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Studying In The Mastery Program

They call me “Elli-Parelli,” even though I am not related to the Parellis. Where would I be though, without my Parelli family and friends? I wonder sometimes...

I am from Switzerland and did not grow up with horses. I started taking riding lessons when I was about nine years old. At the riding school, I used to get into all kinds of wrecks, so I started riding Icelandic horses. And I loved it! These cute little colorful horses have a short flight line – of course, back then, I didn’t know what that meant, but sure appreciated the safe and fun trail rides I was able to enjoy.

The next part of my life was spent traveling the world as a professional snowboarder. I competed in the ISF Halfpipe World Cup in Europe, Japan, and the USA, as well as the FIS Boardercross Series.

As a kid, my family used to take me skiing. By the time I was a teenager, the snowboard had made its way to Europe and I liked the idea of this new snow-sports tool. Gliding through fresh powder snow, racing down the slopes, and flying through the halfpipe is what makes me feel alive and free like a bird!

I love being outdoors, in nature, and enjoying the freedom of life. Eventually, after lots of practice in both summer- and wintertime I was able to make the transition from being a recreational snowboarder to becoming a pro, and getting my first sponsorship deals.



I remember watching the weather channel, and due to all the traveling, I actually had a hard time figuring out where exactly on the map I was. It was a great experience traveling the world alone or with friends and meeting the boarder’s community at the next tour stop or summer training camp somewhere on this planet.

After having been on the road and in the snow for a couple of years, I decided it was time to take a more serious approach to life.

I studied Tourism Management and Public Relations – luckily the college was

in the mountains so I didn’t have to give up my sport! On the contrary, I started teaching as a ski and snowboard instructor in the home of the rich and beautiful, St. Moritz.

During my studies I did an internship with the former Swiss

Parelli office. They didn’t pay me that much, instead they gave me a Swiss Mountain Horse and a Savvy System Home Study Program and told me to have a go. My boss’ real intention was to find out and test just how well the Savvy System worked... I can reassure you – no one got hurt in the process and soon thereafter I got my Level 1 Red Savvy String. I was hooked from the get-go and soon dreamed about becoming an instructor. Slowly but surely, snowboarding became less important and horses, as well as, Parelli took its place.



By following the program step-by-step, trusting the process and quitting my “normal” job, I not only achieved Level 4, and became a Parelli Professional, but also started to show my horse in show jumping. When I first got into horses as a kid I never dreamed about riding bareback and bridleless along the beach but rather about jumping the highest stadium jumps at the fastest speed.

The first time I finally made it to the Colorado Campus was in 2008 to attend a 6-week course, which then was one of the pre-requisites for the Professionals Program. In 2009 I joined the Professionals Program and in 2010 I got accepted into the Mastery Program. I got to study with Pat, Linda, and their top Protégés and Instructors for two-and-a-half years. In 2013 I graduated as a 3-Star Parelli Professional Instructor and Horse Development Specialist.

I had the opportunity to further explore the show jumping world here in the US. During that time, I went to see Pat who was in the area for a cutting competition. Over dinner, Pat and I got to talking, and instead of just a casual dinner, it turned into a job interview.

Ever since, I have been Pat’s “Right Hand Woman” as his Barn Manager. I am lucky enough that I get to make a living doing what I love and learning from Pat as his Protégée in the Mastery Program.

Being a Mastery Student is a way of life that for sure has changed my life!

At the Parelli Talent Development Center, Pat has created this learning environment for us students and while he says, “I might not be able to teach you anything, but I can sure set you up to learn,” you will be learning a lot. I like to think of it as having a sponge as a brain that soaks up everything there is to learn and experience.

The reason why Pat has become the “world-renowned horseologist and success coach for horse lovers” is because he

got to learn from his mentors and figure out why they were so good at what they did. Now, it is Pat's turn to share his knowledge with us so that we can get to where he is – only ten times quicker!

Mastering the Parelli Program is about learning to run everything through a filter of “what would Pat do” and “what would Pat want” and why he would want or do things a certain way.

On a daily basis as a question arises, I think out loud by saying “what do you think Pat would want or do?” This applies to all Four Business Savvys that Pat teaches us about: Horse Development; How to become an Empowering Instructor; Business Administration; and Facility Design, Maintenance and Management.

Once you have mastered Level 4, Pat will be sharing the concepts of Horse Development with you: how to develop horses in all Four Savvys to a minimum of Level 4. Then it is our responsibility to find what they are good at and what they might enjoy to specialize in. At the Parelli Talent Development Center, we have horses of all kinds of ages and stages. I have learned a lot from getting to experience a higher level of feel from Pat's horses and then applying that feel to the young horses. All the stages from taming, foal imprinting, colt starting, foundation training and specialization can be experienced here on a daily basis.

The days are long but the years fly by. It is not about the Levels or the Stars, being a Mastery Student will show you that you don't know how much you don't know. Life begins outside of your comfort zone and every mistake is a learning opportunity.

The better your horsemanship and the more you know about horse development, the better teacher you will be. I didn't realize how much I had learned until I got to share it with students in a teaching situation. Assisting with courses on Campus and sharing the Parelli Program with horse lovers from around the world is another great highlight that I get to experience as a Mastery Student.

Pat has sought out several experts in their fields of customer service, social media, marketing, and public relations in order to provide the best possible experience for his customers. Even though I studied a lot of that in college, getting a hands-on, real life opportunity to apply it under Pat's guidance is going to set me up for success as a Parelli Professional out in the big wide world one day.

Visiting innumerable facilities all across this country; constantly changing and improving the set-up here at the Parelli Talent Development Center; traveling hundreds of thousands of miles in different vehicles; and learning to have owner's eyes, has been a steep learning curve for me.

It might seem that as a Mastery Student, it is all about riding horses, but just like the Parelli Program, the Mastery Program is



so much more than just riding. Being a Mastery Student takes ambition, loyalty, dedication, and talent. The days are long but the years fly by. It is not about the Levels or the Stars, being a Mastery Student will show you that you don't know how much you don't know. Life begins outside of your comfort zone and every mistake is a learning opportunity.

Is it uncomfortable being a Mastery Student?

Yes, it can and will be. Is it worth it? Yes, every second of it!

Some of the funniest stories came from the many situations and opportunities that I have been lucky enough to be involved in, such as being on foal-watch in the middle of night; learning to operate all kinds of ranch equipment; trying to play the right music at the right time during Pat's Seminars; loading black cattle in the dark; racing Pat in a foot race on the ramp to the highway; and many, many more.

Pat knows exactly where you are at with your journey and he sees everything, even if you think he's not watching. When Pat asks people what they want to be when they grow up, what he is really doing is finding out if your and his dreams and goals are close enough to where he can help you live your dream and reach your goals. That is what being a Mastery Student has helped me with.

I am forever thankful for what Pat and Linda have done for me. I am living the dream and enjoy every day here in “La-la-Land”! Somebody pinch me, please!

