

With support from the Dressage4Kids “Training4Teaching” Scholarship program I was able to participate in the first Dressage4OldKids Clinic October 5-9, 2021 at Pineland Farms in New Gloucester, Maine. I brought my 7 year old Halflinger/Dutch Harness Horse mare, Lacey, to the clinic. Lacey and I have been competing First level all summer and we are now trying to achieve the balance and strength to compete at second level in 2022.

One of the over arching themes over the week was, how adjustable can our horses be and also how adjustable can we be as riders? I feel that this was a great discussion point that I will bring home to my students and their horses.

While teaching, Lendon would often ask if we could do absolutely nothing; just ride passively and see what happened. Other times she would ask how many different positions we could put our horses in – was it easy to change our horse’s shape from shoulder in, to haunches in, to straight, to a half pass, to having the neck a little lower, to bringing the poll up a little? Did it take a long time to make these adjustments or did it cause a disruption?

A few of my favorite tidbits from the clinic;  
“Your horse will only be as light as you are” and “Your horse will only be as supple as you are”. This was a very good reminder that if we are pulling, or bracing – our horses will too!

A bad half halt (or one that didn’t work 100%) is better than no half halt at all.

If you can do too much of a movement (Ex. excessive haunches in) the correct amount will be easy.

A correction should take 1-2 strides, not last forever. We should also be careful not to guard with our aids to prevent our horses from making a mistake.

It’s easier to prevent your horse from cantering faster with circles and transitions rather than trying to bring them back from a rolling canter.

During a lengthening, does your horse fade out at the end or do you finish the lengthening by contain them with a forward desire?

Does your trot fade in your lateral work or can you build your trot up as you go?

Horses are quadrupeds, but if he was a biped (standing on his hind legs only) is he straight enough to stand without falling over? If you think of his body as building blocks, his head and neck being one block, his barrel being another block and his hindquarters being the final building block – in your daily schooling, is he aligned and straight enough that he would stand up/stack up straight or would he topple over? If his head was to the left and his haunches far to the right, he would surely topple over.