

# Equine Hanna Somatics® Part 2

## Lateral Flexion of The Neck

*As a follow up to the May/June issue introducing Equine Hanna Somatics® (EHS), this article offers a second movement you can do with your horse. There are four foundational exercises I find beneficial to do while preparing the horse to go to work. These can be accomplished successfully within a short amount of time and the benefits are far reaching! The second movement is Lateral Flexion of the Neck.*

By Patricia Hechter

Photos By Stephen Gorospe

Gently place the palms of your hands flat on the cheeks of the horse, as you stand to his left side in front of the shoulder. Invite your horse to bend his neck around your body. Step slightly back towards his shoulder. As the horse's head and neck return to neutral, follow along with the horse by moving your feet and opening your elbows as needed. Maintain a deep and slow breathing as you assist your horse. Move with your horse as slowly as possible; *it is within this slow facilitated pace that healing has the potential to happen.*

It is important to guide the horse's head gently around toward his side; there is no pushing, pulling or stretching involved. In EHS® we invite the horse to participate in the work we do with him to learn about his abilities and locations of potential issues.

Allow the horse to move only as far as he is comfortable by reading and honoring his cues. Resist the urge to ask for more. Be sure his head is as vertical as possible. The horse's ears ought to be pointing to the sky equally on both sides.

If there is a tilt, gently encourage the head back to the last position where his ears are upright. Do not ask the horse to bend his neck beyond this point, as it is counter-productive.

You will repeat the movement *three times* in each direction. Each movement may look and feel different from the previous or the following. The horse may make a large free motion one time, then hardly move his neck or head the remaining times when asked to participate. This is an important part of the process for success.

EHS takes the actual movement from the limbic system, where volunteering and habit live, to the motor cortex of the brain, where choice of movement lives. (This is simplified for the purpose of this article.) This is one of the reasons EHS educators do not use treats, clickers or key words to accomplish their work.

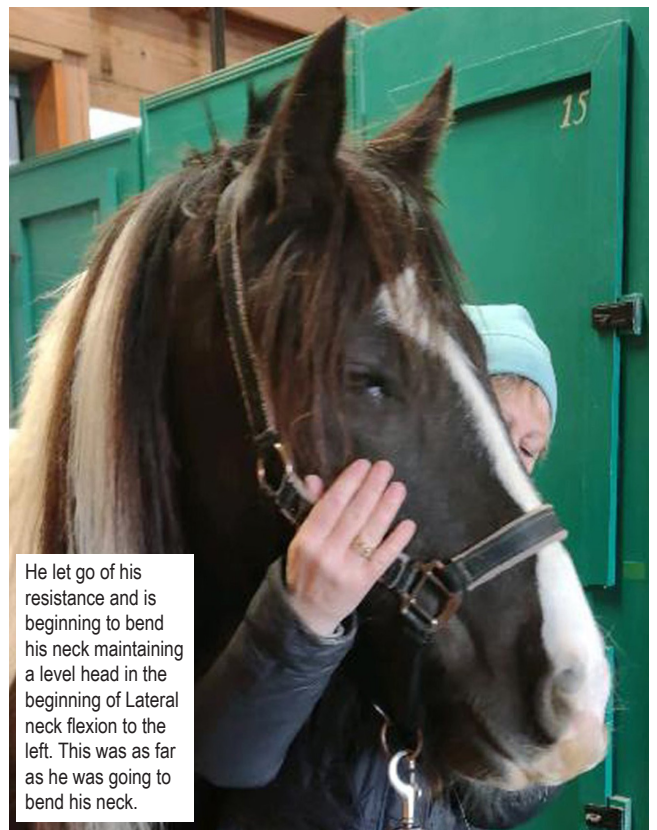
The horse may experience difficulty in bending or returning to neutral in his neck, he may quiver, shake or make larger moves such as pulling his head out of your hands. Much of this is known as "Motor Sensory Amnesia". MSA can happen when there are chronically contracted muscles.

*Continued...*

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This Gypsy Vanner demonstrates a bit of resistance when asked for a Lateral Neck Flexion to the left. I remain connected to him, waiting for him to relax. I am not pushing, pulling or stretching his neck.



He let go of his resistance and is beginning to bend his neck maintaining a level head in the beginning of Lateral neck flexion to the left. This was as far as he was going to bend his neck.

EHS teaches muscles experiencing MSA how to relax and release their tension by increasing feedback between the muscles and the brain.

When your horse experiences these involuntary movements it is important to remain calm, breathing slowly, and to remain gently connected the horse, in this instance the head. If contact is lost, gently reconnect with the horse. Sometimes it may be easier to hold the cheek pieces of the halter rather than placing the hands on the cheeks of your horse's head.

Take 4 photos of your horse standing naturally, not posed: front, back and each side prior to teaching him his new EHS movements. To observe what shifts may have happened repeat the photos of your horse after his EHS session of initial pick-ups and Lateral Neck Flexion.

A fun exercise for you, the human, is to be on your hands and knees on the floor. Lift your left hand and arm from the floor as if you are your horse participating in the initial pick-up exercise. Return your arm to the neutral position back on the floor, slowly. Repeat three times with all four of your limbs. Then move your head and neck in a lateral flexion, three times slowly in both directions.

This will allow you to feel what your horse is experiencing as you work with him. And, as a side benefit you may pick up a few places where your body may be experiencing some MSA! Stay tuned for more EHS with your horse!



Moving to the right is more comfortable. We are not going to ask for more than is offered to limit the head tilt. Notice how soft his eye is.

*Trish Hechter grew up riding and working with her mother in Maryland who was renowned for working with "problem" horses. In the mid 90's Trish earned her Reiki 1 and 2 certificates becoming a Reiki Master in 2020. After meeting Ryan Moschell, a Certified Hanna Somatics Educator®, In 2015, Trish turned her focus to Hanna Somatics and will be EHS fully certified in 2023. Trish has studied and, also, uses the Masterson Method®, Holistic Horseworks®, Tellington Touch®. Further, her healing techniques include sound vibration with tuning forks and a Tibetan Singing bowl.*

*Trish is an avid believer of Tad Coffin's Thera-Tree®. Additionally, she implements essential oils and Bach Flower Essences when beneficial.*

*Trish Hechter and Ryan Moschell, CHSE have created a partnership to work with equestrians and their horses. Dates are available for workshops and clinics in 2022. For more information about Trish's work, please visit [Hechterequinebodyworks.com](http://Hechterequinebodyworks.com).*

*To contact Ryan Moschell and learn more about his work, please visit, [GetOutOfShape.com/](http://GetOutOfShape.com/).*

*To purchase a video introduction of EHS please visit, <https://gumroad.com/a/1049973875>*

*To learn more about Equine Hanna Somatics®, and to find an equine educator near you, please visit [EquineHannaSomatics.org](http://EquineHannaSomatics.org)*