huh? Come on. Come on, Boy. (laughs a little) Yeah.

OWNER: Why don’t you just breeze him around one turn and give the folks a look?”

OWNER: (introducing people) Red Pollard, Mr. and Mrs. Howard. (Horse acts up as Mr. Howard reaches his hand out to jockey with a “Hi.”)

OWNER: Well, we’ll just be moving on.

NEW JOCKEY: Does he breeze?

OWNER: Well, we’ll find out.

(Horse runs a few laps hard.)

MRS. HOWARD: He seems pretty fast.

OWNER: Yeah, in every direction. Hell, he's so beat up it's hard to tell what he's like. I just can't help feeling they got him so screwed up running in circles he's forgotten what he was born to do. He just needs to learn how to be a horse again.

MR. HOWARD: Well, how do you do that?

(Howards, Owner, and New Jockey all now have horse in forest area.)

NEW JOCKEY: How far do you want me to take him?

OWNER: Until he stops.

NEW JOCKEY: Okay. We'll take a pretty good ride.

OWNER: I hope so.

NEW JOCKEY: (as he rides) Okay, Boy, let's see what you've got.

MRS. HOWARD: (As they wait) Well, at least he wasn't expensive.

MR. HOWARD: No. That's true.

NEW JOCKEY: (as he rides) Woohoo! You're an amazing animal.

[Commentary on Seabiscuit](#)

All right, let's talk about Seabiscuit. We're going to go back and take some the principles we've been learning throughout the training and apply this like Seabiscuit's a case study. So, let's talk about what Seabiscuit was like as a colt. What was he like as a kid? We know that he was small; he was the runt, right? He was the little guy in the group; he was really gentle and what were his favorite things to do? Sleep, eat and roll around, right? He loved to play under the trees and, even though he was half the size of the other horses, he could eat twice as much so this is who we know Seabiscuit really is -- just this sweet, gentle little guy who has a really good sense of fun.

So let's talk about some of those adverse childhood experiences that happened to him. One, we know that he was taken away from his mom at a very young age. Then, we see him being physically abused. And, then, he was forced to lose, and so we have some of that emotional abuse going on too. We see this series of trauma happening throughout Seabiscuit's life, and now we start seeing him as an adult. And, our sweet little guy who likes to play and eat, he's now bitter and angry and to the point even that they chain him that they restrain him. Then they say something that I'm sure no one ever says and they say that he turned out just like his daddy. You know that family; I've worked with their cousins and their aunts. They start putting what they have seen in the family in the generations before on him and when he tries to perform, when he tries to do the things that they want him to do, what he really ends up doing is what they trained

him to do which is to lose. And so we start seeing those beginning effects of trauma and the ACE being played out.

So, he's obviously not doing well. He's bitter. He's angry. He's aggressive. They've had to restrain him. So, he gets sent to a new program, and I love this because when they send him to the new program, they bring in the top expert in the field. This jockey knows everything there is to know about horses. There's not a horse that he's ever met that he couldn't handle. And, so they bring him in to meet Seabiscuit; and what's his deep psychological insight? "That horse is nuts." Good luck, and good riddance, and may the Force be with you, right? And, he walks away. Then you have the older trainer Tom Smith, and he's looking around the yard. He sees Red, which is Toby McGuire's character; and he starts seeing that Red and Seabiscuit have some similar behaviors going on. And, we know that a lot of times having peer and peer input is so vitally important in trauma work because it really takes someone who's been there to help someone understand that they can get passed it too. He takes Red in to meet Seabiscuit, and what are the first things that Red says to Seabiscuit? He says, "It's okay. I'm not afraid of you, and I know what you're about. I know what you're going through. Buddy, I've been there; I've lived through that. I totally understand." And, then he offers him the most evidence-based intervention ever created in the history of mankind. He gives him food. You know, there really is something to Maslow's Hierarchy; and we have to meet people where they are. It's not just a foreshortened sense of future; it's also about survival. And, so, making sure that we meet people at that place of food and shelter and clothing and in those basics is so important. So, he gives him something to eat and they start on this relationship. And, so, then they take him out for an assessment because that's what we do, right? We're good at assessment. And they take him out, and, boy, is he fast! But, he is fast in every direction. And, then, Tom, the older trainer, he really gets to the heart of this; and they said, "He is so beat up, and they have him so screwed up running in circles, he's forgotten what he was born to do. He has to learn to be his horse again."

And, that is the key to this entire clip: he's forgotten who he is and he's got to have permission to be that again.

You know, a lot of times when we work with children, we talk about Permission to Be a Child because so many times they've never had that chance to play or go through those developmental stages. And, when we work with adults, they have that lost sense of self. They're now the survivor; they're now the person who's been through all these different things and have all these behaviors and things that they're identified by. And, we forget that at one point, they were the little guy playing under the tree who was sweet and gentle and all and just wanted to eat and sleep. So, if that lost identity, that lost sense of self, so they're like "Okay, how are we going to help him be a horse again? They take him out to just let him do what horses do—run and be natural, right? No performance; no racing. Let's just let him run. And, you have four people in this final scene. And, as the horse is running, back at the car with the two guys, you have the woman say, "At least he wasn't expensive." But, Red, the person who's running with him, the person

who sees him, the guy who said, "I'm not afraid of you" and "I know what you're all about," the one who really gets it says, "You're an amazing animal."

And, with every person we meet that is our challenge to not just see the outside, to see the behaviors or the struggles or the symptoms, but to see that amazing piece of them and to help them get back to that lost sense of self. What are those dreams they lost; what are those things that didn't happen for them? Who was it they wanted to be, not just who they had to become to survive but who is it that they really want to be? And, maybe it's not getting back to it but maybe it's being something more now. So, that's just a really fun way of using a character you probably didn't think about as been traumatized with the horse to explain how so many of these pieces go together but that it all leads to that lost sense of self.