**Flexions in hand (Philippe Karl)**

**1) Relaxation of the jaw/mouth**

-to encourage the horse to relax his jaw we use the snaffle bit, standing on the ground in front of the horse with thumbs in the snaffle rings on each side, acting upwards towards the horses ears only in the corners of the mouth, a steady increasing pressure until the horse opens the mouth then relax the hands and let the horse ‘talk’, should the horse want to lean on the bit and not relax the jaw quick upwards acting actions to lift the horses head to a point where he carries his own head without support, the high position also makes it easier for the horse to relax the jaw as the muscle on the underside of the neck that connect the hyoid bone to the shoulders is stretched which encourages a yielding/relaxing of the jaw and tongue

-this action in the corners of the mouth is to become a cue for the horse to relax the jaw that we can use later under saddle as a prerequisite in all transitions and movements if needed to relax the horse and become light, it is a natural reflex to open the mouth with pressure in the corners of the mouth

**2) Lateral flexion**

-the next step are lateral flexions of the neck to each side with a relaxed mouth to start.

First start by standing in front of the horse facing the horses face and walking to each side keeping facing the horse.

Then ask for the flexion standing on either side (with one rein over the neck the other hand in the bit ring) making sure the horse relaxes the jaw before and at the end of the flexion. Start with the flexion away from you (easier to control any head tilting) then later towards you as well. The height of the head stays the at the same level where the horse is comfortable and relaxed and doesn’t want to lean on the bit/hand

-light contact in your hands means the horse is relaxed and carrying himself

**3) Neck extension**

- With one rein going over the poll and the other hand on the bit ring, the hand on the bit is acting with steady pressure upwards towards the ears and the hand holding the rein over the poll acts downwards towards the other hand. First ask for extension of the neck straight and then also with bend, with a steady pressure in the corners of the mouth that first provoke jaw relaxation and by keeping the pressure a lowering of the neck at which point the hands give and follow the horse’s mouth down and maintain a light contact.

-The action for neck extension is call action-reaction and is a steady pressure compared to the lively upwards actions to lighten the contact or raise the horses neck

**4) Poll flexion**

-poll flexion is last and a relaxed jaw is important to start, then ask for a 45 degree lateral bend away from you standing on one side of the horse, then the rein on the outside of the bend resists while the rein on the inside of the bend asks for more flexion at which point the horse has no way to go but flex at the poll.

-when the poll flexion is easy with bending away from you, ask for it by bending towards yourself and then going from bend to the other keeping poll flexion.

**5) The progression of the flexions**

1 flexion and relaxation of the lower jaw/mouth

2 flexion of the neck laterally in higher/medium height and extending neck down

3 flexion of the poll

-after doing the flexions in hand at halt they are done in hand in walk then under saddle in halt, walk, trot and last canter