

The APCA

# Student Activities JOURNAL

## Be The Leader Others Will Follow

By: Daniel Caron, Original Play, LLC  
[www.danielsprograms.com](http://www.danielsprograms.com)



It surprises me sometimes how much you can learn about interacting with people when you spend time with animals. When you pay attention to what's happening around you, there is plenty that can be applied to your daily interactions.

Meet Cash (see photograph), an old horse that probably pulled a buggy at one time. When he came to me, all I knew about him was that he was malnourished, abused and afraid. When I would put his rope and halter on to lead him, it was no surprise that his first response was to resist. I could pull on the rope and just as I predicted, he would pull right back. Because I am a slow learner, I often pulled against his resistance and this produced yet another predictable response—neither one of us moving at all.

I could have tried to force Cash or get aggressive to encourage him to do what I wanted, but he was familiar with those specific interaction styles. He negatively responded by digging in more and holding his ground. Cash responded this way because he did not feel a connection with me and he lacked a feeling of security. Or, I could have tried to “dominate” Cash because I saw myself as the “leader.” Cracking a whip may produce an immediate reaction but it does not produce collaboration, creativity or growth.

Do either of these particular interactions sound familiar to you? How about in your leadership roles? What we both need are a few basic practices to get things moving.

First, one of us has to decide we don't want to struggle anymore. Hopefully, that is me!

*In letting go of the struggle (literally) Cash begins to trust me during our interactions.*

I quickly realized I need to get closer to Cash, right next to his shoulder. Since he knows about competing at this game of tug of war, I gently and firmly (yes, you can do both at the same time) start moving him slowly in a circular direction. This is easier for him since he is not used to struggling in a circular motion. This slow, steady pace will have us ending right where we started, but at least we have a good start. Whether we move in small or large circles, the concept is that we are moving together towards the same goal. Once we start moving collectively, who knows where we can go? The possibilities are numerous. There may even come a day when I no longer need a rope to “lead” Cash.



Every time I walk out to get Cash I wonder what he will teach me about my interactions with others. It makes me reflect on being a leader, a teacher, and a student and how interesting it can be to move between these roles.



**Daniel Caron is a consultant and program facilitator who works with organizations to show people how to get along better in personal and professional settings. He works with colleges, child-care agencies, community groups, the military and the corporate sector. How could fewer struggles and greater harmony transform your organization? Contact Daniel at (740) 314-9198 or [daniel@danielsprograms.com](mailto:daniel@danielsprograms.com) to learn more.**