



Red Light, Green Light

Module Five, Session Four

Welcome to Red light, green light! Fear can be an invitation. In the Hebrew language, there are two different words used to describe two kinds of fear that we really don't make a distinction between in our culture.

1. "Pachad" is the fear of something bad happening. It's the fear of crashing, falling, being hurt. It is the fear of the boogie man under the bed. Pachad is like a red light, telling you to WHOA. I call this red light fear. Its purpose is to keep you safe from harm.
2. "Yirah" is the fear of getting closer to who you're meant to be. It's the fear of inhabiting more space or possessing more power than you're accustomed to. Its purpose is to keep you from taking risks and keep you safe from change. If you recognize it though, you learn that Yirah is really like a green light. Telling us to GO.

This is Jen Verharen. When I was first learning about this, I was schooling the first few steps of passage on my young gelding. I noticed some fear would come up. My heart would race and there was something in me that wanted to hold back. I wasn't afraid of him. I didn't think something bad was going to happen. But there was still a little fear mixed in with the exhilaration. Because we experience red light and green light fear similarly we tend not to recognize the difference. We put on the brakes in the face of Yirah because we think those butterflies and that nervousness mean "whoa". Once I identified this feeling I was having in the passage as greenlight fear, I was able to embrace the power and step into it rather than let my body hold back. It was so fun!

Where red light fear is a warning, green light fear is an invitation. You can think of it as the difference between fear and excitement but it really goes a little deeper than that.

Red light fear serves an important purpose. It keeps you alive. Until, that is, you collect

some in your nervous system. Then it starts to keep you from living. When red light fear becomes habitual or it's based on stories in your mind, rather than actual threats- it can really start to mess with your mojo.

Green light fear might make it seem too risky to sign up for a show, ride with a new clinician, apply for a new job or have a tough conversation. It might give you pause as your heart is racing in the start box or as you're turning down centerline.

You've learned throughout your life to listen to fear, to let it guide you. But if you misinterpret green light fear... if you don't recognize that it's actually an invitation forward, you could miss out on some of the juiciest experiences that life has to offer.

Learn to take a breath, smile and GO in the face of greenlight fear.

So, how do you tell the difference? They both inspire butterflies, make your hands sweat, make your heart beat faster and cause you to want to turn and run in the other direction.

For us, as riders, this is a particular challenge because we are involved in an activity that has inherent risk. We deal with a combination of green light and red light fear every day and sometimes it can feel like a jumbled mess.

Red light fear can be real. It can be telling you there is honest to goodness danger. Or it can be left over from trauma, from bad experiences or simply from feeling the weight of increased responsibilities.

It's super important that you be able to determine whether your red light fear is real or not. Is it actually warning them you of danger or is it kicking in despite the fact that there is not a real threat?

The first thing I would have you do is get down and dirty with the truth.

Is there anything about what you're doing or about your riding that someone who loves you and is knowledgeable would say is unsafe? Is your horse appropriate for you to work through fear on?

I would encourage you to let go of any old beliefs that may be keeping you boxed in. These might sound like, "I should be able to do this on my own." or "I have to prove that I can do this." or "I don't give up on things." There's also "I owe it to my horse." and "I'm

not a quitter.” Quite often, these thoughts can keep riders in the fear cycle. And keep them from changing their circumstances to get past the fear and stay safe.

Some of the fears we have are legit. We really cannot pretend that there aren't obvious risks involved in riding. But we can take care of any real dangers and move through any unreasonable fears that are left over.

If you are grappling with red light fear, identify if there is anything in your situation that warrants real fear. If there is, shine a light on it. Dig deep and be honest with yourself. If you need to seek additional resources, sell an inappropriate horse, or address mental or physical health concerns, make it a priority to figure out how to do this for yourself with integrity and compassion. Get help if you need it! Fear should only be overcome when it is not warranted. There must be a reasonable degree of safety and predictability present.

Once you've determined you've done everything you can to help create safety for yourself, then you're ready to use the tools I'm teaching you in this course and tackle the red light fear that lingers.

Why do so many riders persist in riding through fear instead of just taking up another hobby? Because, as a past Performance Project participant put it, the joy outweighs the fear.

Green light fear doesn't usually have to do with taking physical risks but with emotional ones.

Think about green light fear. Where does it show up for you?

Is it when you're getting ready to enter the show ring? Is it when you think about having that difficult conversation? Is it when you're getting ready to make a big change? Is it when you think about moving up a level or accomplishing a big goal? Is it when you think about saying no when you usually say yes? Or saying yes when you usually say no?

Green light fear or Yirah, shows up as butterflies, nervousness, maybe even dread. But it is a calling. There is some risk or challenge in front of you and something great on the other side.

When Yirah shows up in your life, treat it as an invitation- to leap, to jump, to passage, to gallop- to take whatever risks are between you and your dreams!

