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## Connective Clarity: When Horses Invite You to Take Up Authentic, Solution Focused Leadership

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**BOOK REVIEW****Connective Clarity: When Horses Invite You to Take Up Authentic, Solution Focused Leadership**

Wendy Van Den Bulk

Wendy Van Den Bulk, 2019, 92 pages, ISBN-13: 978-9463883856, € 20,99 paperback (e-book available at €8,99)

Review by Karen De Waele

Clinical Psychologist and Solution Focused Business Professional

If horses could write, they would have written Wendy Van Den Bulk's book. She does a really good job at explaining the behavior of horses and how it can be useful for leaders. It makes *Connective Clarity* an interesting read about communication, connection, and leadership, and all of it thoroughly linked with the Solution Focus mindset. It's wonderful to notice how Solution Focus really is omnipresent in nature and how it seems to be the basic mindset horses have. Wendy promises the reader great insights in leadership communication and wants the book to help leaders take up their role in a (more) resilient way.

The book is built around the Connective Clarity model. The first part covers how to communicate a clear message and being understood as you intend to. It's an invitation to slow down and reflect on what you really want to say and to prepare yourself to communicate clearly.

The second part dives into the receiving end of communication and helps you to attune to the other and focus on the inter-action rather than the action or the re-action. The five core elements of the model are carefully explained, using examples from the horse world, and linking them with leadership. Part two was a bit tough to swallow because a lot of new concepts are introduced to build the Connective Clarity model. Luckily Wendy uses repetition and clear illustrations which helps to make the concepts stick. She also uses the metaphor of a tumble clown (a toy) to connect all the concepts she used throughout the book. It's a lot of information to put in one part of this book. It seems to me she has all the information and stories in place to write another book to elaborate even more on these core elements.

In the third part she really shows the model in action linked to some core communication concepts such as receiving feedback, encounter confrontations or team dynamics. This third part is full of practical examples and really invites you to explore the themes you need at any given moment. It's the part of the book you can grab whenever you want a practical guide in leadership communication.

What I took away from this book and even have passed on to others is the constant alertness horses have, combined with the basic mindset of 'Interesting!' to connect with their surroundings and developing situations. It's a truly solution focused mindset that helps to be unbiased and to slow down and explore or accept a situation with intent.

This means Wendy succeeds in communicating her message. In the introduction she writes that she hopes readers will adopt the typical mindset horses have ("Interesting!") and feel challenged to actually take small steps to establish Connective Clarity. Knowing Wendy personally it is sometimes as if I hear her say the words that are written. This is authentically Wendy. Her love of horses and Solution Focus really drips from the pages and she managed to naturally link those in this book.

It's really a book that invites the reader to take up authentic, solution focused leadership. When you're part of the Solution Focused community you'll realize that the book is filled with Solution Focus. Wendy states Solution Focus is omnipresent in nature. After reading this book you'll know that's true, certainly when it comes to horses! When you are rather new to the Solution Focus approach, this book invites you to adopt the mindset of horses, which is really Solution Focused in its core.

I would recommend this book to leaders all over the world - even if you're not into horses or don't believe you can learn from their behavior as a leader. This book introduces a few ideas and concepts every leader can use in day-to-day conversations and communication with others.

Personally, I'm rather new to leadership and this book has helped me to be unbiased towards my team and colleagues and slowdown in my conversations and interactions with them.

If you see this book, I hope the cover and or the title trigger you, so you think "Interesting!" and start reading!

#### **The reviewer**

Karen De Waele is a clinical psychologist and a solution focused business professional, currently working as CEO for Sint-Lievenspoort, a social non-profit in Belgium that offers education, therapy, counseling, and other help for people with hearing disabilities, speech disorder and/or autism spectrum disorder.

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