

RESOURCES FOR RIDING AT ANY AGE

→ Aging Backwards

Essentrics.com, \$24.95

Fitness expert Miranda Esmonde-White discusses how posture and muscle tone change as you age—and gives you exercises to combat the aging process. *Essentrics* is fluid full-body workout that rebalances the muscular structure and strengthens every muscle in the body eccentrically.

After a long day of riding, thighs, glutes, calves and hip flexors can feel very tight and restricted. Over time, this stiffness can turn into potential injuries from repetitive stress and muscle imbalances. It's important to take the time to release and rebalance muscles on a regular basis—not only to feel good, but to protect your joints long term.

Essentrics barre stretches work deep into the quads, hips and groin to fully unlock and rebalance the entire lower body to relieve tension and safely restore your joints.

→ The Smart Woman's Guide to Midlife Horses

MelindaFolse.com, \$22.95

Rider and writer Melinda Folse guides you through midlife with horses. Why is riding different yet so desirable for “seasoned riders?”

By midlife, your center of balance may have shifted a bit, your muscle tone may have faded, and well-honed apprehension, courtesy of years of “Be careful!” mothering may have replaced your youthful sense of invincibility.

If, however, you manage to turn these doubts into determination—and climb into the saddle to discover the spell only close communion with a horse can cast—there's nothing else in the world like it.

FIT RIDER



“Horses help us—they're something to get up for in the morning,” he says. “If you want to ride, you'll find a way to ride at the level that feels best for you.”

Choosing to wear a helmet, staying fit, and selecting the horse that matches your fitness and confidence level will help you feel good and keep riding. Find a mentor or trainer who can guide you. “If you're smart with those choices, you should be able to keep riding for a long time,” Emerson says.

Time may change your body's ability to bounce back from injury. Still, Emerson cautions against making age an excuse.

“A 27-year-old horse [just became the oldest finisher of] the Tevis Cup. You can't say that a horse or human can only do something at a certain age. Don't limit yourself. If you think, ‘I'm 40 so I can't do this,’ the limit becomes real. Perception becomes reality. Don't do that to yourself!”

The Barn is Your Gym

To stay in the saddle, remind yourself that equestrians are athletes. Emerson says he keeps fit by working around the farm and riding. He doesn't seek extra workouts but remains active all day.

Work in an office? Make sure to stand up, take the stairs, park farther from the building's entrance and add in walks and workouts.

“Don't go to the barn and watch others clean the stalls and lift the hay,” Emerson says. “Be the one who does the manual labor. It's good for you. A lot of people shun it—maybe because it's hard work or they view it as demeaning.”

He recalls his late friend Walter Gervais who lived and worked at Emerson's Tamarack Hill Farm. Gervais started riding at 55 and worked his way up to eventing's Preliminary level (3'7" jumps) at age 72. At 75, he competed in long format three-day events. He reminded Emerson daily that age didn't matter.

“He made it possible for himself. We all have that capability,” Emerson says. “He stayed in shape because he did tons of physical labor. When he stacked hay, he'd say, ‘I don't think this is fun, but I