

*Sometimes I don't feel very motivated to go out and ride...
What does this mean about me?*

BILL-- I would venture to say that it might just mean you're normal. Admittedly, there are those among us who slog through their riding come rain, shine, personal misery, famine, or pestilence, and really, more power to them! But if you don't relate to your riding that way, you are no less a good person.

I must say that if you have very specific "high performance" goals that you are emotionally wedded to, then you just have to get out there and do it anyway—at least when skipping out is going to derail your horse's training program. But realistically, even top riders and top horses need little breaks to avoid burnout. Knowing that, you just have to formally schedule them into your calendar, and make them as important an aspect of your routine as the work itself.

Meanwhile, if you are juggling job and family along with your riding, then you mustn't feel bad about the need to distribute your attention where else it's also needed. It may require that you adjust your training timeline, but who's keeping track? That's allowed to be your choice.

As for having the time but sometimes just not feeling like doing it, that's another matter. For your horse's sake, it's better not to ride at all than to ride badly because you're angry or in some kind of blue funk. On the other hand, if you allow yourself to step off the over-achiever treadmill, you can bag the arena work for a few days and let your horse give you a different kind of comfort on some quiet walks through the woods. Sometimes that can be more refreshing than a day of half halts in the sand, no matter how successfully they're executed.

I've often said that if you're bored by your riding, you're probably doing it wrong. To get out of the "rote rut," get on a different horse. Trade with a friend for a day, and compare the new horse's reactions—both good and bad—with those of your horse. If you like the difference, you know what to work on. If you don't, you can be that much more grateful for what you've got.

It also helps to establish some short term goals. Choose a clinic or a show a month or so out and point your daily work towards that end.

Another possibility—take a holiday. Honestly, stepping away for a day or even a week won't do any harm. Eagerly looking forward to your next ride is a much better mindset to create than dogged drilling no matter how well intentioned.