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During my time in my Dressage Prep Camp I learned a bountiful amount about how the horse and rider have to work together both in saddle and on the ground. We spent sometime talking about exactly how the horse's body will perform each desired movement. During our discussion about roundness I learned that a horse may hold its head and neck round without being supple and through as well. In order to achieve that thoroughness we learned how the hind end has to narrow and the legs have to step under the midline of the body. In turn the front shoulders will raise and broaden; in all causing the spine to lift up and under the rider.

I also learned about the different types of bend that a horse may have; vertical and lateral. Vertical bend includes the head and the neck while lateral bend includes the full body. Vertical bend must start from the highest point of the spine, the pole. The pole starts at the first vertebra and is held at the highest point while the chin comes towards the chest. It is important that the top muscle (Rhomboides Muscle) in the neck is being used, this is the neck extensor and is linked to the muscles and movements in the withers, spine, back and hind. The bend should not start at the third or fourth vertebrae otherwise it is a false vertical bend and could result in the horse being behind the bit and vertical. Horizontal bend is how the horse moves away and bends around the rider's seat and legs. When the horse moves away from the inside leg his hind end steps under and in turn helps to narrow the hind. It is important that the horse does not continuously stay bent around the leg, using the outside rein steadily to keep the horse straight is also essential.

On the ground we learned about invisible pressure. If the horse and rider are synced on the ground then it can help relate to in the saddle. However the horse must stop when the handler stops or move away when the handler steps towards the horse. It is important that when establishing this connection to understand that the horse may not know exactly what you are asking. It will take time to build this and teach the horse exactly what you want. By stepping towards the hind hocks with your shoulder, the invisible pressure should push the hind end away from you causing the horse to step under. This is good practice before getting into the saddle and asking the horse to step under in lateral movements as well. Standing by the horse's shoulder and asking them to bend their neck side to side is helpful to establish and stretch the muscles for both vertical and lateral bend.