In 1976, Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais introduced his series of tapes for elder citizens with the following words...

"Our objective is... radically different. We want to help you in a way so that the last years are the best years of your life... Because we will help you, not only to restore mobility -- ability to move, to cater to yourself, to be independent, and get rid of some impairments which interfere with your life, but we will allow you to get growing again. That means some of the things at age of 20 you didn't know how to do..."

This issue features stories from elder citizens throughout the world who have enhanced the quality of their lives through explorations using the Feldenkrais Method. Dr. Feldenkrais always said that learning should be a pleasurable experience.

**FIGURING IT OUT**

Dr. Feldenkrais talked about how learning isn’t something we do, but is a biological necessity. The Feldenkrais Method suggests that we can still apply learning to improve our physical abilities at any age. Too often people feel their aches and pains and limitations and yet haven’t been taught that they still can feel differences in how they move, and that they have the power to change these movements to be more comfortable or to move beyond their limitations.

A Feldenkrais practitioner’s hope is that a student’s whole being be engaged in a way that stimulates that need and love of learning. We see it in children when they have a new sensory experience. They immediately begin to explore and develop more experiences from the first one, thus expanding their abilities.

**Figuring it out**

**Do more by doing less**

**Aging more gracefully**

**Living life to it fullest**

**The difference that makes a difference**

**A nurturing environment**

---

**Contents**

Figuring it out ....................... 1
Do more by doing less .......... 2
Aging more gracefully .......... 2
Living life to it fullest .......... 3
The difference that makes a difference .......... 4
A nurturing environment ...... 4
idea. Their first lesson was about listening to differences in movement sensations as her client sat in a chair. After that Bonnie simply began to offer nonverbal, kinesthetic suggestions to how her ribs could move differently in relationship to her hips. Bonnie and her client also paid attention to her feet and ankles and their relationship to her knees and hips. Bonnie did talk and explain in sensory terms what she was doing, but never directly suggested that if she straightened her knees - she would have better posture.

“I loved watching this intelligent senior citizen take subtle sensory suggestions, think about them, and 'figure it out,'” explains Bonnie. “I immediately reinforced, nonverbally, this notion of how extending her knees will continue to extend her whole back. She is a great example of how being engaged in learning increases one's ability to improve.”

Aging more Gracefully

“FELDENKRAIS was a word it took me a while to learn correctly, but the results have been remarkable for me,” writes 77-year-old Shirley Rundle.

“The first person I met when I came to Baltimore was Paris Kern, (FELDENKRAIS practitioner in the Baltimore area, <ParisKern@aol.com>) at my sister’s urging. I attended an ATM class intending to just observe from the safety of a chair. When the class was over and I got up I noticed an improvement in how I felt, and all had done was watch and listen to the teaching! I took private lessons and attended classes. Paris solved my foot problems, saving me from the medication and surgery I felt were inevitable.

“I’ve read a lot to help me understand this neurological training, and I continue to use it to help with my painful arthritis. It has been good also to realize that I need to keep more aware of my surroundings, and to think through movements before I move too quickly, causing myself to have accidents because of my chronic vertigo.

“The mobility that I have recovered with this work is so great, and I’m hoping to ‘age more gracefully’ as I continue to attend classes.”

Do More by Doing Less

Another of Bonnie’s clients who is over 65 years of age, writes:

“ I am struck by the ideal inherent in this Method - Do No Harm. I am never free of back pain due to two spinal disc surgeries. However, six years of lessons with the FELDENKRAIS METHOD continue to give me the skills, confidence and intelligence to cope with pain and outsmart its causes. I’m not sure what I’d do without this process. In every lesson, I learn to move in efficient ways that avoid pain - be it sitting, lying, or walking. Recently on my daily walk I felt pain in my back. By paying attention, relaxing my chest, neck and breathing as well as making a slight adjustment in the length of my stride, I was able to walk comfortably.”

The idea of being able to “do more by doing less” as well as to feel more graceful and agile as they get older, is a very moving and thrilling concept for many elder citizens. Bonnie’s clients love to learn and love to move pleasurably to learn even more as they take charge of their own health and well-being.

Resources

The following resources are available through the Feldenkrais Guild of North America. 1-800-775-2118

ATM for the Elder Citizen. 10 lessons on five audiocassettes.

The Timeless Body®: Improving with Age by Frank Wildman. Nine lessons on three videocassettes.


About the FELDENKRAIS METHOD of Somatic Education

The FELDENKRAIS METHOD is an educational system that develops a functional awareness of the self in the environment. Moshe Feldenkrais DSc (1904-1984), physicist, engineer, martial artist and educator, developed the FELDENKRAIS METHOD by studying the direct relationship between bodily movement and the ways we think, feel, learn and act in the world.

AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT® is the group lesson form in which students explore movement sequences according to the verbal directions of the teacher.

FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION® is the private lesson form combining instructive touch and movement with verbal cues.

These lessons help students become aware of old habits and provide choices for more efficient action.

GUILD CERTIFIED FELDENKRAIS PRACTITIONERS® must complete 800 - 1000 hours of in-depth training over a three to four year period in a Professional Training Program regulated by the FGNA.

The FGNA is an international organization of practitioners which maintains the professional standards of practitioners and provides a range of informative materials for the public.

For more information, please contact your GUILD CERTIFIED FELDENKRAIS Practitioner® or The FELDENKRAIS GUILD® of North America at (800) 775-2118.

Please Note: The FELDENKRAIS METHOD is an educational system. It is not a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Consult your physician if you have pain or difficulty with movement.
Living Life to Its Fullest

In the late 1970’s, shortly after retiring, Rachael Perkins was taking philosophy classes at the Center for Learning in Retirement in San Francisco when she saw a notice that Awareness Through Movement classes were to be offered. She had dabbled with yoga a few years before, finding that it helped alleviate some of the aches and pains she was experiencing, so out of curiosity she went to the Feldenkrais class. It changed her life. She took classes for several years.

Not only did they give her new physical abilities—she walked all over the city of hills, took a running class with young women, gained an inch at an age most people lose height—but after years of grieving her husband’s death and searching everywhere for sense in a senseless world, Feldenkrais work gave her back the self she had lost. She looked and moved much younger than her age. She took ATM every day until her death in 1993, at age 84. It was through her inspiration that her daughter, Anne Perkins (<APerk@aol.com>) became a Feldenkrais practitioner. Anne credits her mother’s enthusiasm for Feldenkrais work for her own interest in the work. "It gave her her life back."

She wrote a poem (re-printed at right) to her teacher, Frank Wildman, then a new graduate of and now a respected trainer of the Feldenkrais Method.

teacher
(for F.W.)

thank you for being in my life
a few minutes hours
(forever)
for teaching me my self
hidden under years
of distrust and despair
thank you for being young and sure
competent, real
(i never knew the girl before
i think i met her as a child
before she disappeared
into the night of grief
and stubborn loneliness
sulking at God a lifetime
because one face was gone)
you quiet, uninsistent
guiding me subtly
inward
i heard you far away at first
deafened by the jangle of psychology/psychiatry/philosophy/theology
mantra/karma/chakra/psyche
psalm/lesson/sermon/prayer
you deliver me from
the valley of the shadow
of words
and let me
Be

Rachael Perkins

Friends of Feldenkrais is a way for the public to become more connected with the Feldenkrais Method.

Individual Memberships:

$25 • Basic benefits: Quarterly Newsletter - SenseAbility, 10% discount off books and tapes, article "The Feldenkrais Method" by Moshe Feldenkrais, and discounts on Annual Conference workshops

$50 • Basic benefits, plus Feldenkrais Logo T-Shirt

$75 • Basic Benefits, plus ATM Audio tape by Moshe Feldenkrais, and Friends of Feldenkrais® polo T-Shirt

To join, call the Feldenkrais Guild of North America at (800) 775-2118 or email: membership@feldenkrais.com
Sixty-nine-year old Lisa Crandall had back problems for years. Since the late 60's she did yoga off and on. "When I hurt I did it -- busy or not -- and if I felt good, I didn't. When I really got into trouble it was a trip to the chiropractor."

After nothing seemed to work, her doctor sent her to an orthopedic neurosurgeon. An MRI revealed the L-3 and L-4 degenerative disks were pressing on a nerve. Lisa took epidural, steroid lumbar injections and did the hospital therapy. But her condition deteriorated and she was told that spinal fusion surgery was necessary. As the care giver to both her husband and her mother she felt there was no way to do this. She tried to go back to yoga but it was too hard to do at this point.

At the suggestion of a friend she met FELDENKRAIS practitioner Charlotte Palumbo. (<cpalumbo@juno.com>) Lisa had a FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION® lesson and started weekly AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT® classes. She immediately liked the fact that the FELDENKRAIS METHOD is available to people of all ages and is never competitive. "ATM classes help us to help ourselves to learn the lesson," Lisa observes. "The teacher’s awareness of each student help us to notice what we are doing -- not just to do what we are doing -- and that is the difference that makes all the difference!"

As a result of a year of weekly classes plus a monthly 4-hour workshop she has managed to avoid surgery. "Now I am much more mindful of myself," says Lisa. "I stop, analyze, adjust. It’s where are my hips and feet and where are they going?? The feet come in, the hips square off and for some reason open up -- then there is a tilt in the pelvis -- now my ribcage is up off of my hip bones -- the upper portion of body gets long and straight. The shoulders go down and back -- my neck gets long as the head goes back and is centered. I’m saying Oh, wow -- this feels good!!! It's a shame what we do to ourselves with our poor posture. Because I have now had a year of ATM’s, workshops, and several FTs, my whole life has changed. As a senior citizen I can say how wonderful it feels to once again have an even gait and a click to the heels."

**The Difference That Makes a Difference**

---

Katharina Tribe was 50 when she came into contact with the FELDENKRAIS METHOD in 1991. She could hardly walk. She had scoliosis since childhood and her spine was all worn off on the right side from a lifetime of compensation. She started the training the following year. A chiropractor said that people with her sort of back usually came into the office on all fours! Katharina says, “No one would even guess it now-- I am my own walking miracle!”

Katharina teaches AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT in Cambridge, England. Recently, on arrival to teach one of her regular classes she saw an ancient, very tiny lady totally doubled over, making her way towards the church and its adjacent church hall where she teaches. Katharina reports, “I hoped that this little old lady was going to the church and not my class... but to the class she came!” Much to Katharina’s delight she was able to lay on the floor and take part in an ATM about flexing the whole body. At the end of the class, the lady reported she simply loved it.

The whole class took the 78-year-old lady under their wing. People who attend AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT classes get friendly with each other. This nurturing environment provides support in a way that other exercise programs do not. Katharina adds, “this story shows another aspect as well... people can join a class whenever they wish.”

Katharina reports, "she comes ever since and has straightened out no end..." She asked the student to write something for SenseAbility. The student told Katharina that she felt unable to put pen to paper... not because she couldn't write, but because what she experiences is to her so overwhelming she can't put it into words. She apologized and hugged Katharina and added, “I so enjoy to come to your class!” She meanwhile took the name of all of her fellow students and is planning a get-together. She wanted to cook a Chinese meal for the whole class. 

---

**A Nurturing Environment**